**20 key ideas on shared and formative assessment**

**The following are propositions formulated by Sally Brown, supported by indicative literature in the field**

1. Ideas formulated around shared and formative assessment result from 40+ years of evidence-led scholarship in the area (see long list of references below).
2. Assessment must be for, not just of learning, that is to say the activities associated with preparing for and undertaking assignments should be valuable as learning in themselves.[[1]](#endnote-1)
3. Students undertaking peer assessment for the first time need to go through a structured process. This includes providing an evidence-based rationale for using peer assessment, describing the task involved, discussing or negotiating the criteria, giving students opportunities to review how the assessment criteria match the learning outcomes, providing risk-free rehearsal opportunities with a debriefing to clarify issues, then finally undertaking the task and debriefing. This process is a useful one whenever any form of innovative assessment is used. [[2]](#endnote-2)
4. Students may need support in developing the skills to give one another feedback. On some occasions they can be too harsh with their criticism, but on other occasions it has been observed but they tend to be kind to one another by giving higher marks than contributions actually deserve. [[3]](#endnote-3)
5. By undertaking formative and shared assessment, students gain a better understanding on how to judge their own work during the production of it. [[4]](#endnote-4)
6. As a result of experiencing good formative assessment in a dialogic exchange, students should become more effective autonomous learners. [[5]](#endnote-5)
7. Motivation to participate in assessment activities can sometimes be enhanced by the use of peer review, since students often regard the opinion of their peers as more important than that of their tutors, parents or other people. [[6]](#endnote-6)
8. Peers, with training, are usually very competent at assessing each other's assessment products, for example presentations, posters, exhibitions and so on.
9. Where what is being assessed is process rather than outcome, that is to say gauging the individual contributions of members of the group, it is essential to include intra-peer group assessment.
10. Feedback is the key locus of interaction nowadays between students and the University, at a time when subject content is ubiquitously available. [[7]](#endnote-7)
11. Formative assessment should function to form and shape future behaviour, and involve transformative practice.
12. Formative assessment needs to be a dialogue, that is to say mono-directional information and advice from the tutor to the student is less effective than a conversation in person, on paper or virtually. [[8]](#endnote-8)
13. It is possible for students to become more effective as learners if they develop advanced assessment literacy, that is, really getting to grips with concepts like criteria, weighting and agency. [[9]](#endnote-9)
14. Assessment literacy is one of the skills that build towards academic literacy: others include digital literacy, information literacy, interpersonal literacy and social literacy. [[10]](#endnote-10)
15. Learning to use formative assessment constructively is a life skill: such practices and behaviours which are learned on how to use feedback to improve effectiveness can be carried forward into careers and life-wide capabilities. [[11]](#endnote-11)
16. Good formative assessments help students build a nuanced view of what is required, moving away from the concept that something is absolutely right or wrong. [[12]](#endnote-12)
17. Through having opportunities to review the work of others through shared/peer assessment, students can develop conceptual frameworks that underpin good practice.
18. Through writing drafts and reviewing them with colleagues, it is possible for students to recognise the potential for improving their own work, whereas too many students think writing a first draft is sufficient. [[13]](#endnote-13)
19. When assessing practical skills, there is substantial benefit in engaging peers in shared assessment, as they learn by evaluating each other and hence improve their own skills. [[14]](#endnote-14)
20. Enhanced digital capabilities for assessment make it possible for students to work iteratively through a program, receiving feedback on initial attempts and striving towards continuous self-improvement. [[15]](#endnote-15)

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1. see Price et al 2012 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. as suggested by Brown, 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. as advised by Race, 2001 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. see, for example, Sadler, 1989 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. As proposed by Sadler, 2010 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. see for example, Falchikov, 2004 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Brown, 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Nicol and McFarlane-Dick, 2006 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Brown, 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
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13. Sadler, 2010 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Pickford and Brown, 2006 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. see JISC 2007, for example [↑](#endnote-ref-15)