

Knight (2001) has looked at some of the differences between summative and formative assessment, which are tabulated in Table 3. You might like to circle what you would wish to intend for your assessment practices. Do these fall primarily in the summative or formative arena?

Dimensions of difference	Assessment as measurement (Summative)	Assessment as judgement (Formative)
Ontology (theory of what exists) and epistemology (theory of how we know about it)	Common sense view that there is a reality that is readily known through diligent use of 'scientific' methods.	There is a problematic relationship between what may exist and what is known. There is not, therefore, any right way to the truth.
Assumptions about achievements	Achievements are seen as transferable. Good measurements predict achievements in other times and contexts.	There is only a limited transfer of learning so there can be no strong claim about learner's performance in other contexts. <i>Assessment data are not good predictors.</i>
Typical products	'Feedout' in the shape of warrants to achievement	Feedback in the shape of improvement 'conversations'.
Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reliable measures of achievement 2. Motivating learners 3. Providing information to guide learning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing comments that afford opportunities for better learning 2. Motivating learners
Treatment of complex human learning achievements	Reductionist. Assumes that complex achievements can be separated into component parts that can be reliably assessed. The total score is then treated as a valid measure of complex achievement.	Complexity has emergent properties, which means that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Complex achievements must be judged as they are.
What achievements are most likely to be assessed in this way?	Understandings and performances that can be fairly captured by low-inference judgement methods – convergent, routine, lower-order achievements.	Complex achievements – divergent creations, non-routine judgements, 'soft skills'.

Table 3 - Summative and formative assessment (Knight, 2001)

An assessment manifesto

This 10-point manifesto is taken from the end section of *'500 Tips on Assessment'* by Sally Brown, Phil Race and Brenda Smith, published by Kogan Page in 1996.

Assessment should be based on an understanding of how students learn.
Assessment should play a positive role in the learning experiences of students.
Assessment should accommodate individual differences in students. A diverse range of assessment instruments and processes should be employed, so as not to disadvantage any particular individual or group of learners. Assessment processes and instruments should accommodate and encourage creativity and originality shown by students.

The purposes of assessment need to be clearly explained. Staff, students, and the outside world need to be able to see why assessment is being used, and the rationale for choosing each individual form of assessment in its particular context. Assessment needs to be valid. By this, we mean that assessment methods should be chosen which directly measure that which it is intended to measure, and not just a reflection in a different medium of the knowledge, skills or competences being assessed.

Assessment instruments and processes need to be reliable and consistent. As far as is possible, subjectivity should be eliminated, and assessment should be carried out in ways where the grades or scores that students are awarded are independent of the assessor who happens to mark their work. External examiners and moderators should be active contributors to assessment, rather than observers.

All assessment forms should allow students to receive feedback on their learning and their performance. Assessment should be a developmental activity. There should be no hidden agendas in assessment, and we should be prepared to justify to students the grades or scores we award them, and help students to work out how to improve. Even when summative forms of assessment are employed, students should be provided with feedback on their performance, and information to help them identify where their strengths and weaknesses are.

Assessment should provide staff and students with opportunities to reflect on their practice and their learning. Assessment instruments and processes should be the subject of continuous evaluation and adjustment. Monitoring and adjustment of the quality of assessment should be built in to quality control processes in universities and professional bodies.

Assessment should be an integral component of course design, and not something bolted on afterwards. Teaching and learning elements of each course should be designed in the full knowledge of the sorts of assessment students will encounter, and be designed to help them show the outcomes of their learning under favourable conditions.

The amount of assessment should be appropriate. Students' learning should not be impeded by being driven by an overload of assessment requirements, nor should the quality of the teaching conducted by staff be impaired by excessive burdens of assessment tasks.

Assessment criteria need to be understandable, explicit and public. Students need to be able to tell what is expected of them in each form of assessment they encounter. Assessment criteria also need to be understandable to employers, and others in the outside world.