Learner Assessment

The program employs a full spectrum assessment continuum (including placement, ongoing formative feedback/evaluation, summative assessment, and high stakes assessment) that is fair, valid, and useful to all participants.

52. **There are processes in place to ensure the learner's appropriate placement in the program.**

    —Input from learner assessment is used for placement, including assessment of the learner's
    — Needs and goals (as individuals, and as members of families, communities, and workplaces).
    — Proficiency levels in listening, speaking, reading, writing.
    — Special needs (literacy, learning disabilities).

    —There is a process in place for addressing the inappropriate placement of a learner.

    —Specified policies/assessment procedures are in place for determining a learner's readiness to progress to a new level.

    —Results of assessment/placement activities are communicated and explained to learners
    — In a timely fashion.
    — In language learners can understand.

    —There is recognition of, assessment of, and provision for special needs.

    —Learners who are assessed as inappropriate for the program are provided with advice and recommendations regarding other educational options.

53. **Ongoing formative evaluation and feedback, of value to learners, are integrated into the teaching/learning process and inform class direction.**

    —Learning objectives, goals, and outcomes (and criteria) of tasks and classroom activities are discussed with learners.

— Self-assessment strategies are developed to give learners control of their own learning, better understanding of their own skills, and a clearer focus on goals and objectives. Examples of self-assessment strategies may include:[54]
  — The use of collaborative learning portfolios.
  — The use of evaluation tools such as rating scales and checklists.
  — Comparison of speaking/writing against particular criteria (rubrics).
  — Learning logs/journals.
  — Tests with answer keys.
  — Comparison of speaking/writing with a model.
  — The use of computer programs that provide immediate feedback.

— Evaluation and feedback (which include recognition of the goal, evidence of "gap," if any, and strategies for "closing the gap") are provided formally and informally, at regular, frequent intervals, through some of the following:
  — Brief meetings with learners to discuss progress, goals, recommendations.
  — The use of rubrics to provide feedback on performance of language tasks (completed by peers or instructor).
  — Corrective feedback to the entire class regarding an issue that poses difficulty to many in the class.
  — Individual (oral or written) feedback on a spoken/written task.
  — Feedback from performance on weekly quizzes and tests.
  — Feedback on homework, in-class work, presentations, group work, role-plays, discussions, etc.
  — Feedback on portfolios.
  — Other.

— Feedback and evaluation are of value to the learners. They
  — Are timely.
  — Are in language learners can understand.
  — Include opportunities for feedback to result in revision, correction and improvement (i.e., the

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[54] From *CLB2000 Guide to Implementation*, section on assessment

opportunity to "do it again").
— Inform the direction, pace and content of class.

—The program recognizes the time required for assessment and allows instructors time for learner conferences, portfolio reviews, exit interviews, test development, etc.

54. Appropriate summative assessment is meaningful, based on multiple measures, and clearly linked to the outcomes specified in the curriculum and to class content/activities. Learners know how they will be assessed.

—Summative assessment is linked directly to the goals and outcomes specified by the curriculum.

—What will be assessed and criteria/expectations for success are made clear to learners prior to assessment, in a selection of the following ways:
— Course requirements and weightings are clearly explained to learners.
— Learning objectives/goals/outcomes of tasks and classroom activities are discussed with learners.
— Expectations and criteria for success are communicated to (or developed in cooperation with) learners.
— Learners become familiar with the assessment criteria and assessment tools (e.g., rubrics, rating scales, checklists) by using them for self- and peer-evaluation.
— Learners are involved in designing assessment strategies.
— Learners are involved in selecting work to include in a portfolio.

—There is a transparent connection between what is done in class and the assessment that occurs:
— The skills that are assessed are those that were taught and practiced.
— Assessment activities and tasks resemble the learning activities and tasks that learners engaged in during the class.
— The language that is assessed is the language that was taught.
— The themes and content of assessment tasks

resemble the themes/content that learners explored during the class.

— Assessment criteria that reflect what was taught and that were used for peer/self-assessment are used to assess performance on language tasks.

—Summative assessment is sensitive, appropriate for adults, and neither culturally nor contextually biased.[55]

—Summative assessment is meaningful:

— There is a transparent connection between what is assessed and the present and future needs and goals of the learners.

— As far as possible, assessment tasks are engaging and interesting.

—Summative evaluation is based on multiple and varied measures of assessment, appealing to different learning styles, conducted over time.

—Summative evaluation is outcome-based, focused on what learners can do.

55. The program ensures that assessment is fair and valid.[56]

—When using language proficiency tests to make decisions, the following guidelines are met:[57]

— Program staff critically evaluate the test instruments used for decision-making purposes in the program.

— The program employs tests that reflect current understanding of assessment and language.

— The program avoids using tests that are based on outdated models of language and assessment.

— The program employs tests in which stated purposes correspond to program needs.

— In recognition that the stress and anxiety inherent in high-stakes test situations may negatively impact

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[55] i.e., features that would be unfamiliar, upsetting, or distressful to learners are avoided if possible.

[56] See TESOL (2003), Standard 6E

[57] The guidelines are adapted from the "Ethical Guidelines for the Use of Language Proficiency Tests" set by TESL Canada Federation. For the complete list of guidelines, see the TESL Canada website http://www.tesl.ca

performance, the program avoids relying on a single standardized test score or inflexible cutting scores for decision-making purposes.

—Facilities used for testing purposes are appropriate (e.g., well lit, spacious, quiet).

—Equipment used for testing purposes is in good working order.

—Test materials are secure and undamaged.

—Testers are trained and follow protocol in administering and monitoring high stakes tests.

—In-house assessment tools are reliable, valid, piloted, and revised to ensure they are measuring what they are intended to measure.

—The program supports/encourages collaboration among instructors of the same proficiency levels to ensure inter-rater reliability and validity of rating instruments.

—The needs of learners with special needs (e.g., learning disabilities, literacy) are considered during proficiency and high-stakes testing.

56. Learner progress within the program is documented, and this information is presented in such as way as to be useful and recognized for transfer into training programs, the work-place, and post-secondary education. [58]

—Instructors are informed of any program policies, procedures, or expectations regarding
  — Frequency of assessment.
  — Methods of assessment.
  — Methods of recording and reporting results of assessment.
  — Uses of assessment.

—Learners are informed of admittance requirements for relevant courses, training programs, the work place, and post-secondary education.

—Learner progress and assessment results are documented and communicated to learners on an ongoing basis.

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[58] See TESOL (2003), Standard 6K

— Learner progress and assessment results are used as a basis for making decisions regarding referral to other language programs, training programs, post-secondary education.

— Where relevant, Canadian Language Benchmark assessments are used to facilitate movement from program to program and from program to workplace, within Alberta and Canada.

— A selection of learners is contacted after completion of a program (or at a specified period after a course has ended) and information regarding progress toward goals is documented.

— Learner assessment results and progress toward goals are communicated to relevant stakeholders (e.g., funders, administrators).

References and Further Reading: Assessment

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