

Checking for understanding

Formative assessment in English



This document provides a suggested outline for facilitating a group session where teachers can use the formative assessment in English video to reflect on their own practice. It could also provide guidance for activities for self-directed reflection.

These activities aim to:

- build knowledge of formative assessment (particularly checking for understanding) and of AERO's guidance in this area
- assist in developing teaching strategies involving formative assessment and
- encourage teachers to embed formative assessment in their practice.

The content included in this group facilitation guide aligns with standards including:

- **Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Focus Area 6.2** This resource is related to 'Focus Area 6.2 Engage in professional learning and improve practice'.
- **Australian Professional Standards for Principals Professional Practice 2** This resource is related to 'Professional Practice 2 Developing self and others' in the Australian Professional Standards for Principals.

 [Watch formative assessment in English](#)

Facilitator preparation

The following is an example checklist to help you prepare for the session.

- ✓ **Review the materials**
 - Read AERO’s [Tried and Tested Formative assessment practice guide](#).
 - **Watch the formative assessment in English video**, noting down key points that would be valuable for your team and perhaps any aspects you think might need clarification.
 - ✓ **Plan the session**
 - Make sure to give your team sufficient notice about the session so they have time to do the pre-work.
 - Consider how the session can specifically assist your school and your students.
 - Think about what you want participants to be able to do as a result of this session. For instance: identifying what it is that you want students to know and be able to do as a result of the sequence of lessons, or methods by which you might collect information that students have progressed in their learning.
 - ✓ **Consider how change will be promoted in your school**
 - How might teachers in different classes have a common view of what checking for understanding is, how teachers might support the work of their colleagues, and what additional resources and learning might be required.
 - ✓ **Prepare to facilitate**
 - Read through this resource and highlight the key elements and the questions you plan to ask.
 - ‘Road-test’ the session with one of your colleagues to clarify any aspects of formative assessment that you are unsure about and to make sure you are confident with each step.
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Attendee preparation

The following is an example checklist of pre-session work to set participants before they attend.

- ✓ Read AERO’s [Formative assessment Tried and Tested guide](#).
- ✓ Identify a formative assessment approach that you have used to collect information on whether students have mastered a skill or set of knowledge can help you to focus the session, and connect to practices used in your context.

Will it focus more on how a teacher might use formative assessment? Or how common misconceptions can be identified? Or perhaps how a teacher can identify at what stages they will want to assess student understanding of curriculum content during a lesson? Or how a teacher can provide feedback to students to ensure they have mastered knowledge or skills?

Formative assessment session agenda

The following table outlines a possible agenda for a 45 minute group session.

Timing	Agenda item	Notes
5 mins	Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	
5 mins	<p>Review key aspects of AERO's Tried and Tested Formative assessment guide, with a focus on checking for understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low key assessments should be used to collect information, particularly relating to common misconceptions. • Take the opportunity to ask challenging questions which require students to explain their reasoning. • Have a method for noting down observations of student responses. 	The purpose of this section is to revise elements of the Tried and Tested guides and to emphasise the key points of learning for the team before watching the video.
10 mins	<p>Think about your own teaching practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you use formative assessment in your practice now? <p>Focus on strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think we do well? • What aspects of formative assessment are you not so sure about? • Are there parts of it that you use less in your current instruction? <p>Think Pair Share</p>	
5 mins	Formative assessment in English video viewing	If you have identified aspects of the video that are particularly important for your team, you may wish to pause at certain points to reiterate a point or idea.
15 mins	<p>Video consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is something that you learnt from watching this teacher discuss how they implement formative assessment in their lessons? • Was there anything in the video that you found surprising? • Which parts of formative assessment would you want to know more about? • Are we clear about what information about student learning is important to know at different stages in the lesson? • How do we currently know whether students have mastered an idea or concept? 	This is an opportunity to discuss some key questions from the video. Encourage your team to be specific about teaching strategies rather than talking generally about formative assessment.

Timing	Agenda item	Notes
5 mins	Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What support would help you to develop your formative assessment?	

Post-session review

This could be in the form of another meeting, online session, peer coaching session or some other format agreed by the group.

- Reconvene the team after several weeks to review key aspects of formative assessment (with a focus on checking for understanding) and to share experiences. Questions to ask could include:
 - What changes to practice have been relatively simple?
 - What parts have been challenging for you?
 - How can the school assist you to implement formative assessment in your classroom?

Reflection on meeting

It is important for you to reflect on the session and the progress of your team. The following questions can help you think about the outcomes and next steps for improving the quality and consistency of formative assessment.

- Were there differences in expertise between members of the group?
- Are there members of the team who you felt left the meeting still a little unsure of what effective practice looks like? What could you do to follow up and provide support?
- What parts of the session worked well for the group?
- What aspects were less successful?