

e-Learning: Initial/diagnostic assessment, induction and guidance**2.1 Guide and support the induction of learners into the organisation or their learning programme****2.1.1 Identify initial/diagnostic assessment e-tools for learners and appropriate diagnostic methods'****LEARNING OUTCOMES**

After working through this information sheet you will be able to:

- identify appropriate initial assessment tools and methods, and the rationale for their use
- identify how e-learning tools can help learners to specify their learning needs

Selecting an appropriate assessment tool

How do you decide which tool will best suit the needs of both you and your learners?

It is important to consider a range of factors when selecting an appropriate tool. Professor Dave Bartram at Hull University identified six evaluation criteria to aid the selection of assessment tools. These were used and developed by LSN supported projects on initial assessment, and found to be helpful. The model below describes the issues that need to be considered under these criteria.

Model Developed from Prof. Bartram's Evaluation Criteria

Scope considers the skills coverage of the tool. *Validity* and *Reliability* reflect on the accuracy and consistency of the products in meeting both teacher and learner needs. *Practicality* looks at the suitability of the product with regard to the circumstances within which it is intended to be used. *Acceptability* and *Fairness* focus on how engaging and accessible the tool is for learners in general, but for those with learning issues in particular.

For some key questions, to consider, **click** on the image to reveal the criteria.

Rationale for using electronic initial assessment tools

Why use e-initial assessment tools?

Below are just some ways in which it is felt that the use of technology can enhance the initial assessment experience for both teacher and learner.

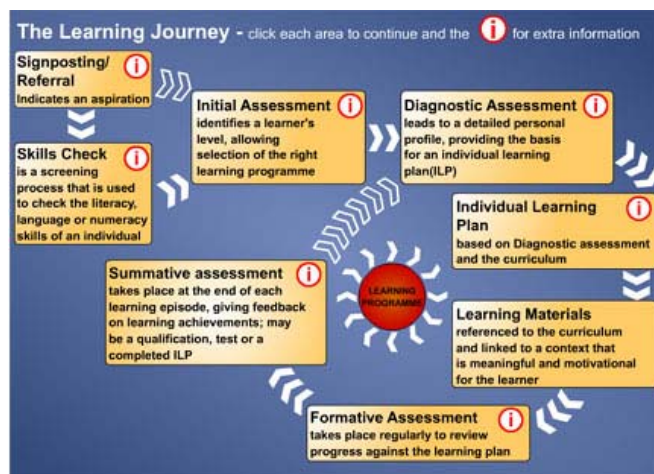
- The more interactive nature of technology can help to engage learners, and encourage ownership and understanding of their own skills and learning (and prior learning) during the initial assessment process.
- The use of technology can assist the accurate recording of individual learner's skills, which can then inform individual learning plans, and help to avoid the demotivational problem of repetition.
- The centralised holding of initial assessment data makes it accessible to all teachers, and therefore the mapping of a learner's needs and progress easier to track.
- Technology makes it easier to support initial assessment data collated across an organisation, or programme area, and can help to establish baselines for monitoring progress and measuring value-added.

Helping learners to specify their learning needs

The use of assessment as a way of enhancing learning is clearly a benefit, particularly if feedback is given to learners soon after testing. Using the results to inform learners and learning in a meaningful way, for example, through developing individual learning plans (ILPs) or personal learning plans (PLPs), appears to have proven more problematic¹. Through the use of technology, however, it is felt that electronic ILPs have already made, and will continue to make a significant difference, not just to teachers and organisations in terms of recording, monitoring and tracking progress, but also to learners with regard to ownership of their learning. This is becoming particularly true with the development of e-portfolios to assist learners in gathering and storing evidence, and identifying prior learning.

The DfES 'The Learning Journey' shows a progressive learning cycle that is continually evolving using assessment that is inclusive of the learner. Click on the DLR to work through the Learning Journey.

Two key questions, regarding assessment and learning generally, can be extended to help us see the potential benefits of incorporating technology in this process.



How can technology support effective learning during and after assessment?

- Students can receive immediate formative feedback on their performance through technology.
- Assessment schedules can be built into packages to suit teaching and learning needs.
- Good e-assessment packages should make it clear to learners the purpose of the assessment and the criteria being measured against.
- Technology allows learners and teachers to review progress informally at any time, and can flag up periodic formal review meetings.

How can technology promote learner autonomy?

- Students can automatically see their strengths and weaknesses, and identify their needs through using technology.
- E-assessment can clarify for students the purpose of each learning activity.
- Technology can afford learners the opportunity to informally test their progress independently, and at their own pace.
- Formative e-assessment can give learners the opportunity to select their own learning materials.
- Technology allows learners to check their own progress and reflect on what they have done at any time.

A good example of interactive formative e-assessments can be found through the LSN **KeySkills4U.com** web link below.

TASKS

1. Find out if any colleagues are using initial/diagnostic e-assessment tools, and what they think of them. How do the tools stand up to the criteria and questions raised on this information sheet?
2. On the links below, you will find assessments and case studies of a variety of e-assessment packages. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of them. Would any of them suit your groups of learners? Again, use the criteria and questions cited on this information sheet as a starting point.
3. Have a look at the attached electronic initial assessment form (developed by Derby City Council Education Service) with some learners. What difference do they think it would make to their learning experience compared to paper-based versions? What do you think the strengths and weaknesses of it might be?

Initial and End of Course Assessment					
Centre:		Course name:		Course no:	Curriculum area no:
Tutor:			Learner:		
To be completed by the tutor			To be completed by the learner		
Learning Outcomes			Start of the course date:		End of the course date:
	understand and use it	need more practice to be competent	have had no experience of this before	understand and use it	need more practice to be competent

WEB LINKS

- LSN: 'Findings_from_an_Evaluation_of_Initial_Assessment_Materials' : <http://www.lsd.org.uk/files/pdf/2000015.PDF>
- LSN: Summary of the above Briefing_Paper: <http://www.keyskillssupport.net/teachinglearning/assessment/initialdiagnostic/tool.aspx>
- JISC: E-assessment Case Studies: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/E-assessmt_case_studies_update.doc
- Open University: E-assessment Roadmap <http://kn.open.ac.uk/public/index.cfm?wpid=4996>
- Open University: Interactive Assessment or Interactive Learning: What's the Difference? <http://kn.open.ac.uk/public/getfile.cfm?documentfileid=6812>
- LSN: Key Skills: <http://www.keyskills4u.com/>

CROSS REFERENCES TO OTHER INFORMATION SHEETS

- Unit 7