

## STUDENTS BECOMING ASSESSORS

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

#### Introduction

This module is designed to help teachers make effective use of opportunities for students to improve their understanding by taking the role of assessors.

There are different ways in which students can contribute to formative assessment such as peer assessment, self-assessment or collaborative work. In this module several of the roles that students might take will be explored, together with the formative assessment processes involved in these roles.

The module makes use of example student tasks which all involve problem-solving; these problems often have no single correct answer and they can all be approached in a variety of ways.

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#### Time

Approximately 2 hours plus teaching time

#### Acknowledgement:

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## Activity A: Student learning from sample responses

*One powerful strategy for enabling students to become assessors is to ask them to reflect on the work of others or compare it to their own solution. This role shift has several learning advantages.*

**In the context of problem solving it encourages students to:**

- **consider alternative methods.** In many Mathematics and Science lessons, students are presented with only one method for doing each task. They do not therefore come to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of alternative approaches.
- **consider methods that they would not have normally chosen.** When solving mathematical problems, for example, research shows us that many students do not choose to use algebra or graphical methods.
- **use metacognitive strategies.** When learners recognise and reflect other students' work, it helps them to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning.
- **formulate feedback.** When giving feedback to themselves or other students, learners need to understand the learning intentions, criteria for success, their own/peers' reasoning and a way of closing the gap between the current level of understanding and the desired goal<sup>1</sup>.

This activity involves watching a video clip of a lesson in which secondary students assess student work that has been provided by the teacher.

Begin by asking teachers to familiarise themselves with the task and student responses found on **Handout 1: Text messaging**. The student responses were chosen to represent five different approaches to the problem.

Then watch the video of Sheena's class<sup>2</sup>. Before the lesson her students had been asked to attempt the problem individually, without help. In this follow up lesson, students first try to comprehend the sample work, then they evaluate it.



*Video: Sheena's class*

<sup>1</sup> A popular approach in this context is known as 'Three stars and a wish': students are asked to find three good things about the work they have been given for comment and to formulate a wish, which is one thing they would have liked to see in the work.

<sup>2</sup> [https://microsites.ncl.ac.uk/fasmedtoolkit/professional-development/modules-new/students-becoming-assessors/sheena\\_-\\_primas-video/](https://microsites.ncl.ac.uk/fasmedtoolkit/professional-development/modules-new/students-becoming-assessors/sheena_-_primas-video/)

Consider the following questions:

- What aspects of the provided samples of work do students attend to?
- What criteria do students use as they assess the sample work?
- What are students learning from the sample work?

### Concerns about using student work

The students in Sheena's class appeared to be highly engaged and their discussions were thoughtful.

However, teachers sometimes comment that students are not interested in discussing other students' work, or that they do not seem able to be able to discuss the work. Frequently, they look for an approach similar to their own and go no further.

Sometimes students attend to superficial features such as the neatness of the sample work than to the quality and communication of the reasoning employed. Other teachers are concerned that students will uncritically copy sample work.

Consider the following questions:

- How did Sheena orchestrate the lesson to promote engagement and discussion?
- What could you do to avoid potential problems when your students assess other students' work?

### Choosing sample work

It is important that students spend time developing their own approaches before seeing sample work. This can help to avoid the problem of students uncritically copying sample work and also means they have already developed at least one approach to solving it.

The choice of sample work for comparison is clearly important, and the way it is chosen will depend on the priorities of the teacher and the class. In most cases, such as in the video example, it is useful for students to see alternative representations and approaches that students have not previously considered. Sometimes teachers prefer to create their own examples, often based on the approaches they have seen in their own students' initial responses.

In addition, it can sometimes be helpful if the sample work illustrates common errors that will prompt discussion. If the sample work is chosen carefully and students are encouraged to be critical, then they will learn from the comparisons and discussion.

### Planning a lesson using sample work

Ask teachers to choose a topic or lesson that they have recently taught or planned and to think about the samples they might use with a particular class.

Consider the following questions in the context of the specific class:

- What specific examples would be useful?
- Why would they be useful?
- What criteria would you use for choosing sample work to use with students?
- How would you introduce the activity in your class?
- What would you be looking out for as you circulate, in the time that the students are discussing the samples? Why?

## Activity B: Involving students as assessors

Often when pupils have finished a piece of work, they want to move on. They tend to be reluctant to re-examine it, polish it or present it so that other people can understand and follow their reasoning.

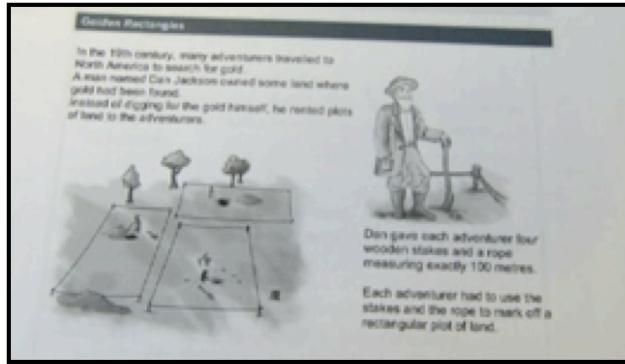
For this activity, first ask teachers to familiarise themselves with the tasks shown on **Handout 2: Golden Rectangles** and **Handout 3: Counting Trees**. Note that the *Counting Trees* problem is also used in the module *Introduction to Formative Assessment*.

Explain that you are going to show video extracts of Emma's and Shane's lessons<sup>3</sup> in which they ask their pupils to assess and improve one another's work.

Emma uses the *Golden Rectangles* task and has collated a selection of her own pupils' work on this task into a poster. She has also prepared some 'progression steps' to help her pupils analyse this work (last page of **Handout 2**). Note that pupils refer to a 'traffic lights' scheme that Emma uses in her lessons: 'green', 'amber' and 'red' refer to decreasing levels of understanding.

Shane uses the *Counting Trees* task and has also prepared some 'progression steps' to help his pupils assess one another's work (last page of **Handout 3**).

Give out **Handout 4: Comments on Emma's and Shane's lessons**. Ask the teachers to look out for what observations students make about one another's work, and to consider how this might help them improve their own work. Tell them that they can make a note of their observations on Handout 4. Now show the video.



*Video: Shane's and Emma's lessons*

Then ask teachers to think about the 'progression steps' and compare Emma's and Shane's 'progression steps'.

**What are the advantages or disadvantages of each method for helping students to reflect on, and improve, their work?**

Allow the teachers a little time to consider this question and to make some notes for themselves on **Handout 4**.

Discuss briefly that teachers have commented that students are sometimes more able to be critical of sample responses that are taken from sources outside the classroom, when they cannot be identified. When giving feedback to members of their own class, personal relationships come into play. Classroom cultures may need to be developed where ideas and work may be critically appraised without individuals feeling threatened and exposed.

<sup>3</sup> <https://microsites.ncl.ac.uk/fasmedtoolkit/professional-development/modules-new/students-becoming-assessors/emma-shane-primas-video/>

## Activity C: Planning a lesson in which students are assessors

In this activity, participants plan a lesson. Later, they should teach the lesson, and in Activity D, after the lesson has been taught, they have an opportunity exchange their experiences.

Divide teachers into two groups, Track A and Track B. Ask the Track A group to work on **Handout 5: Track A: Using students' own work** and the Track B group to work on **Handout 6: Track B: Using sample work provided by the teacher**.

### Planning the lesson

First ask the teachers to plan their assessment *task*. It is helpful if each participant chooses the same assessment task, as this facilitates the follow-up discussion. For this reason, the teachers should choose one of the tasks below:

- Text messages (see Handout 1)
- Golden rectangles (see Handout 2)
- Counting Trees (see Handout 3).

Then ask them to plan their assessment *lesson* in which students solve the task, revisit it and assess other students' work – either work from their classmates (Track A) or from some sample responses (Track B).

The questions below (see **Handout 7: Planning for an assessment lesson**) suggest issues teachers may want to consider during their planning. Nevertheless, they are to be understood as one possible approach to peer and self-assessment and teachers should be able to make changes according to their own context.

Consider the following questions:

- When will you allow students time to work on the assessment task, individually or in pairs, without your guidance?
- Do students have an opportunity to think about their own work, discuss the other students' work and reflect on their thinking and methods?
- Do students have sufficient time to revise their own work in the light of the comments and discussion?
- What materials do students need for this lesson?
- How will you gain insight of your students' thinking during their work in the lesson?
- What difficulties do you expect from your students? How can you react to these?

## Activity D: Exchanging experiences

After the teachers have implemented their planned lessons in the classroom, meet together to discuss what happened. Begin by asking the teachers to answer the following questions on **Handout 8: Exchanging experiences**.

Consider the following questions:

- How did your students perform on the task, unaided?
- What were their strengths and difficulties?
- How did students assess the provided responses or work of their peers? What aspects did they attend to? How did they formulate feedback?
- How well did students react to and use the evidence to improve their own work?
- What are the implications of this lesson for your future teaching?

Then ask teachers to share their experiences with students becoming assessors in peer and self-assessment. Some teachers may want to share their students' work as examples to highlight learning progressions or difficulties. For this reason, make sure to ask the teachers to bring interesting student solutions with them to this session.

You could also compare the two different approaches (Track A and Track B).