Practical strategies for embedding principles of good assessment practice into your teaching

Principle	Practical strategy	
Clarify good performance	• Provide clear definitions of academic requirements before each learning task	
	• Provide explicit marking criteria and performance level definitions	
	• Provide opportunities for discussion and reflection about criteria and standards before learners engage in a learning task	
	• Ask learners to reformulate in their own words the documented criteria before they begin the task. This could be submitted with the assessment.	
	• Model in class how you would think through and solve exemplar problems	
	• Provide learners with model answers for assessment tasks and opportunities to make comparisons against their own work	
	• Explain to learners the rationale of assessment and feedback techniques	
	• Before an assessment, let learners examine selected examples of completed assessments to identify which are superior and why (individually or in groups)	
	• Organise a workshop where learners devise, in collaboration with you, some of their own assessment criteria for a piece of work	
	• Ask learners to add their own specific criteria to the general criteria provided by you	
	• Work with your learners to develop an agreement, contract or charter where roles and responsibilities in assessment and learning re defined	
Encourage time and effort on task	• Reduce the size (e.g. by limiting the word count) and increase the number of learning tasks (or assessments). Distribute these across the module	
	• Make such tasks compulsory and/or carry minimal marks (5/10%) to ensure learners engage but staff workload doesn't become excessive	
	• Break up a large assessment into smaller parts. Monitor performance and provide feedback in a staged way over the timeline of your module	
	• Empower learners by asking them to draw up their own work plan for a complex learning task. Let them define their own milestones and deliverables before they begin. Assign some marks if they deliver as planned and on time	
	• Provide homework activities that build on/ link in-class activities to out-of-class activities	
	• Ask learners top resent and work through their solutions in class supported by peer comments	
	• Align learning tasks so that students have opportunities to practise the skills required before the work is marked	
	• Give learners online multiple-choice tests to do before a class and then focus the class teaching on areas of identified weakness based on the results of these tests	
	• Use a 'patchwork text' – a series of small, distributed, written assignments of different types. Each of these are complete in themselves but can also be stitched together through a final integrative commentary	

	• Award fewer marks for early assessments to allocate all marks for the final synthesis. This format gives learners some choice by allowing them to select which patches to include in the final reflective account	
	• Have learners undertake regular small tasks that carry minimal marks, with regular feedback	
	• Provide learners with mock exams so they have opportunities to experience what is required for summative assessment in a safe environment	
Deliver high quality feedback information that helps learners self-correct.	• Provide opportunities for learners to work through problem sets in tutorials, where feedback from you is available. This ensures that the feedback is timely and is received when learners get 'stuck'	
	• Ensure feedback turnaround time is prompt, ideally within 2 weeks	
	• Give plenty of documented feedback in advance of learners attempting an assessment, e.g. a 'frequently occurring problems' list	
	• Give plenty of feedback to learners at the point at which they submit their work for assessment. This feedback might include a handout outlining suggestions in relation to known difficulties shown by previous learner cohorts supplemented by in-class explanations. Learners are most receptive to feedback when they have just worked through their assessment	
	• Ensure that feedback is provided in relation to previously stated criteria, as this helps to link the feedback to the expected learning outcomes	
	• Limit the number of criteria for complex tasks; especially extended writing tasks, where good performance is not just ticking off each criterion but is more about producing a holistic response	
	• Instead of providing the correct answer, point learners to where they can find the correct answer	
	• Ask learners to attach three questions that they would like to know about an assessment, or what aspects they would like to improve	
	• Ask learners to self-assess their own work before submission and provide feedback on this self-assessment as well as on the assessment itself	
Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.	• Structure learning tasks so that they have a progressive level of difficulty	
	• Align learning tasks so that learners have opportunities to practice skills before work is marked	
	• Encourage a climate of mutual respect and accountability	
	• Provide objective tests where learners individually assess their understanding and make comparisons against their own learning goals, rather than against the performance of other learners	
	• Use real-life scenarios and dynamic feedback	
	• Avoid releasing marks on written work until after learners have responded to feedback comments	
	• Redesign and align formative and summative assessments to enhance learner skills and independence	
	• Adjust assessment to develop learners' responsibility for their learning	
	• Give learners opportunities to select the topics for extended essays of project work	

	• Provide learners with some choice in timing with regard to when they hand in assessments	
	• Involve learners in decision-making about assessment policy and practice	
	• Provide lots of opportunities for self-assessment	
	• Encourage the formation of supportive learning environments	
	• Have learner representation on committees that discuss assessment policies and practices	
Encourage interaction and dialogue around learning (peer and teacher student).	• Review feedback in tutorials. Ask learners to read the written feedback comments on an assessment and discuss this with peers	
	• Encourage learners to give each other feedback in an assessment in relation to published criteria before submission	
	• Create natural peer dialogue by group projects. Structure tasks so that the learners are encouraged to discuss the criteria and standards expected beforehand, and return to discuss progress in relation to the criteria during the project	
	• Use learner response systems to make lectures more interactive	
	• Facilitate teacher-learner feedback in class through the use of in-class feedback techniques	
	• Ask learners to answer short questions on paper at the end of class. Use the results to provide feedback and stimulate discussion at the next class	
	• Support the development of learning groups and learning communities	
	• Construct groupwork to help learners to make connections	
	• Ask learners to set tasks for each other	
	• Encourage the formation of peer study or create opportunities for learners from later years to support or mentor learners in early years	
	• Link modules together as a pathway so that the same learners work in the same groups across a number of modules	
	• Require learners in groups to generate the criteria used to assess their projects	
	• Ask learners, in pairs, to produce multiple-choice tests, with feedback for the correct and incorrect answers	
Facilitate the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning.	• Create a series of online objective tests and quizzes that learners can use to assess their own understanding of a topic or rea of study	
	• Ask learners to request the kind of feedback that they would like when they hand in their work	
	• Structure opportunities for peers to assess and provide feedback on each other's work using set criteria	
	• Use confidence-based marking (CBM). Learners must rate their confidence that their answer is correct. The higher the confidence the higher the penalty if the answer is wrong.	
	• Use an assessment cover sheet with questions to encourage reflection and self-assessment. Ask learners to make a judgement about whether they have met he stated criteria and estimate the mark they expect	
	• Directly involve learners in monitoring and reflecting on their own learning, through portfolios	
	• Ask learners to write a reflective essay or keep a reflective journal in relation to their learning	

	• Help learners to understand and record their own learning achievements through portfolios. Encourage learners to link these achievements to the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in future employment	
	• Ask learners, in pairs, to produce multiple-choice tests over the duration of the module, with feedback for the correct and incorrect answers	
Give learners choice in assessment – content and process.	• Give learners opportunities to select the topics for extended essays or project work, encouraging ownership and increasing motivation	
	• Give learners choice in timing with regard to when they hand in assessments – managing learner and teacher workloads. Particularly appropriate where students have many assignments and the timings and submissions can be negotiated	
	• Require learner groups to generate criteria that could be used to assess their projects	
	• Ask learners to add their own specific criteria to the general criteria provided by the teacher. Take these into account in the final assessment	
	• Ask learners, in pairs, to produce multiple-choice tests with feedback for correct and incorrect answers, which reference the learning objectives. Let the rest of the class take these tests and evaluate them. These could be used in final assessment	
Help teachers adapt teaching to student needs.	• Request feedback from one minute papers where learners carry out a small assessment task and hand it in anonymously at the end of a class. Use the information from these to inform teaching in the next class	
	• Have students request the feedback they would like when they make an assignment submission	
	• Provide opportunities for frequent low-stakes assessment tasks with regular outputs to help you gauge progress	
	• Use online tools with built-in functionality fir individual recording and reporting – providing information about levels of learner engagement with resources, online tests and discussions	
	• Use learner response system to provide dynamic feedback in class. The stored data provides information about responses, which can be analysed	
	• Provide opportunities for learners to self-assess and reflect on their learning. A record of these reflections provides information about the learners ability to evaluate their own learning	
	• Request feedback from learners on their assessment experiences in order to make improvements	
	• Carry out a brief survey mid-term or mid-semester while there is time to address major concerns	