

# The Subject Learning Folder and its Application in Supporting the Training of 2nd Year Students in Self-Assessment Techniques

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## **Authors Declaration**

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Research Masters Degree in Education Studies is entirely my own work, that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the use of a newly devised Subject Learning Portfolio with incorporated resources aimed at developing student self-assessment skills. In addition the study was concerned with whether the portfolio had the potential to be beneficial as a teaching and learning tool across other subject domains.

The area of formative assessment is a complex area of educational theory. The Literature Review identifies how assessment definitions can diverge in terms of focus of student-controlled assessment. However the author supports the position as put forward by many in the educational arena; meaningful and truly effective assessment practise is centred in the classroom and it develops student ability to assess themselves and direct their own learning.

The author embarked on a process of action research to the backdrop of preparations for the implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework in her own school. The study found that the Subject Learning Portfolio was successful in developing self-assessment skills in the author's class group. The author recognises the critical role that the critical reflection and action process had in improving professional practice which has benefits for student learning.

However the portfolio did not transfer successfully across other subject domains which highlighted universal challenges to the introduction of new resources as well as the reforming of classroom assessment practice. The research concluded that time and effective training are instrumental in effecting real assessment change. What appeared to particularly critical however is teacher engagement with critical reflection and developing innovative approaches in their own professional practice.



## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

As an introduction to the study entitled, *The Subject Learning Folder and its application in supporting the training of 2nd year students in self-assessment techniques*, this chapter will begin with a brief introduction to the area of self-assessment theory as an over-arching aim of formative assessment. Next the rationale for the study will be explored. The context of the study will then be presented followed by a brief account of the research methodology employed. To conclude the structure of the thesis will be detailed.

### **1.2 Self-Assessment as the Overarching aim of Formative Assessment**

In 1998 Black and Wiliam published a review of studies which investigated the benefits of formative assessment approaches. In this review they linked formative assessment with student learning gains. This review highlighted the vast amount of research into the area of formative assessment and its benefits. The subsequent educational debate succeeded in highlighting to governments, policymakers and the wider educational community the potential of formative assessment to support and improve learning. Something critically important in a world where learning success and learning autonomy are closely related and very often equate to continued personal and professional success. Governments worldwide have been evaluating their educational systems on the basis of whether their overall assessment structure and prescribed assessment practices can be considered effective in supporting and improving learning in a continuous manner. In an Irish context, the well-documented lack of effective and on-going formative assessment practice in the classroom (NCCA 2001, 2005a, 2005b) has led to the provision for expansive reform of the junior cycle in the form of the new Junior Cycle Framework (DES 2012). There is a concerted attempt to bring assessment closer to learning in terms of passing responsibility for it to individual schools, teachers and students. This is in contrast to how arguably the most 'important' assessment was

traditionally carried out by examining boards away from where the learning was happening i.e. at the end of three year of the junior cycle.

Research into the benefits of formative assessment (Boud 1995, Kluger & De Nisi 1996, Black & Wiliam 1998a/b, ARG 1999, Black *et al.* 2003, Carless 2005, Clarke 2005, Popham 2006, Price 2008) has highlighted the need for an enhanced role for the student in controlling assessment on a continuous basis. The aim of the discussion presented in the Literature Review and in the thesis overall is to stress that an enhanced role is not sufficient. Where the role of the student is enhanced might not mean that it is prioritised above the role of the teacher. As self-assessment empowers students to guide their own learning and internalise the criteria for judging success (McMillan and Hearn 2008), developing the student's ability to monitor their own learning should be the primary aim of assessment (Sadler 1989, Boud 2005). Hence as the role of the student is foregrounded and the teacher may be seen to assume a role which facilitates learning as opposed to directing it. It is this aim which serves as the foundations for this study.

This shift in emphasis from the teacher to the student marks a considerable departure from traditional professional practice. It cannot be underestimated how challenging a process it is and will be to effect change of this nature. Training, time and arguably most importantly a positive attitude towards formative assessment and teaching and learning innovation on the part of all stakeholders are the crucial foundations upon which more effective teaching and learning can begin to develop.

### **1.3 Rationale for the Study**

My own experiences of learning have helped shape my educational values, in particular my learning experiences at third level. However my own experiences have been shaped not in terms of degree or teacher training certification but in terms of taking responsibility for and ownership of my learning and the resulting empowerment and learning confidence. However before the development of said success, I encountered serious learning challenges.

In the second year of an undergraduate degree I faced the dreadful prospect of dropping out of college. I had failed another German exam and success or failure of the repeat exam would undoubtedly have had serious consequences for my future. At a meeting

with my German lecturer to view and discuss my German exam paper, it was clear that considerable learning improvements were needed. When I then asked the lecturer "What should I do?", her response was simple "You must improve your German, everything you need is in the [course prescribed] text books". On leaving my lecturer's office that day, I felt fear to the point of nausea at the possibility of not completing my degree. However I also felt equal confusion, generated by the advice given to me by my lecturer. I knew her to be patient and friendly but she seemed 'unwilling' to provide me with detailed guidance on how to pass my German test. This appeared out of character for her and for what I knew of the role of her profession at that time, or what I thought I knew in any case. Was a lecturer's role not the same as a teacher's i.e. the person who holds all the information and deals it out as required for others to store and re-use?

Over the next few days, I was forced to reflect on and analyse what was going wrong, although at the time, I didn't realise they were the terms used for what I was doing. Poor attendance and completion of assignments had lead to underdeveloped language ability. However I studied for my language exams in the same way as all my exams: last minute cramming, rote learning and past exam practice. However meaningful learning was unattainable by sporadic rote learning and the answers from previous years' exams. As my German lecturer knowingly and rightly communicated - everything was in the books. I devised a study plan, gathered resources and started learning German from scratch.

The following October, as I sat waiting in a large lecture hall for a German university lecturer, I came to realise the significance of what I had achieved. Taking responsibility for and ownership of my learning in this way was empowering and lead to increased personal and learning confidence.

Following on from this, during my initial teacher training year I was exposed to a number of student-centred educational theories and in particular formative assessment or Assessment for Learning (AfL). As I engaged with and implemented techniques based on these theories I once again reflected on my German repeat exam experiences and just how significant a learning episode it was. In such a 'make or break' scenario as I had faced, how many other students would have managed to rise to the challenge? The need to equip students with the skills and confidence to direct and take ownership of their own learning throughout their schooling was more than apparent.

Nevertheless I witnessed significant tension between my educational values and my professional practice once I started qualified teaching. In order to establish myself as a credible authority in the 'well-managed' classroom, I remember employing many 'settling' activities i.e. activities that often required silence with no opportunity for the establishing of student-centred learning dialogue. I also wondered just how strictly I should follow prescribed text books. Where I did follow rigidly aligned subject content as presented in textbooks I noticed this left less scope for more interactive activities that might facilitate better student engagement and improved learning.

This tension and knowledge of the need to increase student's active engagement led me to develop many tailored resources, some effective and some less so. It was during my second year of teaching that the Subject Learning Folder began to take shape, which is now the subject of this study.

As crucially highlighted by the research literature, there is a need for an enhanced role for the student in controlling assessment on a continuous basis. Correspondingly, this study explored the use of a newly devised Subject Learning Folder with incorporated resources aimed at developing student self-assessment skill. In addition I was concerned with whether the Folder had the potential to be beneficial as a teaching and learning tool to other subjects. Thus the benefits and challenges to teacher and student participants were examined. The study is also particularly timely as Irish teachers and students will be facing educational challenges resulting from the implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework (2012).

The impetus to conduct this study came from a combination of a desire to continue to learn and innovate as well as an implicit and professional desire to help students in developing their own learning.

#### **1.4 Study Context**

The study was conducted over a two year period. Phase 1 of the study was an exploratory study which took place in St Joseph's College Lucan (all girls post-primary) and Drimnagh Castle, Drimnagh (all boys post-primary). There were two participant teachers involved in this part of the study; the teacher-researcher and 26 2<sup>nd</sup> year French students and an English teacher and 26 1<sup>st</sup> year students. Phase 2 of the study took place

exclusively in St Joseph's College Lucan (all girls post-primary) and all participant students were in 2<sup>nd</sup> year. There were five participant teachers involved in Phase 2 including the teacher-researcher. The subjects represented in this part of the study were French, German, Maths, History and Home Economics. Student group sizes varied from 19 - 29 students. Phase 2 of the study saw considerable amendment of the Folder resources based on data analysed from Phase 1. Briefly this amounted to an attempt to better understand and incorporate core AfL principles into the revised Folder resources.

## **1.5 Methodology**

The study entitled, *The Subject Learning Folder and its application in supporting the training of 2nd year students in self-assessment* aims to answer the questions:

- Can the use of the Subject Learning Folder facilitate the development of student self-assessment skills?
- Are there benefits and challenges to students?
- Are there benefits and challenges to teachers?
- How transferable are the resources across a variety of post-primary subjects?

This study employs an overarching Action Research framework in collecting and analysing data. The teacher-researcher was ultimately concerned with improving her own professional practice as well as evaluating whether the Folder intervention might be useful in improving practice for other teacher participants. As promoted by Elliott (2006, p.169), the nature of action research has at its core the "practical intention to realise educational values in action" (p. 169) and to form "practical insights and judgements". In terms of this study the emphasis was on the evaluation of genuine educational practice as it occurs.

Data collection was facilitated via the employment of baseline, follow-on and resource review questionnaires, a teacher focus group meeting, reflective commentary on implementation, semi-structured interviews and the evaluation of the Folder intervention resources.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**



In this section an overview of each chapter of the thesis will be presented.

### Chapter One

This chapter briefly details self-assessment theory, the rationale for the study, the context of the study, the research methodology employed and finally the structure of the thesis.

### Chapter Two

In Chapter Two a literature review relating to the core themes of this study is presented. An overview of assessment in its traditional sense and its current Irish and international context will be presented and discussed. The area of formative assessment in terms of its definition, its links with other fields of study, its core principles and key strategies as well as its relationship with summative assessment and resulting purposes of assessment will then be detailed. Following this relevant research in this area of assessment will be explored. Student self-assessment and its definition as the overarching aim of formative assessment is then discussed. This will lead to the presentation of relevant research in this area of assessment in order to highlight the benefits and challenges of student self-assessment. This section will conclude with resulting discussion based on the area of Continuing Professional Development and teacher ownership and innovation.

### Chapter Three

Chapter Three details the Research Methodology employed. To begin with an overview of the study in terms of the research questions, the timing, the context and the data collection will be given. The adopted methodology of Action Research will then be defined and discussed as well as the research questions. The study context and Folder intervention will then be described in greater detail along with data collection and employed tools as well as data analysis. The concluding sections of this chapter will then define and discuss the important areas of ethics, reliability and validity.

### Chapter Four

Chapter Four is the Data Analysis chapter. After a brief overview of data collection and n-values, the remainder of the chapter is broadly separated in two; the presentation and in-text discussion of data produced from Phase 1 and from Phase 2 of the study. Phase 1 and Phase 2 are discussed in terms of firstly the development of the Folder intervention and the outcomes of each stage. The outcomes are then discussed in

relation to the research questions. Briefly, data findings pointed to beneficial outcomes for the teacher-researcher's participant group. However there were issues with the transferability of the Folder across other subject domains.

## Chapter Five

In Chapter Five study findings based on analysis in Chapter Four are drawn together and discussed. Areas for further research are presented as well as recommendations for the key stake-holders in student learning are made. The thesis then concludes with closing comments by the teacher-researcher.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This literature review explores the nature of formative assessment and student self-assessment as the over-arching aim of formative assessment. This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the associated action research study.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, an overview of assessment will be given followed by discussion on purposes of assessment. Secondly, formative assessment theory and practice will then be explored. Example definitions and a theoretical framework will be presented. Irish and international perspectives on formative assessment will then follow. Key strategies will then be presented followed by exploration of formative assessment benefits and challenges. Thirdly, an overview of self-assessment as an all-encompassing form of formative assessment will be presented along with its theoretical framework, practical applications and benefits and challenges.

## **2.2 An Overview of Assessment**

What exactly is assessment and where does it belong in the teaching and learning continuum? Traditionally assessment policy and practice have been significantly influenced by high-stakes state exams. These exams are characterised as summative assessment which measures and summarises student learning mostly in the form of grades or marks. As defined by Taras (2009):

An assessment can be uniquely summative when the assessment stops at the judgement (p. 58).

These grades or marks or judgements do not provide the student with information that can be fed back into the learning process in order to make improvements. Due to the importance placed on these examinations, classroom assessment practice has traditionally reflected and reinforced this type of assessment. The preparation of students for summative exams which, for example, might take place at the end of a week, topic, chapter, term of study commonly takes the form of rote learning of subject content. With this approach to assessment, the teacher is central to teaching and learning and the student is to a large extent, dependent on the teacher. The effectiveness of this approach to teaching and learning as a means of best supporting student learning has been investigated and challenged by many in the worldwide educational community

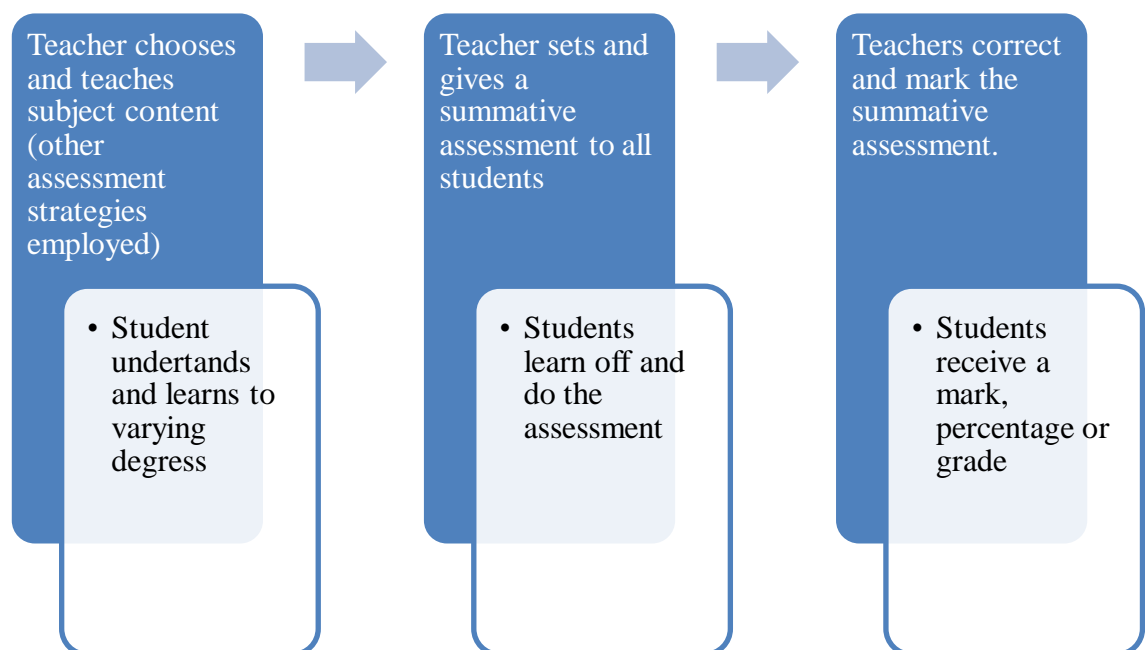
over recent decades (Ausubel 1968, Sadler 1989, Gipps 1994, Boud 1995, ARG 1999, Clarke 2005, NCCA 2005a/b, Heritage 2007).

The following definition of assessment by initial teacher education authors, Capel *et al.* (2005), can be seen to emphasise the importance of this 'measuring' purpose of assessment. They state:

Assessment covers all those activities which are undertaken by teachers and others to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning

(p. 301)

The centrality of the teacher's role is also stressed. This definition can be seen to possess elements of the traditional approach as highlighted as the beginning of this section. A brief illustration of this approach can be seen in Figure 2.1 below. The illustration also aims to highlight the relatively linear nature of a traditional teaching and learning approach. This is an approach which is strongly influenced by summative assessment and where teacher and student roles are mostly exclusive of each other.



**Fig. 2. 1 Traditional Linear Approach to Teaching and Learning**

Figure 2.1 highlights that although the traditional approach to teaching and learning ultimately leads to summative assessment, other assessment strategies which may also be present. Similarly, the Capel *et al.* definition similarly mentions that assessment involves a number of activities.

The following definition can be seen to elaborate further on what might be entailed with these other assessment activities. Here Black and Wiliam (1998b), indicate that assessment is formative when assessment activities produce information that can be used to 'adapt teaching to meet student needs'.

Assessment refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers- and by students in assessing themselves – that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Such assessment becomes *formative* assessment when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet student needs (1998b, p. 2).

This definition articulates the role of the student and the need for them to be involved in "assessing themselves". The requirement to "measure" learning is not mentioned however nor is it denied. A more cyclical assessment process is apparent where assessment activities produce information which then becomes feedback when it is fed back into the learning process. It is this activity of engaging with feedback to actively improve learning that is considered critical to improving learning and which is under investigation in this study. One issue with this definition however is that the impression is given that feedback is used to adapt teaching i.e. the teacher controls the use of feedback. Consequently this definition can be described as still emphasising the centrality of the teacher in some way. Optimal enhancement of learning comes where students learn to produce and manipulate feedback for themselves (Sadler 1989). This is facilitated where teachers learn to 'let go of the reigns' of assessment control in favour of developing student assessment control (Hall and Kavanagh 2002). This concept will be further elucidated in terms of the final definition to follow.

In 2009, Black and Wiliam revised their earlier definition as follows:

Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited (p. 9).

An interpretation of this definition could be that the role of the teacher has been diluted in favour of the fore-grounding of the role of students. In comparison to the earlier definition, feedback is no longer described as being the sole control of the teacher. The student is also part of overall "decisions about the next steps in instruction".

The requirement that effective assessment should be on-going and supportive of learning is echoed throughout the educational assessment literature (Ausubel 1968,

Sadler 1989, Gipps 1994, Boud 1995, ARG 1999, Clarke 2005, NCCA 2005a/b, Heritage 2007). Variance does exist though in relation to the role and level of control a student has in the assessment process and this issue will be dealt with in more detail in Section 2.4 and 2.5.

### **2.3 Purposes of Assessment: Formative and Summative Assessment compared and contrasted**

The two principal forms of assessment have often been distinguished in simple terms; summative assessment measures learning and formative assessment supports and improves learning. Here two separate purposes of assessment can be discerned.

Summative assessment used for the purposes of measuring learning in the form of certification, for example, is still of considerable importance to an educational system. Taking the Irish educational system as an example, reforms at junior cycle level are currently being piloted (DES 2012). These reforms recommend extensive implementation and employment of formative assessment. Nonetheless the reforms do not seek to replace summative assessment. It still serves the purpose of certification at the end of the three year junior cycle.

Although it can be considered that there exists two overall purposes of assessment of measuring learning and supporting learning, the assessment literature identifies many other purposes. To illustrate this, a selection of sources (Black 1998, Pellegrino *et al.* 2001, Capel *et al.* 2005, Newton 2007, Harris and Brown 2009, Boud 2010) have been used to compile a summary of current assessment purposes, as seen below in Table 2.1. As well as highlighting the various purposes of assessment, this table aims to briefly illustrate the unclear boundaries between formative and summative assessment.

Table 2.1 illustrates that certain assessment purposes can be clearly characteristic of either summative or formative assessment. Moreover clear characteristics of one form of assessment might also potentially be characteristic of the alternative form of assessment.

**Table 2. 1 Purposes of Assessment: Which are characteristic of Formative and Summative Assessment**

	Characteristic	Characteristic
--	----------------	----------------

<b>Purpose of Assessment</b>	<b>of formative assessment?</b>	<b>of summative assessment?</b>
Certification	Potentially	Yes
Accountability	Potentially	Yes
Motivation	Yes: for most students	Yes: for some students
Monitoring student Progress	Yes	Potentially
Monitoring Teaching	Potentially	Potentially
Comparing Student Achievement	Potentially	Yes
Classification of Students	Potentially	Yes
Informing Lesson Planning	Yes	Potentially
Supporting Learning	Yes	Potentially
Highlighting Learning Weaknesses/Strengths	Yes	Potentially
Providing Opportunity for Effective Feedback	Yes	Potentially
Acknowledging effort	Yes	Potentially
Fostering life-long Learning	Yes	Potentially

Examples as highlighted by Table 2.1 are discussed below based on their primarily referred-to purpose.

#### Certification:

Where a course of study has been completed, official certification is awarded detailing a student's achievement. Traditionally the details provided have been in the form of summative marks or grades. Once again, the educational reforms in Ireland at junior cycle can be used as an example. Schools will be required to provide certification which provides richer information on achievement, based on both summative and formative assessment (DES 2012).

#### Accountability

The information on student achievement used to report to third parties, such as, parents, school management, school boards and government bodies is primarily given in the form of summative marks or grades. This information can be used to hold teachers, school and government bodies accountable for their professional performance. However learning evidence gathered from continuous formative assessment might also be used as an integrated or separate component of a final mark or grade.

#### Classification:

Summative marks or grades resulting from standardised testing are traditionally used to classify student achievement against the achievements of other learners. This classification happens within teaching groups, year groups or more widely such as nationally or internationally. This information may be used to set/band students into groups of similar ability. There is the possibility however that formative assessment information could be used alongside these marks or grades to classify students in future.

#### Supporting Learning, Providing Opportunity for Effective Feedback & Fostering Life-long Learning:

The purposes listed here are implicit in the definition of formative assessment. However traditional summative assessment activities might also function or be reflected upon formatively. For example, in addition to receiving a mark or grade, time might also be given to the evaluation of areas of learning strength and areas for learning improvement with time and guidance being provided for the improvement of learning. This activity would thus support learning and provide an opportunity for effective feedback. Hence gaps in learning are not 'swept under the carpet' and can be dealt with by students and teachers before moving on.

Teachers might also provide students with the opportunity to do pre-tests in order to diagnose areas where further revision might be needed. Another example is the use of mini-white board tests where students may present answers to the teacher one at a time in a whole class situation. On viewing the students' responses, the teacher informs the student to what extent their answer is correct. This information may be useful in preventing the student from making similar mistakes in later questions and thus allowing for real-time learning improvements. In relation to the purpose of 'fostering life-long learning', if students are taught skills on how to better prepare themselves for and reflect independently on summative assessments, this too might be considered a possible characteristic of summative assessment.

In relation to overall purpose, the nature of formative assessment is that it is present early on in the learning process, for example, in the form of the sharing of learning objectives, learning outcomes, effective task criteria and prior learning discussion. Next it can support the student's efforts in understanding, internalising and retaining information where effective task criteria are used by the student and teacher to monitor and evaluate task completion and success. Moreover, the student can be encouraged to investigate the relationship new information has to previously learnt information, reflect



on progress and deal with learning gaps in real time. However summative assessment that serves purely a summative purpose often takes place separate to this process. This type of assessment happens after the learning has happened and often in a more formal and pressurised environment e.g. class tests and end-of year exams etc. that call for a considerable amount of rote learning.

To sum up a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of both forms of assessment is required in order utilize both forms of assessment in a way that supports teaching and learning on an ongoing basis.

## **2.4 Formative Assessment**

The following section aims to present and discuss example formative assessment definitions building on definitions presented in Section 2.2. The theoretical foundations and practical applications of formative assessment will then be presented and discussed.

### **2.4.1 An Overview of Formative Assessment**

Michael Scriven (1967, cited in Bennett 2011) is cited as originally coining the term, formative assessment. In the context of Curriculum Design, he described how information was used either as an appraisal of a curriculum's worth while there was still time to make amendments, or as an overall appraisal of the final version of a curriculum. This concept was further adapted by Benjamin Bloom in 1968 in the book *Learning for Mastery* in relation to making improvements to student learning as it occurs (cited in Bennett 2011). Later in the 1980s, Sadler (1989) emphasised the necessity of feedback and student self-assessment in formative assessment.

The concept of formative assessment is expanded upon by Otero (2006, cited in Baroudi 2007) who proposes a theory-based model of formative assessment grounded in Vygotsky's theory of concept formation. She explains that a student's knowledge consists of the transformation of formal academic concepts into experienced-based concepts. For her:

Recognizing, describing, and using students' prior knowledge in instruction is the formative assessment process (p. 38).

Here we can see that the definition provided by Otero develops the concept that learning starts even before the teaching has begun. However, once again, the level of student active involvement is neither emphasized nor discernible.

The concept that continued learning is built upon successful prior learning is also echoed in a definition formulated by the Assessment Reform Group's, *Assessment for Learning: 10 Principles* (2002):

Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

Here the learner and teacher work together to interpret what learning has taken place, what learning is envisaged and what needs to be done to close the learning gap. The learner is seen as having, at the very least, equal responsibility in the assessment process.

As a final definition Sadler (1989) considers formative assessment as follows:

Formative assessment is concerned with how judgments about the quality of student responses (performances, pieces, or works) can be used to shape and improve the student's competence by short-circuiting the randomness and inefficiency of trial-and-error learning (p. 120).

For assessment to be considered formative, assessment "judgements" are used to improve student's "competence". However as touched upon in Section 2.2, the issue of where control lies within assessment cannot be discerned from this definition. This definition by Sadler does not seek to strictly define the role of the teacher and the student; there is a conscious lack of reference to whom should be providing these assessment judgements. They could presumably come from either teacher and/or student.

Although this section only briefly details the definitional issue of formative assessment, it is quite clear that it has been and continues to be the subject of much debate. For the purposes of this study, the pivotal area of the student's role and control of assessment will be further discussed in the Section 2.5 on Student Self-Assessment.

### 2.4.2 A Theoretical Framework for Formative Assessment

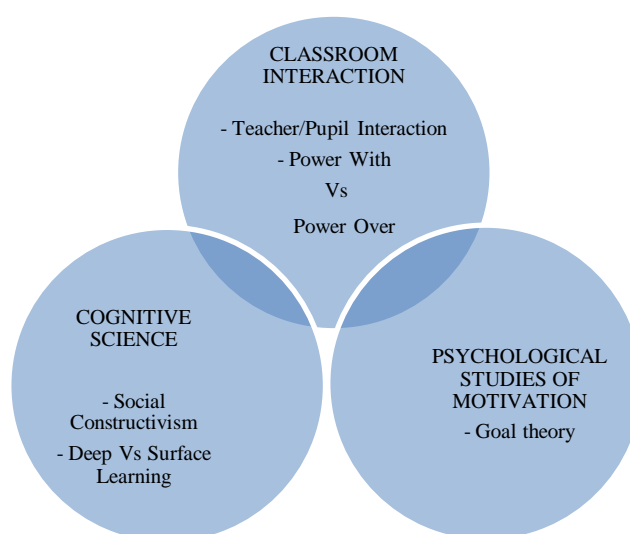
As previously mentioned, formative assessment remains to be clearly defined. Nonetheless, at all times it is defined on the basis that if carried out effectively it supports and improves student learning. If this is to be believed, an account of its theoretical foundations is required. To this end, Sadler (1998) stresses that:

Theoretically or practically desirable practices need to be informed by an adequate conceptualisation of what is supposed to be going on (p. 79).

To begin with, the research of Torrance and Pryor (1998) is noteworthy. Their study, *Teacher Assessment at Key Stage 1: Accomplishing Assessment in the Classroom* explored and developed formative assessment practices, consciously backed up by theoretical discussion. They identified three distinct fields of study from which to draw insight in exploring formative assessment theory:

1. Classroom Interaction Studies
2. Cognitive Science
3. Psychological Studies of Motivation

They maintained that it was the "juxtaposition of insights" (p. 20) (as detailed in Fig. 2.2 below) deriving from these different fields of study that afforded formative assessment its justification and potential.



**Fig. 2. 2 Formative Assessment Theory: Links to other fields of study (bases on Torrance & Prior, 1998)**

## 1. Classroom Interaction Studies

Within the field of classroom interaction studies, Torrance and Pryor present that the linguistic interaction between pupil and teacher can be complex. Along with the explicit messages exchanged, implicit messages in these interactions communicate social relationships and social construction of knowledge. The researchers cite the work of Kreisberg (1992), who makes the distinction between *coercive power* and *collaborative power*. More simply put, teachers can consciously select language which encourages balanced, cooperative and collaborative dialogue between students and teachers. This fosters an atmosphere in the classroom where a teacher is seen to have *power with* the student as opposed to *power over* the student, as Kreisberg describes. He maintains that this is important in developing a more secure and supportive learning environment.

## 2. Psychological Studies of Motivation

Psychological studies of motivation, in particular the work of Carol Dweck (2000) is also cited by Torrance and Pryor as an area from which formative assessment derives insight. The psychologist Carol Dweck conducted, along with associates, extensive research in the area of learning motivation theory and goal orientation. She distinguishes between students with *learning goals* and those with *performance goals*. In brief, students with learning goal orientation:

- Choose more challenging tasks regardless of possible outcome,
- Mostly believe increased effort leads to success,
- Generate strategies for mastering tasks and remain relatively unaffected by failure in terms of self-esteem.

Students with performance goal orientation:

- Avoid challenge where they doubt their ability,
- Self-handicap as an excuse for failure,
- Mostly believe level of success relates to level of fixed ability or fixed intelligence,
- Attribute difficulty to low fixed ability
- Become upset or anxious when faced with failure.

She has found that the use of formative assessment strategies can foster learning goal orientation in students. She mentions strategies such as collaborative work, the setting of personal learning goals based on improving previous levels of performance and the assessment of performance against set criteria. According to her research, in order to see on-going increases in achievement it is vital to foster this type of goal orientation. She adds that it is also vital to develop learning and personal confidence by focusing on the discovery of what exactly is causing lack of success and the subsequent closing of this learning gap through directed effort.

### 3. Cognitive Science

Within the field of Social Constructivism Psychology, Torrance and Pryor present the work of the Russian educational psychologist Lev Vygotsky. He developed the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development i.e. the difference between what a student can do independently and what they can do with the support of others. Vygotsky's (1978) research has shown that when students talk about their thinking as it emerges, thinking itself is developed and learning is reinforced. Accordingly Torrance and Pryor maintain that two-way assessment dialogue between teacher and student and/or student and student can support and improve learning.

The researchers also cite the work of Marton *et al.* (1984, cited in Torrance and Pryor 1998) on *surface* and *deep* learning approaches. In summary, *surface* learning is characteristic of students who try to learn in order to repeat what they have learned, who employ rote learning predominantly, who take a narrow view and concentrate on detail and who fail to distinguish principles from examples. *Deep* learning is characteristic of students who actively seek to understand information, who engage effectively with tasks and information, who relate areas of learning to one another and who relate learning and concepts to everyday life. Furthermore, the researchers detail that student learning approaches can depend on the circumstances a student finds themselves in and can be influenced by predominant approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom (Marton & Säljö 1976a/b). Further presented by Torrance and Pryor is the estimation that *deep* learning approaches can support and improve learning by allowing students greater control over their learning.

So as Torrance and Pryor have presented here, an effective formative assessment process is not only defined by when assessment takes place and who is involved. A particular learning environment or culture is vital to the effective engagement of

students with all learning activities. One must understand the importance of many different issues:

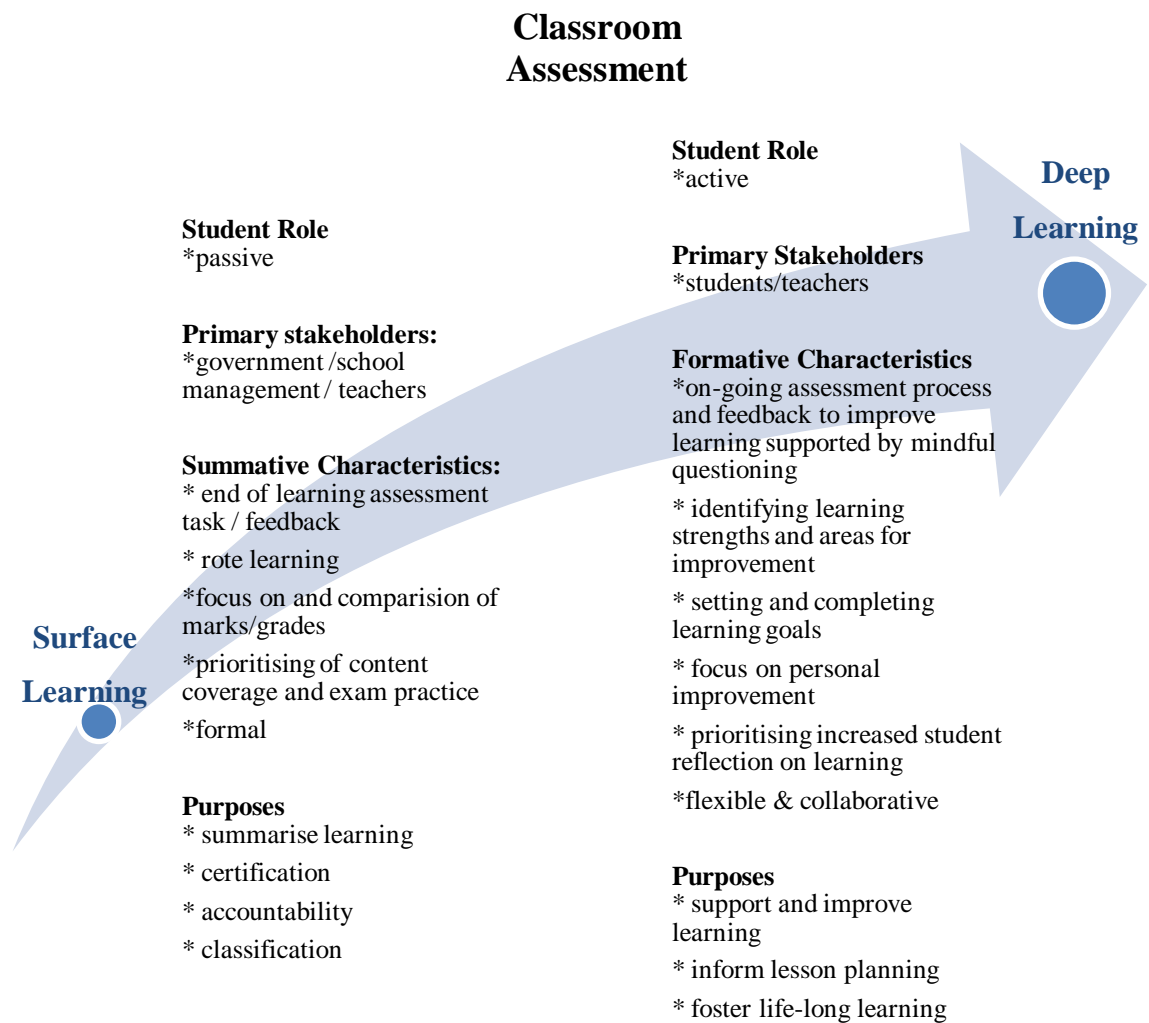
- Focused and mindful questioning.
- Fostering a cooperative balance of assessment control.
- Two-way learning dialogue between teacher and student and/or student and student.
- Focusing on the understanding of as opposed to the short-term recall of information.
- Guiding students to set themselves learning goals as opposed to performance goals.

Paying due attention to the above areas can thus be said to develop more effective learners. These learners could be said to possess a self-affirming confidence in their own ability. They know they face learning that will challenge them yet they welcome future learning opportunities and do not easily give up in the face of difficulty.

It is important to stress that assessment methods which could be described as formative have always been employed in classrooms. For example, the simple and informal activity of helping a student through a task, then providing them with feedback on their level of achievement and guidance on how to improve can be described as formative assessment. However whether or not such activity can be described as part of an integrated and ultimately effective formative assessment process which is embedded in a supportive and collaborative teaching and learning culture is another matter. For example in their research into attitudes to, understandings of and consensus on assessment at primary level in Ireland, Hall and Kavanagh (2002) detailed how teachers they interviewed considered that the single most important purpose of assessment was to "provide information about pupil learning so future learning steps can be effectively planned" (p. 265). Participant teachers in this study recognised 'assessment' as being the full range of activities undertaken in the classroom "to establish what children know, understand and can do" (p. 265). Nevertheless teachers' use of such 'formative assessment' activities were primarily seen as a means of adjusting and directly their own teaching activities. Teachers did not talk about including students in controlling and directing assessment and their learning. In addition the recording and reporting of 'formative' assessment evidence was lacking in contrast to the systematic recording of summative test results used to report to others and to comparing student learning. Hall

and Kavanagh concluded that to a large extent assessment information tended to reside in teachers' heads and did not provide evidence that could be readily shared with and used by the student. As Brown *et al.* (1997, cited in Price M., 2008) stress, it is the type of assessment that defines what students regard as important and this directly affects how they learn. However in contrast to this, this study aims to draw out this assessment information in order for it to be more freely and purposefully wielded by students as well as teachers.

In an attempt to draw together information presented in this section and Section 2.3 on the purposes of assessment, Figure 2.3 below illustrates the varied characteristics of classroom assessment. The more the classroom learning culture strives towards formative assessment characteristics and purposes the more deep learning is facilitated and fostered.



**Fig. 2.3 Classroom Assessment: Synthesising summative assessment with a formative assessment process**

In the upcoming Section 2.4.4 on formative assessment strategies, the characteristics presented above will be further elucidated and discussed.



### 2.4.3 Irish and International Perspectives on Formative Assessment and Assessment Reform

Assessment reforms worldwide are striving to foster a more formative, supportive and collaborative teaching and learning culture in the classroom. An OECD publication entitled *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms* (2005) highlights examples of exemplary assessment practice from secondary schools in Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Scotland, Queensland in Australia and New Zealand. This section will now take a brief look at how the educational systems in a selection of these countries promote formative assessment as a core component of education and educational reform. The Irish educational system will then be discussed in the context current junior cycle reforms to be implemented nationally in 2014.

#### New Zealand

Formative assessment is given clear priority in the New Zealand curriculum at primary and secondary level (Crooks 2011). For example the primary school curriculum states (Ministry of Education, 2007 cited in Crooks 2011):

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching as both student and teacher respond to the information that it provides (p 38).

This student-centred position in the context of system-wide assessment is also further reinforced by the Ministry for Education's position paper *Directions for Assessment in New Zealand* (Absolum et al. 2009, cited in Crooks 2011). It stresses that:

all young people should be educated in ways that develop their capacity to assess their own learning. Students who have well developed assessment capabilities are able and motivated to access, interpret, and use information from quality assessment in ways that affirm or further their learning (p 5).

Here all aspects of the student's education should involve developing their capacity to self-assess. Resulting from this position, primary schooling for example is often characterised by relatively unstructured interaction between student and student or teacher and student rather than planned formal assessment. Teachers would spend a good degree of their time moving around their class, monitoring and guiding students.

At secondary school level students amass credits for the purposes of school-leaving certification i.e. National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEAs). Specified

credit values are assigned to learning standards. More established subjects are broken down into Achievement Standards with one failing level (not achieved) and three passing levels (achieved, merit, excellence). In addition there are Unit Standards which are used for vocational subjects or subjects that fall outside the National Curriculum. They are assessed at a pass or fail level (achieved / not achieved). More than half of the Achievement Standards and all Unit Standards are internally assessed within schools. The national Ministry for Education requires the external moderation of at least 10% of internally assessed standards (Ministry of Education New Zealand 2013)

Since 1995 considerable resources have been devoted to assessment-focused continuing professional development, usually involving two years of professional development support at a time for individual schools. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes have focussed on the development of individual teachers' assessment for learning strategies as well as the use and moderation of assessment data collaboratively by groups of teachers.

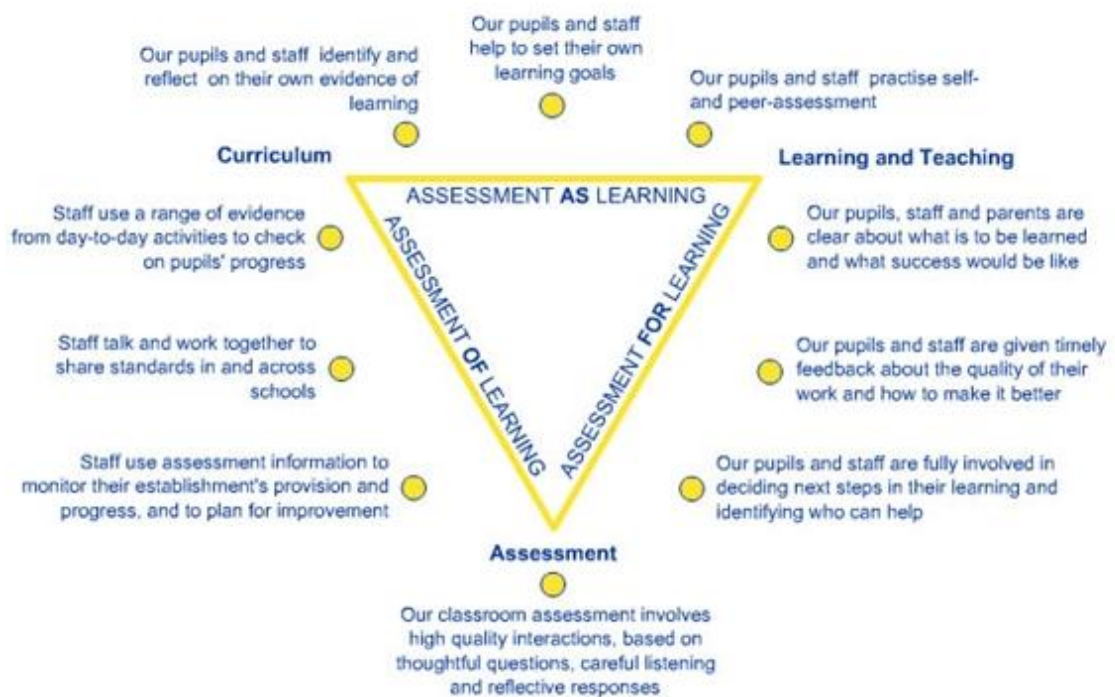
### Finland

Finland has high levels of educational achievement and attainment (Stahlberg 2010, Hendrickson, 2012). It is a top-scoring nation in the international Programme for Student Assessment (PISA). However in terms of Finland's national assessment structure, students are subject to far less high-stakes testing than students in other countries. Finnish students do not take a national, high-stakes, standardised test until they graduate from secondary school when they intend to enter third level education (Hendrickson, 2012). The Finnish National Board of Education (2013) emphasises on their website that assessment is "encouraging and supportive by nature" as well as "student-orientated". Consequently "national testing, school ranking lists and inspection systems do not exist". In addition teaching quality is increased by the requirement that all teachers possess a master's degree. Internal assessment and moderation are also strong features of the Finnish educational system where school and teachers enjoy a large amount of autonomy.

In order to encourage a supportive and collaborative teaching and learning culture the National Curriculum encourages cooperation and helpfulness over inter-student competitiveness. Overall the assessment system in Finland is based around improving instruction and learning and the majority of the assessment is formative (Hendrickson 2012).

## Scotland

Since 2002 Scottish educational policy has sought to constructively align all purposes of assessment while foregrounding the learning needs of students (Hutchinson and Young, 2011). Implementation of the national assessment development programme Assessment is for Learning (AifL) began in 2002. This programme sought to align assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment as learning. Sharing of criteria, effective questioning and feedback are considered component parts of Assessment as Learning (Clark 2011). Figure 2.4 below aims to illustrate below how the various stakeholders in education have their role to play in an effective assessment process. In particular the role of the student is fore-grounded in terms of being fully involved in directing their learning.



**Fig. 2. 4 AifL Triangle**  
(Source: Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2004)

The AifL programme describes all stakeholders such as students, educational staff, parents and the wider educational community as learners. The programme encourages these stakeholders to use information from assessment as feedback to inform planning for learning improvements (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2004). There is an emphasis on the building of learning communities such as collaborative student learning communities in the classroom as well as teacher and school communities to facilitate assessment moderation and learning innovation (Hutchinson and Young 2011).

## Ireland

In an Irish context, assessment policy and practice have been significantly influenced by two high-stakes state exams which take place during secondary education - the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate (Looney, 2007). Both of these exams are characterised as summative examinations, where student learning in the form of subject content knowledge is tested and quantified at the end of a learning period i.e. at the end of three junior years for the Junior Certificate and at the end of two to three senior years for the Leaving Certificate. The grades or marks resulting from these examinations do not provide the student or teacher with information that can be fed back into the learning process in order to make improvements. However due to the importance placed on these examinations in an Irish context, summative assessment has been foregrounded ahead of formative assessment practices (Hall and Kavanagh, 2002). The preparation of students for summative exams which, for example, might take place at the end of a week, topic, chapter, term of study commonly takes the form of rote learning of subject content (Looney 2007). In this approach to assessment, the teacher is central to teaching and learning and the student is to a large extent, dependent on the teacher.

The Irish educational research community and government policy makers have recognised for a time now that real assessment reform is needed (See for example: Hall and Kavanagh 2002, NCCA 2005a/b, Looney 2007, Jones and O'Brien 2011, NCCA 2011, Sugrue 2011, Concannon-Gibney and Murphy 2012, DES 2012). Work by the National Curriculum and Assessment Authority (NCCA) into the provision for curriculum and assessment reforms involved the studying of international educational systems (NCCA 2011). Many effective features of international educational systems - some are detailed above - have been adopted and are features of the new Junior Cycle Framework. In 2014 the implementation of these reforms on a phased basis will begin with the adoption of a new English 'specification' in place of the former Junior Certificate curriculum. In the forward to *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (2012) the Department for Education and Skills emphasises the critical role formative assessment has to play in improving learning experiences and outcomes for students:

We must ensure that assessment becomes a key part of teaching and learning across the three years of junior cycle and provides high quality feedback to students and parents. The opportunities for such approaches to assessment are even greater in situations where assessment is no longer high-stakes.[...]Students

rather than examinations will be at the centre of the new approach to assessment (p v-vi).

The need for the development of low-stakes classroom assessment is equally prioritised. In practice the reforms will see core learning across the curriculum described by 24 Statements of Learning. The skills of Literacy and Numeracy as well as five Key Skills are also given priority in terms of what and how students learn. Schools will be able to decide what combination of subjects, short courses, Priority Learning Units (directed at students with Special Educational Needs) or other learning experiences will be provided during the three years of junior cycle. The Junior Certificate Examination will be replaced by a school-based model of assessment which will be internally moderated and certified mostly. A form of assessment, for example an exam paper or assignment, worth 60% of the junior cycle mark will take place at the end of the three years - there is the scope for variations in weighting however. The remainder of the mark, 40%, will be based on evidence of student learning from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

These are indeed ambitious reforms and there is potential for effective change which will improve teaching and learning. The area of teacher CPD is crucial. *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (2012) stresses that:

teachers will receive comprehensive professional development in educational assessment, including processes of moderation, and providing feedback to students (p 26).

However at this point it is not possible to tell how well these reforms will be implemented.

More recently, the Department of Education and Skills has established a new dedicated support service for schools in implementing the new Junior Cycle Framework, Junior Cycle for Teachers - JCT - (2013). A brief one-page circular was sent to all secondary schools in October 2013, summarising the vision for CPD provision. JCT states:

A variety of CPD models will be employed both on and off-site and a multi-faceted approach will be adopted to help promote professional dialogue and the sharing of experience.

This vision indeed broadly reflects the concept of effective CPD as detailed above. No doubt however the implementing of this vision will be a challenging process. In terms of effecting assessment reform the promotion of a culture of ongoing professional dialogue, sharing of professional experience and fostering of innovation is critical. The

building of teacher learning communities has been emphasised in other educational systems as a core component of effective CPD, as in the Scottish example above. This could be considered a stable platform on and from which to reflect on actual practice and to take action, even collaboratively, to improve professional practice (Hutchinson and Young 2011).

The provision of effective CPD for teachers and principals is a critical issue in exacting effective change and will be returned to in Section 2.4 of this chapter as well as Chapter 4 and 5.

#### **2.4.4 Formative Assessment Strategies**

As highlighted in Section 2.4.2, a certain kind of teaching and learning culture is required to support and improve learning. Under these conditions lies greater potential for formative assessment to enhance teaching and learning. Formative assessment strategies must then reflect the characteristics of this kind of learning environment. The current section will detail formative assessment strategies as described in the literature and will further discuss their relationship to the fields of study detailed in Section 2.4.2.

##### Learning Objectives and Task Assessment Criteria

Often it can be difficult for teachers to describe what they are looking for when it comes to the outcomes of a task even though they may have no difficulty in recognising a good performance from a student's response. Sadler (1989) emphasised that often teachers' ideas of quality go largely unexpressed - this can only lead to overdependence on the teacher to direct and confirm learning and thus fostering a *shallow* learning approach in students. Noteworthy here is the work of Chris Rust *et al.* (2003) on the concept of tacit knowledge, a concept which was originally formalised by the polymath Michael Polanyi (Rust, 2004). They maintain that the transferring of knowledge to others can be difficult to articulate and consequently 'go missing' from the final communication. They describe such missing knowledge as *tacit*. This knowledge is internal, hard to formalise and deeply rooted in action. As a result, knowledge of this kind is experience-based and can only be revealed through the sharing of processes involving "observation, imitation, dialogue and practice" (p. 152). As a result they consider the articulating, presenting and interaction with tacit knowledge in the form of the sharing of assessment criteria and

processes, of vital importance. This concept can also support the adding of weight to the balance of assessment control in favour of the student. Established formative assessment strategies promote the sharing and understanding of learning objectives and the elucidating of task criteria. This in turn provides a framework for the sharing and modelling of learning outcomes. These three processes of sharing objectives, sharing criteria and modelling allow students to take a more active role in their learning. When a student has a clear perception of what is to be learnt during a class, he/she can follow and use criteria for achieving a learning outcome. It is also important that task criteria and outcome models or samples do not corral a student towards a predetermined learning outcome. Task criteria and modelling should support them in their learning and task completion but also allow scope for personal choice and creativity. A student's learning success is then discussed in relation to task criteria. Students are thus able to have their own learning progression confirmed on a class by class basis as well as at the end of a unit of learning such as a chapter, term or academic year. This also helps focus a student on the process of performing a task well for the purposes of learning progression as opposed to focusing on marks or grades. The effective employment of task criteria and corresponding feedback take a central role in this study.

### Effective Learning Dialogue

Often it can be the case in classrooms that students are the passive recipients of information that the teacher must impart. The pressure of curricular coverage can take time away from the pivotal practice of assessing where exactly students are in their learning and reacting accordingly (Ausubel, 1968). To this end, genuine two-way interaction with teachers and peers is essential. Knowledge can be more effectively understood and internalised when students are encouraged to understand how they learn and not just what they learn. Involving students in more active and reflective discussion also allows them to take greater ownership of their learning. Linguistic interaction in the classroom all too often focuses on the predefined and linear questioning of students in order to elicit established facts specific to the subject domain (Clarke 2005). Consequently questions can often take a 'closed' form where answers are categorised as strictly right or wrong. Also questions can be formed on the basis of that which is easiest to assess within the time constraints of a questioning episode. This greatly restricts the type of information and richness of response. Moreover students may aim to provide teachers with 'what they want to hear' as opposed to exploring their own

understanding of a topic. In order for a more productive learning dialogue to occur, formative assessment promotes the use of strategies such as:

- Increasing wait time: On employing this strategy, Black *et. al.* (2003) reported that teachers initially feared unbearable silence, kids switching off and misbehaving but with time students produced more thoughtful answers.
- 'No hand up': Here there is the expectation that all students must formulate an answer and may be called on to provide a response.
- 'Talking partners': A number of students share and explain current learning to each other in order to gain greater understanding and reinforce information already learnt. As mentioned previously, Vygotsky's research has shown that when students talk about their thinking as it emerges, thinking itself is developed and reinforced.
- Higher order thinking enquiry: Simple recall questions are replaced with questions that require students to analyse, synthesise and evaluate information. The application of elements of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom *et al.*, 1956) which classifies a cognitive hierarchy of questioning is helpful here.
- Problem solving: Students can collaboratively explore their own understanding of a topic and develop personal ingenuity and creativeness that otherwise closed predefined questioning might not support.
- Creating a supportive climate: Where a teacher fosters supportive and sensitive learning discussion amongst everyone in the class. Teachers are mindful not to respond critically of incorrect answers so that students feel safe in expressing themselves. They also use shared learning objectives and task criteria to guide and elicit evidence of students learning.

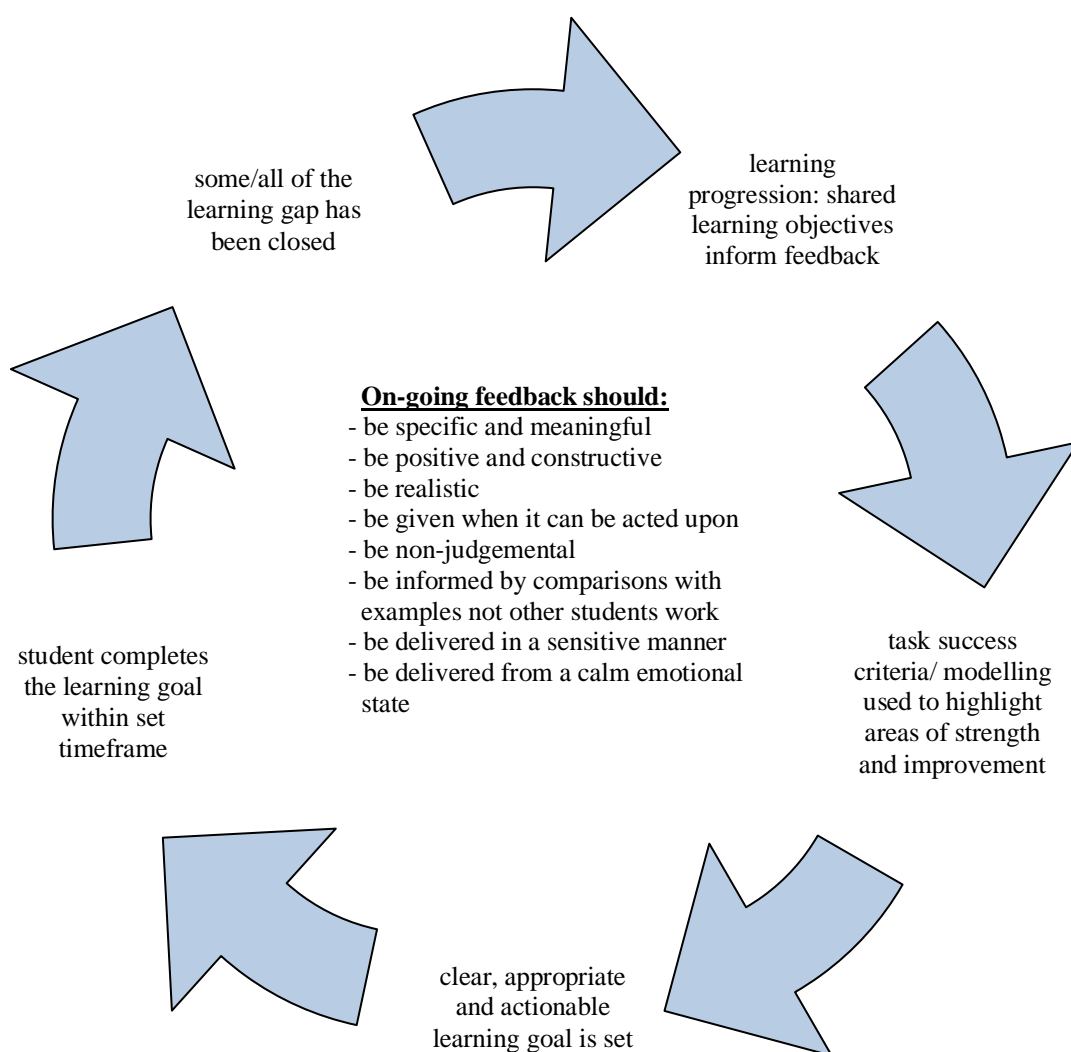
#### On-going feedback that moves learning forward

As Sadler (1989) noted, teacher judgements on the quality of students' work can be accurate but the resulting feedback does not necessarily support and improve learning. Feedback in the form of a single summary mark or grade lacks the appropriate information on where a student's learning strengths and areas for improvement lie and thus cannot move learning forward. Feedback in the form of vague and judgemental language e.g. 'fair attempt - must try harder' or 'good - keep it up', also lacks the potential for moving learning forward. These can be considered summative comments, as is with the case of solitary grades and marks they do not provide information that can



be used to improve learning. Moreover they can often be interpreted, however erroneously, as the teacher's personal opinion of the student as well as the student's work. This can have a negative impact on student learning as well as learning and personal confidence. Clarke (2005) warns that the traditional forms of feedback in the form of marks, grades and vague comments have in many cases led to regression in students' progress as they reinforce *performance goal* motivations (Dweck, 2000).

In order for feedback to be effective, the concept of a learning loop (Sadler 1989) which directly informs the content of on-going feedback, should be kept in mind. This loop also highlights assessment as a process as opposed to an intermittent activity, detached from teaching and learning as detailed in Section 2.2.



**Fig. 2. 5 The AfL Cycle: Closing the learning gap using effective feedback**

This AfL Cycle (Fig. 2.5) has been devised by the author with Sadler's concept in mind and also draws on a summary of advice given by Boud (1995) on the delivery of feedback. The figure illustrates how on-going feedback should be linked to effective learning progression. This involves the sharing of learning objectives through to the sharing of task criteria and task outcome modelling. Feedback received up to this point informs how areas for learning improvement can be handled in order to close the learning gap. Follow-on learning goals should be clear - in the same way that task success criteria are. They should be appropriate to each student's individual areas for learning improvement and should also be actionable i.e. the goal should be a task that the individual student is capable of carrying out, yet is challenging enough to move learning forward. On effective completion the learning gap should be closed. Simultaneously feedback should help foster the type of supportive environment that is conducive to effective learning, as described in the previous section and as highlighted in Figure 2.3.

As detailed above in Section 2.4.2, these characteristics can encourage cooperative discussion and engagement. This is important in developing a more supportive, collaborative and thus effective teaching and learning.

In order for feedback to effectively inform and support learning as a part of formative assessment, the use of strategies such as the following, are important (Clarke, 2005):

- comment-only assessment
- grading sparingly and/or keeping some marks only for recording purposes
- comparing work clearly against task success criteria
- effective oral questioning
- focusing on the strengths of a piece of work first with the highlighting of an area for improvement e.g. 'two stars and a wish'
- student-directed feedback: peer- and self-assessment

All of the above strategies aim to encourage a student's willingness to identify learning strengths and to address learning needs. Moreover when consistently employed throughout a student's schooling, it would be hoped that this approach to learning would become habitual to the student. This could then lead to an ability to take more responsibility for managing their own learning. (The final bullet-point above detailing student-directed feedback will be discussed in detail in Section 2.5 on Self-Assessment.)

To conclude, in terms of how formative assessment strategies are presented in the literature, an overarching illustration of the structure of formative assessment or Assessment for Learning (AfL) as devised by Thompson and Wiliam (2007) is useful at this point (Fig. 2.6).

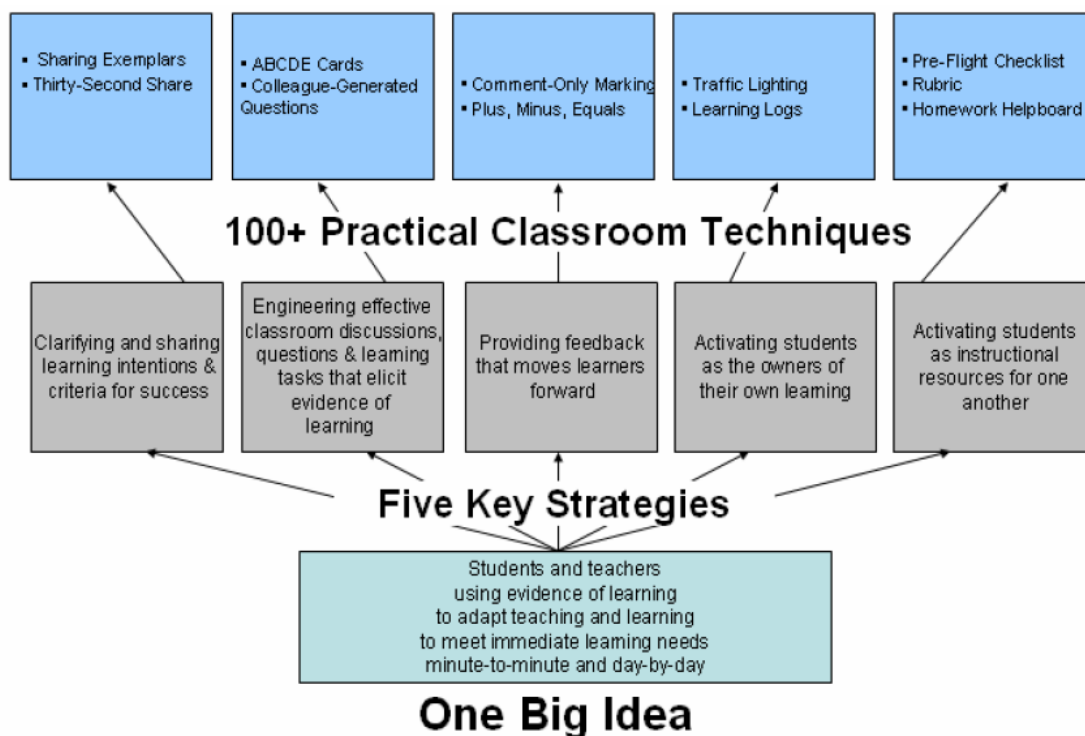


Fig. 2. 6 The Structure of AfL (Source: Thompson and Wiliam, 2007, p10)

This illustration aims to link the relationship between the associated formative assessment definition i.e. One Big Idea, to its five key strategies from which 100s of techniques can be applied in the classroom. As described above in this section, learning objectives and task criteria, effective learning dialogue and on-going feedback are highlighted in this illustration as three of five key strategies in AfL. Of note, however, is how the student's role has only been prioritised in the remaining two strategies. By nature of this classification, it might be argued that student control has been either lessened or even omitted from the other three key strategies. Again this point will be returned to in Section 2.5 on Student Self-Assessment.

#### **2.4.5 From Theory to Practice: A critical Appraisal of the Benefits and Challenges of Formative Assessment**

Educational research literature abounds with study reports, research reviews and policy documents claiming the beneficial results obtained from applying formative assessment strategies in the classroom (Ausubel 1968, Sadler 1989, Gipps 1994, Boud 1995, ARG 1999, Carless 2005, Clarke 2005, NCCA 2005a/b, Heritage 2007, Price 2008).

Formative assessment theory does not necessarily translate smoothly into practice.

There are issues in terms of the soundness of formative assessment theorisation as well as challenges in its practical application (Black and Wiliam 1998a, Carless 2005, Harris and Brown 2009, Joyce *et al.* 2009, Bennett 2011). This section will deal with selected examples of such study reports, reviews and examples of critical commentary. To conclude a summary of the benefits and challenges of formative assessment will be presented.

The first examples come from the aforementioned researchers Black and Wiliam. They conducted a major review of formative assessment literature published between 1988 and 1998. In relation to research pre-1988, Black and Wiliam used review articles by Natriello and Crooks in 1987 and 1988 respectively as baselines. The review report was published as the article *Assessment and classroom learning* (1998a). Overall they concluded that the research they reviewed showed "conclusively that formative assessment does improve learning" (p. 61). One particular research account they present is of an American study undertaken by Bergan *et al.* in 1991 with 838 five year old children from disadvantaged backgrounds from six different regions in the USA. The purpose of the study was to support the early acquisition of basic skills. It was run over eight weeks with a course of diagnostic assessments to be given at the beginning, after two, four weeks and at the end. The teachers used mainly observations of skills to assess progress and used open-style activities which meant they could differentiate the tasks to suit the individual needs of the child. The students worked with task criteria throughout and noted their own progress based on the diagnostic assessments described above. Data analysis showed that the experimental group gained higher scores than the control group in tests in reading, maths and science.

Another example from the Black and Wiliam review is of a review of work by Pressley *et al.* (1992), relating to the use of effective questioning to explore and develop students

prior knowledge. The review established that requiring learners to compose answers with explanations to explore their prior knowledge of new work does improve learning. It was suggested that this may be because students learn to relate previous learning to new and to avoid superficial judgements on new learning. It might also be argued however that when basing new learning on inaccurate learning or preconceived ideas of learning, a student's ability to progress might in fact be hindered.

A further example comes from the aforementioned authors Torrance and Pryor. In 1998 they published findings of a study into classroom assessment. They reported that situations where pupils interpret questioning as genuine, lead to more considered and richer responses as opposed to the ritualised routine question and answer responses. This would have the effect of encouraging deeper learning as well a more genuine teaching and learning culture in the classroom.

Another extensive research review of over 3000 articles conducted by Kluger and DeNisi (1996) looked into the effects of different types of feedback. Across 131 suitable studies, they found that on average feedback did increase achievement with the biggest impacts occurring when feedback indicated not just what to improve but how to go about it.

These are only a small portion of the accounts available in the educational literature supporting the benefits of formative assessment strategies. Nonetheless it is important to clarify that many have been open to a significant amount of criticism.

To begin with, it has been argued that the benefits of formative assessment have been overstated in relation to actual empirical evidence and also under-theorised (Torrance & Pryor 1998). Research reviews such as that undertaken by Black and Wiliam in 1998 have received criticism in this respect. This particular example is notable as, it was upon their claims for effectiveness and learning gains, that worldwide debate and policy change in the UK took flight. Bennett (2011) supports this view and also warns that the research covered in the review is too disparate to confidently claim that all formative assessment leads to a significant learning gain. It appears that even Black and Wiliam's (1998a) own admission that, "the underlying differences between the studies are such that any amalgamations of their results would have little meaning" (p. 53), has been ignored. Nevertheless, a surge in interest occurred as a result of these effectiveness claims and in particular the attributing of mean effect sizes of between 0.4 and 0.7,

(Black & Wiliam 1998a/b) (gains as yet to be established empirically). As Bennett emphasises, this interest was quickly capitalised upon.

Black and Wiliam have also been criticised in relation to the aforementioned 'under-theorising' of formative assessment. Unlike the work done by Torrance and Pryor (1998), Black and Wiliam (2009) more recently admitted that their earliest work on formative assessment was not pre-defined theoretically. They explain that research findings were relevant to the concept of formative assessment. They go on to clarify that the area does indeed require a wider range of theories to be considered "so that the concept of formative interaction may be enriched and contextualised in the light of relevant theories" (p.2).

In addition to the empirical and theoretical issues there are the practical issues too. Effective formative assessment requires a certain environment which may involve changes to the running, format and ethos of the classroom. This is indeed a challenging task for any modern-day teacher who faces pressure from a variety of sources. Moreover despite the foregrounding of formative assessment in educational policy worldwide there is still the overbearing pressure to meet accountability targets and academic targets, in the shape of high-stakes summative exams which do not reflect formative learning outcomes. This pressure can detract from the process of implementing worthwhile change in the classroom.

The ethos and application of formative assessment has quite often become skewed. During their research study Torrance and Pryor (1998) discovered that teachers strongly agreed with the principles of formative assessment but for some, applying them had yet to prove to be a worthwhile process. Also teachers feel that although they have always employed certain elements of formative assessment, some now question policies where evidence of this must be explicitly recorded. Critically teachers expressed they felt under-supported and overwhelmed by the demands put on them in all aspects of their duties. Consequently this impacted on the time they have to develop effective formative assessment in the classroom. Alongside all of these issues teachers also found it difficult to relinquish some control of assessment.

The above is only a sample of the issues involved in the practical application of formative assessment. Quite often research has reported (Black *et al.* 2003) patchy implementation of strategies. The process has then often proven to be counter-productive and in conflict with the aims of formative assessment.

In conclusion to this section Table 2.2 below offers an illustration of the benefits and challenges of formative assessment.

**Table 2.2 Formative Assessment Benefits and Challenges**

CHARACTERISTIC	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
Informal	Less anxiety	Failure to recognise significance of assessment method
Ongoing	Enriched learning	- Patchy implementation - Tendency to over-assess
Focus on supporting student learning	Learning process above learning product is valued	Dependency on teacher-provided feedback
Learning Outcomes aligned against criteria	- Task outcomes more accessible - Assessment more transparent	-Skill needed to formulate accessible task criteria -Skills needed to formulate realistic and challenging learning goals
Interactive/ 2-way dialogue between students, peers and teachers	Students become more active in their own learning	- Supportive and co-operative learning environment needed - Dependency on teacher-directed dialogue
Element of learner choice and control	- Better internalisation of knowledge - Fosters life-long learning	Teacher fear of relinquishing control
Collaborative	Better scaffolding of learning	- Extensive student training and support from teacher required

The benefits above illustrate a shift in the balance of assessment control away from the teacher towards the student and each characteristic has the potential to develop this rebalancing of control. However when considering the corresponding challenges of these characteristics, one underlying theme appears to connect them, namely the teacher's ability to effectively employ formative assessment strategies. The implementation of the formative assessment process begins with the teacher. Hence the above challenges have at their core the following key issues; whether a teacher has an adequate understanding of all that formative assessment entails, whether they are willing to begin to relinquish assessment control and whether they believe fully integrating formative assessment warrants the difficult task of changing their teaching and learning methods. The teacher is critical to the establishment of an effective formative assessment process (Carless 2005). However for teachers to change deeply engrained pedagogical habits, a great deal of time, training and support and critically an open and enthusiastic attitude is needed. As Shavelson concluded (2008, cited in Bennett 2011) in relation to his work in innovating, implementing and studying the effects of formative assessment:

After five years of work, our euphoria devolved into a reality that formative assessment, like so many other education reforms, has a long way to go before it can be wielded masterfully by a majority of teachers to positive end (p. 294).

These issues warrant further discussion and will be revisited in the following Section 2.5 on Self-Assessment.

## **2.5 Student Self-Assessment**

Section 2.2 introduced the concept of student control in the assessment process. Section 2.4 detailed how formative assessment as detailed in the literature, aims to foreground the role of the student and presented how this might benefit students learning. This section on student self-assessment builds on formative assessment definitions, purposes and strategies presented in Section 2.4 and aims to further emphasise the role of the student. Student-self assessment will be presented as the over-arching aim of formative assessment - the goal for all teachers and students to strive towards and also aim under investigation in this study.

### **2.5.1 Establishing a Theoretical Framework for Student Self-Assessment**

In terms of what can most effectively support and improve learning, Sadler (1989) described how it is necessary for students to become 'apprentices' in assessment judgement. He argues that it vital that they become 'insiders' in the assessment process as opposed to 'consumers'. He maintains that students should be able to monitor their learning as they are learning. Black and Wiliam (1998a) also echo these sentiments and have expressed that student input and control in assessment is a '*sine qua non*' for effective learning. There-in lies the essence of a definition for student self-assessment - the gradual transferring of assessment control to the student. In their research into self-assessment in primary school students' writing skills, Andrade *et al.* (2010) define student self-assessment as:

a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on the quality of their work, judge the degree to which it reflects explicitly stated goals or criteria, and revise accordingly (p 199).



They emphasise the word 'formative' and stress how self-assessment is a process of improvement and not a matter of having students determine their own grades. As Boud (1995) further elaborates, it is in the act of questioning, judging ourselves and making the next step that effective self-assessment lies. In comparison with formative assessment definitions, self-assessment definitions presented here can be seen to absorb and expand on formative assessment concepts while focusing on the ultimate requirement for developing student assessment control.

Section 2.4.4 highlighted how student-led assessment, whether self or peer, has been classified as a separate key strategy of formative assessment. Let's take Thompson and Wiliam's (2007) classification of AfL strategies and techniques as an example (see Figure 2.6). Given the critical role of the student in developing truly effective assessment, it could be argued that the role of the student in describing key formative assessment strategies requires even further fore-grounding. A suggestion might be that three key strategies which normally make no specific reference to the role of the student are prefixed with the sentence '*Student active engagement should be sought when ...*' For example:

- *Student active engagement should be sought when* clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success.
- *Student active engagement should be sought when* engineering effective classroom discussions, questions and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning.
- *Student active engagement should be sought when* providing feedback that moves learning forward.

These are of course tentative suggestions and would require considerable deliberation on and evaluation of the practical applications.

In terms of the illustration of the AfL Cycle presented in Section 2.4.4, the incorporated strategies could also better articulate and fore-ground the role of the student in a similar manner by attributing a more active and participatory role to students. Moreover this process could then further reinforce the student's confidence in their ability to direct their own learning. The greatest potential for enhanced learning through self-assessment lies in the ability to effectively self-monitor and self-direct or self-assess on-going learning (Sadler 1989/1998, Black *et al.* 2003, Popham 2006, Newton 2007, Sebba *et al.* 2008, Black and Wiliam 2009).

This simplified assessment loop of questioning, judging and making the next step mirrors the overall strategies and characteristics of formative assessment, as detailed in Fig. 2.5 *The AfL Cycle*. The pivotal element however is that this process is undertaken by the student who realises that he/she possesses the ability and importantly the confidence to carry this out.

More generally Sadler (1989) sums up self-assessment in the form of two actions to be understood and taken by the student:

- The ability to perceive a gap between the current and desired level of learning.
- The ability to close the gap to attain the desired level of learning.

One thing that must be emphasized however: Although responsibility for making judgements should eventually lie with the student, the student is not expected to make these judgements in isolation. Learning is enhanced by maximising opportunities for students to discuss their work with others, be it peers or teachers (Boud 1995).

### **2.5.2. From Theory to Practice: A critical Appraisal of the Benefits and Challenges of Student Self-Assessment**

This section will detail examples of study reports or reviews claiming the beneficial results of applying self-assessment in the classroom and also the associated challenges. Insofar as self-assessment is a facet of the formative assessment cycle - albeit with enhanced student input- the benefits and challenges of formative assessment as presented in the Section 2.4.5 also apply to self-assessment.

Lopez and Kossack (2007) explored the effects continuous self-assessment had on 3rd level students' perceptions and academic performance in comparison with students who did not employ self-assessment or only used pre- or post-course self-assessment. Their findings indicate that those students who were required to employ self-assessment across a course showed more consistent increases across course tests and higher test scores overall than students who employed only pre- or post-course self-assessment or no self-assessment at all.

In 2003, Boud and McDonald published the findings of their study into training teachers and staff in self-assessment skills across subject areas. Ten Caribbean schools representing the top, middle and bottom levels of achievement were chosen. There was an experimental group of 256 senior secondary students who received formal training in self-assessment skills and a control group of 259. Their study indicated that the introduction of self-assessment practices was well accepted by teachers and students. Students reported that it was relevant to external exam preparation and also impacted on their perceptions of their careers and the learning they were undertaking. Also, on average students with self-assessment training outperformed their peers. The greatest effect sizes were reported for business studies and the humanities.

A further example of an extensive research review, claimed as the first of its kind, is that of Sebba *et al.* (2008). The conclusions of this review are based on a synthesis of 26 studies. They reported that most studies produced some positive outcomes for pupil attainment (9/15 studies), pupil self-esteem (7/9 studies) and increased engagement with learning and/or increased confidence (17/20 studies). Their review also highlighted important conditions that impact positively on peer or self-assessment:

- teacher's commitment to learners having control over the process
- the move from a teacher dependent to an inter-dependent relationship between student and teacher where teachers adjust their teaching in relation to student feedback
- although no direct relationship was reported, indications are that it is important to involve students in co-designing evaluation criteria.

Brookhart *et al.* (2004) conducted a study of 41 primary school students which involved them predicting and graphing their results from a weekly time-tables task. Student also reflected weekly on their progress in terms of their study and problem-solving strategies. Brookhart *et al.* concluded that this form of self-assessment was successful in transforming rote learning of times-tables into a deeper learning experience for students which had an effect on their overall approach to mathematics learning.

Harris (1997) conducted a review of research into self-assessment implementation in language learning from primary to third level education. He makes the point that although primary students might initially require more substantial guidance in the development of self-assessment skills, they seemed just as able at assessing themselves as older students. He concluded that student-self assessment is key to helping students

perceive their own progress which in turn helps them see the value of what they are learning. He asserts that a perception of the value of learning is possibly the best motivation to learn.

The above is merely a brief listing of some of the many positive findings attributed to student self-assessment that have been reported in the literature. Student self-assessment can be effective in improving deeper and more meaningful student learning by developing more responsible and reflective learners, improving problem-solving and critical thinking skills, promoting intrinsic motivation and a learning goal orientation (Dochy *et al.* 1999, Segers and Dochy 2001, Thompson *et al.* 2005, McMillan *et al.* 2008).

However the path to effective student-self assessment can be complex and often uncertain. Up until the late 80s no major review of student self-assessment literature seems to have been undertaken. The first such review that can be discerned is that of Falchikov and Boud (1989) into the accuracy of student self-assessment at higher level. They conducted a critical review of 48 quantitative studies which examined differences between student and teacher marks when assessing the same student performance. The study tentatively concluded that 'no overall consistent tendency to over- or under-estimate performance was found' (p. 396) and some students exhibited a 'fair degree of accuracy' (p. 396). Furthermore they stress that particularly salient to their findings is not whether students are able to assess themselves but what accounts for the variation in student ability to self-assess. They found that more academically competent and experienced students made more accurate self-assessments than their less experienced peers. Also their findings hinted that self-assessment accuracy varied across subject domains and gender differences could also be seen to have an influence. A more recent study (Lew *et al.* 2010) which investigated the accuracy of multiple self-assessments performed by 3588 third level students over also drew a similar conclusion in terms of this 'ability effect' (p. 135). Once again students judged as more academically competent performed self-assessments with greater accuracy than their less competent peers. Findings from this study however also indicated that there was only weak to moderate accuracy in terms of student self-assessment ability. Furthermore accuracy did not improve over time. The research literature can be seen to contain numerous corroborating and conflicting examples of studies where student and teacher assessment is compared for accuracy (See for example: Sumner 1932, Doleys and Renzaglia 1963,

Chiu 1975, Jackson 1988). This serves to illustrate that effective and accurate self-assessment is influenced by numerous factors.

In relation to challenges that arise in the implementation of self-assessment strategies, Joyce *et al.* (2009) conducted a study for The New Zealand Council for Education into teachers' perceptions of self-assessment. Unsurprisingly issues which arose in this study echo some of those highlighted in Section 2.2.3 on the practical implementation of formative assessment strategies. Their main findings were (p.1):

- Teachers' beliefs about learning are fundamental to whether they will provide the space for students to use self-assessment strategies
- Before self-assessment can be an effective part of students' learning, teachers have to develop a classroom culture where students are active rather than passive learners, they must believe that they can learn, are motivated to want to learn, and are given choices about their learning
- Students must be taught how to use self-assessment. Both teachers and students need to accept that first efforts will not be perfect, that students will need scaffolding to use the tools effectively, and that students will need different levels of support
- Different students respond better to different self-assessment strategies. Students should be exposed to a range of strategies and encouraged to independently adopt those that suit them best
- Sustained and planned professional development is a necessary component of developing a school-wide culture of self-assessment, as is strong leadership
- Time is an important factor - it takes time to embed self-assessment into everyday practice, it takes time for students to be able to use self-assessment strategies successfully, and time needs to be allowed for students to practise self-assessment

These points emphasize the most important areas of formative assessment and thus self-assessment to be nurtured:

1. Preparing the way for assessment change by having the right attitude to learning and preparing the right classroom environment
2. Effective training for teacher and student

3. Time; Teacher and student need time to acclimatise to a new learning environment, time to practise and amend new strategies and time to reap the benefits.

As highlighted previously, a critical underlying theme which appears to connect the challenges faced when implementing formative assessment is the teacher's ability to effectively employ formative assessment strategies. So it would appear that the question should be, how can a teacher make self-assessment work rather than does self-assessment work?

Taking the above example, Joyce *et al.* (2009) highlight the importance of teacher attitude, the right learning environment and effective training as critical to the successful implementation of self-assessment. Out of these three areas, attitude and effective teacher training appear to be critical. Teachers must have a positive attitude to their own learning in terms of the pedagogical re-training that effective assessment reform will entail. In studying 'exemplary' teaching in the USA, Collison (2012) makes the very important point that teachers who have a deep personal desire to learn become pedagogical innovators. Their quest to learn, benefits student learning. These same teachers then find or create ways to help colleagues by sharing innovations, ideas and insights.

In parallel, effective training for teachers must also be emphasised. In an Irish context for example, training or CPD has traditionally taken the form of one-off sessions which are successful in 'information-giving' as opposed to transforming teaching practice. There is also a dearth of research as to the impact of these types of CPD sessions (Sugrue, 2011).

Many other researchers (Huber 2011, Jones and O'Brien 2011, Early and Porritt 2010, Frost 2012) promote this model of ongoing, collaborative and adaptable CPD, where teachers clearly participate as students in formatively assessing themselves and each other in the learning of new professional skills. This form of CPD could also be seen to support and encourage pedagogical innovation.

More recently, the Department of Education and Skills has established a new dedicated support service for schools in implementing the new Junior Cycle Framework, Junior Cycle for Teachers - JCT - (2013). A brief one-page circular was sent to all secondary schools in October 2013, summarising the vision for CPD provision. JCT states:

A variety of CPD models will be employed both on and off-site and a multi-faceted approach will be adopted to help promote professional dialogue and the sharing of experience.

This vision indeed broadly reflects the concept of effective CPD as detailed above. No doubt however the implementing of this vision will be a challenging process. In terms of effecting assessment reform the promotion of a culture of ongoing professional dialogue, sharing of professional experience and fostering of innovation is critical. The building of teacher learning communities has been emphasised in other educational systems as a core component of effective CPD, as in the Scottish example above. This could be considered a stable platform on and from which to reflect on actual practice and to take action, even collaboratively, to improve professional practice (Hutchinson and Young 2011).

Clearly, it is of the utmost importance that the 'ground is prepared', so-to-speak, for the implementation of formative and particularly self-assessment strategies particularly in the current Irish educational context.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

On investigation of the literature there does not appear to be full consensus on the definition of assessment and formative assessment. Nevertheless there appears to be broad consensus on how effective formative assessment can be a meaningful tool in supporting and improving learning. There also appears to be consensus on the requirement for educational reform focused on the foregrounding of formative assessment. Within this, the further foregrounding of student ability to self-assess as the 'highest point' of formative assessment for which to strive, is an important goal. The literature emphasises that self-reflection and the ability to self-direct learning facilitates the most effective learning.

However even when formative assessment appears to have proven its capabilities, the challenges still to be faced when striving for effective implementation on a whole-school level appear considerable. Correspondingly, as are challenges to be faced implementing the research interventions.

Assessment reform has occurred worldwide over recent decades and is gathering momentum in Ireland. Nevertheless, the literature not only highlights but stresses that there are significant challenges that must be addressed in order for teachers to wave the wand of 'formative assessment' effectively and successfully, and in turn for students to thus benefit. An open and eager attitude to (re-) training and pedagogical innovation on the part of teaching staff as well as the provision of effective continuing professional development is required. Training should encompass educational theory, the practical applications of this theory and ongoing collaborative engagement and support in the development of formative assessment skills.

Secondly, the development of the formative capacities of current summative assessment practices is also critical. This synthesis must however meet the needs of certification as well as accountability along with that of developing reflective life-long learners. This synthesis of assessment practices has been referred to as sustainable assessment by Boud (2010):

assessment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of students to meet their own future needs (slide 4).

Without credibly tackling these main issues, the promise that formative assessment holds may vanish.



## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3. Introduction**

This chapter details the research study and justifies the chosen research methodology. Firstly an overview of the study will be given, briefly detailing its main aspects.. Following this, the research questions driving the study will be further presented as a starting point to justify the chosen research methodology. The study context, timing, employed resources and data collection methods will then be outlined. Considerations regarding ethics, validity and reliability will then be presented.

#### **3.1 Study Overview**

This section will outline and briefly detail the main aspects of the research study as illustrated in Table 3.1 on the following page.

The study incorporated an Action Research approach which incorporated participatory and non-participatory components. This research methodology will be further defined and discussed in Section 3.2.

Research was conducted over a period of two years. The initial year of study (Phase 1) involved the teacher-researcher and one participant teacher and their associated student groups (See Table 3.1). The research intervention at this stage involved the use of the Phase 1 Folder with incorporated resources.

The main study in year 2, entitled Phase 2 in Table 3.1 took place in the teacher-researcher's school. Five separate subject groups were involved the research intervention at this stage involved the use of the Phase 2 Folder and associated resources. The study context, timeline and study resources will be further detailed in Section 3.3.

A variety of data collection methods were employed - baseline and follow-up student and teacher questionnaires, teacher focus group meeting, individual semi-structured teacher interviews and teacher and student reflections. Folder implementation and use was also evaluated during the Phase 1 and Phase 2 studies. Data collection will be further detailed in Section 3.4.

**Table 3. 1 Study Overview: Phase 1 & 2**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>"The Subject Learning Folder and its Application in Supporting the Training of 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students in Self-Assessment Techniques"</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Can the use of the Subject Learning Folder facilitate the development of student self-assessment skills?</li> <li>○ Are there benefits and challenges to students?</li> <li>○ Are there benefits and challenges to teachers?</li> <li>○ How transferable are the resources across a variety of post-primary subjects?</li> </ul>				
<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Study Phase</b>	<b>Resource Introduced</b>	<b>Data Collection Tools</b>	<b>Participant Details</b>	<b>Research Methodology</b>
<b>Sep 2010 - Aug 2011</b>	Phase 1	Phase 1 Folder *	-1 reflections on implementation - 1 student / 1 teacher baseline questionnaire - 2 further student questionnaires - 2 further teacher questionnaires - Resource evaluation	French Group (Researcher) - 26 2nd year students  English Group - 26 1st year students	- Participatory Action Research  - Non-Participatory Action Research incorporating case-study
<b>Sep 2011</b>	Phase 2	Phase 2 Folder DS*	1 teacher / 1 student baseline questionnaire	-All students 2nd year	- Participatory Action Research
<b>Oct 2011</b>		Phase 2 Folder SAF*	Teacher focus group meeting	French Group (Researcher) - 26 students	
<b>Nov 2011</b>			Teacher questionnaire: review of Folder implementation	Maths Group - 21 students	- Non-Participatory Action Research incorporating case-study
<b>Feb 2012</b>		Phase 2 Folder PRS*	Individual semi-structured teacher interviews	German Group - 27 students	
<b>June 2012</b>			Teacher / Student questionnaire	History Group - 29 students	
<b>Dec 2012</b>			Teacher questionnaire: Review on participation in study	Home Ec. Group - 19 students	

\* Phase 1 and 2 Folders and associated resources (DS: Divider Sheets. SAF: Self-Assessment Form. PRS: Progress Review Sheet) are detailed in Section 3.3. Resource examples are presented in Phase 1 Appendices A - E and Phase 2 Appendices A - D

## **3.2. Research Approach**

### **3.2.1 Research Questions**

As mentioned in Section 3.1, a qualitative research approach has been chosen to explore the following research questions in relation to the development of a Subject Learning Folder and its application in supporting the training of 2nd year students in self-assessment techniques:

- Can the use of a newly developed Subject Learning Folder facilitate the development of self-assessment skills?
- Are there benefits to students?
- Are there challenges to students?
- Are there benefits to teachers?
- Are there challenges to teachers?
- How transferable are the resources across a variety of post-primary subjects?

The research questions required studying data produced by a variety of participants i.e. teacher-researcher, participant teachers and participant students, and their personal interactions in various different learning environments to an array of interventions. This scenario can be interpreted as having multiple meanings and realities (Cohen *et al.* 2011) as is the nature of all qualitative research. Subsequently the conclusions which result from this approach to research are presented tentatively and in terms of transferability to other similar contexts.

### **3.2.2 Action Research**

As detailed in Chapter 1, the impetus to conduct this study was influenced by the researchers own personal and professional educational experiences. Born of these experiences was a desire to continue to learn, improve and innovate as well as an implicit and professional desire to actively train and support students in developing and controlling their own learning. Within these experiences and desires, the teacher-researcher recognises the development of her own epistemological and ontological viewpoints. Roche (Mc Donagh *et al.*, 2012) defines these concepts as:

One's epistemological viewpoint is concerned with how you view knowledge, knowledge generation and knowledge acquisition; your ontological standpoint informs how you view the nature of being - your understanding of how you are in relation to others. (p. 21)

The teacher-researcher's standpoints regarding the students' construction and expression of knowledge combined with how she viewed the students and their role in assessment as well as her own role, synthesised to form, what Roche describes as, living educational values. These educational values as well as the construction of knowledge within the research question, were key in the choosing of an appropriate research methodology. Action Research was thus considered the most appropriate research methodology as the key characteristics of this research process can be detailed as (LaBoskey 2004, cited in McDonagh *et al.* 2012):

- Aiming towards improvement in practice and/or thinking
- Collaboration and communication with colleagues and students, and critical engagement with the literature
- The utilisation of multiple methods of data collection to gain in-depth understanding
- Sharing the research with the education community

The concept of taking action to improve professional practice can be traced back to Kurt Lewin, a German-American psychologist. He coined the phrase action research in the 1940s. Stephen Corey is credited as being instrumental in bringing action research to the fore in education in the USA in the 1950s. He believed that teachers would be more able to improve their practice by studying it. John Elliot has contributed significantly to this research area since the 1970s with his work focusing on interpretive action research approach where the researcher investigates their practice and the practices of others. Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis have also focused on practitioner-researcher self-reflection.

This study employs an overarching action research framework in collecting and analysing data. The teacher-researcher was ultimately concerned with improving her own professional practice as well as evaluating whether the Folder intervention might be useful in improving practice for other teacher participants. Specifically the teacher-

researcher was exploring whether Folder implementation could lead to improvements in student learning i.e. the *discovery* of *whether* the Folder could be an effective assessment tool in her own subject classroom as well as others and *whether* there are challenges and benefits for teachers and students. As previously detailed in Chapter 1, the researcher reflected on her own educational practice and identified a conflict between her educational values and the reality of the teaching methodologies she employed in the classroom. Whitehead (2011) describes this conflict or dissatisfaction with professional practice as experiencing oneself as a living contradiction. Whitehead (2011) and McNiff (2008) consider the realisation of this fact to be an initial step in a participatory action research cycle. Moreover the aim is to improve matters for study participants, it is problem-solving so-to-speak. Fundamental to this aim is that the researcher is directly involved in the context being researched as well as collaborating and interacting with participants and relevant others. As promoted by Elliott (2006), the nature of action research has at its core the "practical intention to realise educational values in action" (p. 169) and to form "practical insights and judgements". As is also the aim of this study, the emphasis is on the evaluation of genuine educational practice as it occurs. This educational research is contrasted with what he terms as research on education which aims to develop objective knowledge about practice where the researcher adopts the position of an impartial spectator. In the implementation and evaluation of the Folder resources, the teacher-researcher has been practically involved at every stage either directly in evaluating her own practice or indirectly in guiding and evaluating the engagement of study participants with the Folder i.e. respectively, the participatory and non-participatory elements as entitled in Table 3.1. Practical reflections, insights and judgements pertaining to the Folder's effectiveness were made and will be made based on the practical involvement of all study participants including the teacher-researcher. At no stage did the teacher-researcher take the position of spectator.

Overall this process can be illustrated as on-going cycles of (Cohen *et al.*, 2011):

- Diagnosis
- Planning an intervention
- Implementing the intervention
- Evaluating the outcome (multiple methods of data collection to gain in-depth understanding)

Table 3.2 below maps these stages of Action Research against the timing and phases of this study. The table illustrates that the study comprised of two cycles of action research. Initial diagnosis of an area for professional development resulted from reflection on the conflict between the teacher-researcher's educational values and actual professional practice.

**Table 3.2 Mapping of Research Study against Action Research Methodology**

Stage	Timing	Brief details of research stage in the context of the study
<b><u>Cycle 1</u></b>		
<b>Diagnosis</b>	Jan - June 2010	Conflict between the teacher-researcher's educational values and educational methodologies used in class resulted in the identification of areas for professional development
<b>Planning the intervention</b>	June - July 2010	Current assessment resources were revised in consultation with research supervisors for use by teacher-researcher and other participant teachers.
<b>Implementing the intervention</b>	Sep 2010 - May 2011	The Phase 1 Subject Learning Folder was implemented by the teacher-researcher and 1 other participant teacher.
<b>Evaluating the outcome</b>	June - August 2011	Findings from multiple data collection methods indicated that there had been benefits and significant challenges to the use of the Folder
<b><u>Cycle 2</u></b>		
<b>Diagnosis based on outcome of Cycle 1</b>	June - August 2011	The summative bias inherent in the Phase 1 Folder required considerable attention as well as the over-lap of purpose of individual resources.
<b>Planning the revised intervention</b>	August 2011	The Phase 2 Folder was devised following extensive revision and simplification of the Phase 1 Folder in order to improve its suitability as a formative self-assessment tool.
<b>Implementing the revised intervention</b>	Sep 2011 - May 2012	The Phase 2 Subject Learning Folder was implemented by the teacher-researcher and 4 other participant teachers.
<b>Evaluating the outcome</b>	August 2012 onwards	Findings from multiple data collection methods indicated that the Phase 2 Folder had been successful in beginning to develop self-assessment skills in the teacher-researcher's group. However considerable challenge remained in its effectiveness across other subject domains.

The teacher-researcher developed the Phase 1 Folder resources to address the conflict detailed above. The Phase 2 Folder resources were then developed directly from the Phase 1 Folder resources based on findings from the first action research cycle. Briefly significant amendment was required to due an inherent summative bias as well as the overlap of purpose in the design of the resources. In terms of improving her own personal practice, the resources were implemented and on-going reflection took place on their use by all participants which then culminated in the evaluation of their overall effectiveness at the end of the second cycle of action research. Multiple data collection methods were used to collect data for this evaluation and to gain in-depth understanding:

- Questionnaires
- Teacher reflections on implementation
- Focus group meetings
- Interviews
- Participant review and reflection / observation schedule

They will be detailed and discussed in Section 3.4.

The teacher-researcher also aimed to evaluate whether the use of the Folder by other teachers and students is an effective assessment tool i.e. the non-participatory element. The inclusion in the study of five other subject groups and their teachers can be described as the study of a bounded instance i.e. the studying of a specific person, group, organisation or event (Coles and McGrath, 2010). The study of a bounded instance of this nature is known as case study research. Case studies use multiple data collection methods which in turn result in a detailed picture of the person, place or thing under examination. Events, contexts and situations are described through the eyes of the study participants, including the researcher. In the context of this study, findings are unique to this specific case study which means that they are not generalizable to other situations. However findings may be relatable to similar circumstances in different contexts.

The case study is firstly exploratory as there is the inclusion of a Phase 1 study. Secondly it is descriptive and explanatory in terms of how the experiences of participants in the study are core to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Folder.

The case study element is thus employed in order to support the evaluation of genuine educational practice as it occurs (Elliott, 2006).

Conclusions were drawn from data and recommendations were presented. Moreover the teacher-researcher continues to develop and improve student self-assessment strategies into current practice.

### **3.3 The Study in Detail**

The Folder was implemented in Phase 1 by two participant groups including the teacher-researcher's. Phase 2 saw implementation by five participant groups including the teacher-researcher's. The two phases of the study differ in overall number of participant teachers and students, number and type of subject and format and functioning of resources. This section will therefore separately detail the context, timing and resources associated with both Phase 1 and Phase 2. This information is also summarised in Table 3.1 in Section 3.1.

#### **3.3.1 Phase 1**

As shown by Table 3.1, Phase 1 of the study ran from September 2010 to August 2011. There were two participating subject groups. The teacher-researcher's 2nd year French group comprised of 26 female students and the associated study took place in a suburban girls' school in Dublin. The other participant teacher's 2nd year English group comprised of 26 male students and the associated study took place in an inner-city Dublin school. The choice to include this particular participant teacher and group as my friendship with her would allow for greater ease of access to data. This type of sampling is considered characteristic of non-probability sampling. Here inclusion in a research sample takes into account convenience and practicality, amongst other reasons, as opposed to generating samples through random selection, as is the case with probabilistic methods (Laerd Dissertation, 2013)

As described in Chapter 2, formative assessment theory and in particular self-assessment theory were used as the theoretical framework around which the resources



were designed. Engagement with the literature along with reflection on advice from both research supervisors was an ongoing process throughout the overall study. As a result, the teacher-researcher's understanding of the nature of effective formative assessment and self-assessment developed over time. The Phase 1 resources thus reflect an initial level of understanding and professional experience. The Phase 1 resources will now be briefly described.

#### Phase 1 Subject Learning Folder & Divider Sheets (Phase 1 Appendix A)

The overall format of the Phase 1 Subject Learning Folder comprised of a cover page, a contents page and separate teacher-researcher designed divider sheets held within a plastic or hardback ring-binder folder. It was envisaged that one Folder would contain work spanning the three years of the junior cycle. The divider sheets separated topic sections as detailed by the subject syllabus. Students would write out work and notes onto A4 pages and file these in the appropriate sections. An individual divider sheet provided a breakdown of sub-topics within a topic. Tick-boxes were used to highlight the amount of time spent on a certain sub-topic, to be ticked when introducing learning objectives for a new sub-topic. Space was also provided alongside each sub-topic for the brief recording of information relating to goal setting and achievement. In addition to a list of topics as prescribed by the subject syllabus, the Folder also included a section named 'Tracking Progress and Achieving your Goals'. This section contained the resources used to develop student self-assessment skills.

#### Difficulties / Goals List (Phase 1 Appendix B)

This sheet was used as a reference for students when reflecting on how well they completed a task. It was used to help articulate and detail the areas of learning that needed improvement and gave suggestions for corresponding goals.

#### Results / Goals Record Sheet (Phase 1 Appendix C)

This sheet was used by students to detail test information and to record recognised areas of learning that need attention and the resulting learning goals.

### Tracking Progress Graph (Phase 1 Appendix D)

This graph was used by students to plot and illustrate their test results and to highlight the mark they were working towards.

### Tracking Goals Graph (Phase 1 Appendix E)

This graph was used by students to plot and illustrate the frequency with which they set goals and how satisfied they were with their completion of the goal.

The combined aim of all the resources was that their use may encourage students to better reflect upon the learning they had completed and to better direct future learning. However when their implementation and use was evaluated at the end of the pilot year, certain issues were recognised. These issues will be discussed fully in Chapter 4. Briefly however, these issues included:

- The purposes of some resources overlapped with others e.g. the recording of goal setting and achievement information recorded on three separate sheets
- There was over-emphasis on the assessment of summative test and their results in the form of marks
- There was no provision for the recording of learning strengths
- There was no provision for the recording of task criteria which could facilitate better reflection on areas of learning improvement and learning strength
- There were too many resources

These issues were taken into consideration when designing the Phase 2 Folder. They will be detailed when discussing the Phase 2 Study next.

### **3.3.2 Phase 2**

Phase 2 of the study ran from September 2011 to Dec 2012. There were five participating subject groups and the associated study took place at the teacher-researcher's school in Dublin. The teacher-researcher's 2nd year French group comprised of 26 female students. The participant Maths teacher's group comprised of 21

female students. The participant German teacher's group comprised of 27 female students. The participant History teacher's group comprised of 29 female students and the participant Home Economics teacher's group comprised of 19 female students. The sampling of these particular teachers was again an example of non-probability sampling. It was specifically determined by virtue of the fact that they had shown an interest in and willingness to participate in the study when the teacher-researcher appealed the whole staff before the beginning of the study.

As described above, specific issues were taken into consideration when designing the revised Folder for the Phase 2. Also in order to better understand these issues the teacher-researcher continued to engage with assessment theory literature along with reflecting on advice from both research supervisors. The Phase 2 resources thus reflect a more developed level of understanding and professional experience. The Phase 2 resources will now be briefly described

#### Phase 2 Subject Learning Folder and Divider Sheets (Phase 2 Appendix A)

The Phase 2 Folder retained its overall format as a divided folder of student work to span the three years of junior cycle, with the addition of a User's Guide (See Phase 2 Appendix A). However the format of the divider sheets was amended and they were now only used to record the date and the specific learning goal for a class or number of classes. This would support the highlighting and sharing of learning goals, as identified as a key component of the The AfL Cycle, as illustrated by Figure 2.3 in Chapter 2.

The other resources were replaced with one generic Self-Assessment Form and a Progress Review Sheet. In the case of the French Folder, a Skills List was included to replace the Difficulties/Goals List. This had been envisaged as useful for all participating subject groups however the teachers did not have the time to devise their own specific Skills Lists before the start of the study.

#### Skills List (Phase 2 Appendix B)

As with the Difficulties/Goals List in the Phase 1 Folder, it was envisaged the Skills List would be used as a reference for students when reflecting on how well they were completing or had completed a task. The skills listed could either be categorised at a

learning strength or an area for improvement. The skills listed were also categorised by abbreviated codes which were to be used when a teacher or student marked work.

### Self-Assessment Form (Appendix C)

The Self-Assessment Form was designed to incorporate four key components which are represented in the The AfL Cycle, as illustrated by Figure 2.3 in Chapter 2:

- The use of task criteria: 'What I need to do'
- The identification of learning strengths: 'What went well '
- The identification of areas of learning that need improvement: 'What needs improvement'
- The setting and completion of subsequent goals based on learning strengths and areas for learning improvement: 'My Goal'

Information recorded under the last three of the above headings could also be referenced against information in the Skills List by using the appropriate codes.

When this resource was being designed the teacher-researcher felt there was a need to include space for the recording of summative marking criteria identified against the task criteria. The implicit and explicit tendency of the teacher-researcher to continue to foreground summative assessment will be detailed in Chapter 4. Space was also provided on the form for teacher feedback.

### Progress Review Graph (Appendix D)

The activity of plotting results along a graph remained part of the Phase 2 Folder. However an effort was made to encourage reflection on the connection between the setting and achieving learning goals and summative marks and grades. Space was provided on this sheet to reflect and remark on this possible connection and to note overall opinions of how a student's learning had progressed or not over an extended period of time.

With these Phase 2 resources a concerted attempt was made to address issues that arose from the evaluation of the Phase 1 study. The overall aim was to have resources that provided a clearer and more complete AfL framework around which student self-

assessment skills would be developed and supported. The AfL Cycle was used as a reference for the Phase 2 design of the resources. The number of separate resources was also reduced as was the overlap of purpose. More scope was also provided for reflecting on and detailing of learning strengths.

As can be seen, substantial revisions were made on the basis of the teacher-researcher engagement with assessment theory literature and reflection on data provided by the Phase 1 study. A number of data collection tools were used to collect data during the Phase 1 and the Phase 2 study. They will be detailed and discussed in the following section.

### **3.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

In the context of this study, the following data collection tools and resource evaluation were utilised:

- Questionnaires
- Teacher reflections on implementation
- Focus group meetings
- Interviews
- Evaluation of resources

Ultimately, findings based on data collected from the tools above was interpreted qualitatively as is characteristic with action research. However data did produce a considerable amount of numeric data e.g. numbers of resources used consistently versus inconsistently. This numeric data was also interpreted qualitatively.

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaires**

During the overall study 11 questionnaires were administered (Table 4.1 in Chapter 4 gives a break down of these questionnaires and completion rates for them. Please see Phase 1 Appendices F - I and Phase 2 Appendices E - L.). For the purposes of Phase 2, which produced a great deal more data, the online survey tool Survey Monkey was employed. All surveys were composed using this tool and administered in paper form. The construction of an effective questionnaire which can produce relevant and usable

data is a skill which takes time to develop. The teacher-researcher observed how her own skills at questionnaire writing developed over the course of both the Phase 1 and the Phase 2 study. The process involved discussion with and review from both supervisors. When writing the questionnaires it was important to consider the following points (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, Coles and McGrath, 2010):

- Plan with the research questions and data analysis in mind
- Clarify the questionnaire's general purpose
- Clear, unambiguous presentation and language, particularly as the respondents are children
- Relatively quick to complete where peer and / or supervisor review the questionnaire prior to use
- A variety of question types can be used e.g. dichotomous, multiple choice, rating scales, open ended. A good questionnaire often has a variety of questions suited to purpose.
- Avoid leading questions and complex questions
- Ask only one thing at a time
- Provide instructions on competing questions where necessary

Baseline teacher and student questionnaires were employed at the beginning of both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 study to gauge attitudes or opinions and to decipher to what degree formative assessment was already used. End of Year questionnaires were employed to investigate whether changes in attitudes or opinions and classroom practice had occurred. An appraisal by teachers and students of the resources was also sought in the End of Year questionnaires. An informal mid-study review questionnaire was also employed to ascertain to what extent the Phase 2 Folder had been implemented, while also being a means of flagging any issues or queries. A post-study questionnaire was also employed to ascertain whether participant teachers had gained any beneficial experience from involvement in the study.

In striving to explore the themes presented in the research questions, questionnaire items were considered at length and revised by the teacher-researcher. Questionnaires varied in their structure, type of question and scaling. Structured questionnaires incorporated the use of a more closed style of question, multiple choice and Likert scaling. This style of questionnaire was most often used when collecting data from

larger participant samples i.e. all student participants. Semi-structured questionnaires incorporated the use of a more open style of question which allowed for a more individual and authentic response from participants. Although student questionnaires incorporated open questions, this style of semi-structured questionnaire was more often used with the participant teacher sample.

### **3.4.2 Teacher reflections on implementation**

The English teacher and teacher-researcher briefly recorded their reflections when first implementing the Folder. They observed the engagement of the students with the resources as well as evaluated their own engagement. They recorded data based on their active involvement with the phenomena under observation. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to guide the recording of data. It comprised mostly of open questions.

### **3.4.3 Focus Group Meeting and Individual Interviews**

A focus group meeting and individual interviews were employed during Phase 2. These were used as a replacement for the recording of teacher reflections on implementation used during Phase 1.

Interviews and focus group meetings are social and emotional encounters not just a straightforward data collection exercise (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Numerous different variables can exert and influence on interviews and focus group meetings e.g. non-verbal behaviour, age, gender, appearance of the interviewer, group dynamics. It is the responsibility of the interviewer to conduct the interview / focus group meeting sensitively. They must also be aware of the importance of maintaining rapport and encouraging interviewee motivation and interest (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

Both the focus group meeting schedule and the individual interview schedule were semi-structured in nature with an open question style. They were used to explore participant teacher interaction with the resources as well as attitudes and opinions

towards AfL and student self-assessment. The meeting and interviews were conducted in an informal and relaxed setting.

### **3.4.3 Coding and Content Analysis**

A very large amount of data was produced from the data collection tools above. All data recorded was saved and stored. During Phase 1 the teacher-researcher personally transferred all data to Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. This is referred to as Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis or CAQDAS (Cohen *et al.*, 2011) and as well as safeguarding data storage it is also helpful in terms of sorting, annotating, searching, cross-checking, filtering and displaying data. This was a lengthy process. For the purposes of Phase 2, which produced a great deal more data, the online survey tool Survey Monkey was employed. All surveys were composed using this tool and administered in paper form. The teacher-researcher then transferred this data manually into the Survey Monkey online questionnaires. This saved a considerable amount of time as it allowed for the automatic generation of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

Qualitative data analysis involves interpretation of data. The analysis and interpretation of the large amount of data associated with the study was managed by reducing data to fewer categories in a process called coding. A code is a name or label given to a piece of text that contains information connected to an identified theme (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

All data produced were read and evaluated in order to determine broad themes under which data could be organised. This allowed for more systematic and effective interpretation of data.

Content analysis was the next step in the process. This is the summarising and reporting of data. Researchers must endeavour to present findings coherently and logically in the context of associated themes. Relevant references from the Literature Review should be used in order to explain, explore, challenge and critique findings (Coles and McGrath, 2010).



### 3.5 Ethics

Before this research study could commence, ethical approval was sought from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee (REC). This is a rigorous procedure necessary to investigate whether the social benefits of the research endeavour against the personal costs of the individuals taking part. The primary aim of the REC is to ensure all research participants are respected and their rights promoted. Maintaining well-established ethical standards is an important aspect of upholding the integrity of the research process (DCU REC, 2013).

Researchers are required submit an application for approval which details numerous aspects of the research study. For example:

- the aims and justification for the research
- proposed method
- participant profile
- means by which participants are to be recruited
- potential risks to participants and risk management procedures
- adverse unexpected outcomes
- support for participants
- how will the anonymity of the participants be respected?
- legal limitations and data confidentiality
- data/sample storage, security and disposal
- provision of a plain language statement and an informed consent forms for all participants (Please see appendices for examples)

Written consent to participate in the study was sought from all participants via the provision of an informed consent form (See Phase 2 Appendix N). All teachers consented to participate and all but two students consented to participate. For those students who did not consent to participate, the resources were not considered different to any other assessment tools that the teacher would use outside of the study. In turn they participated in class as normal. However data were not collected from these students during the course of the study. Participants in the study had the right to withdraw from the research at any time, at which point their data would be destroyed. The confidentiality of participants was respected whereby their contributions were analysed and presented in an anonymous fashion.

### **3.6 Reliability and Validity**

Validity can be defined as the degree to which the research has explored the phenomena it set out to study (Coles and McGrath, 2010). It is an important concept in qualitative research. In terms of this study data collection, analysis and research conclusions enabled the teacher-researcher to answer the research questions associated with the study.

Reliability in qualitative research is the extent to which data findings are an accurate representation of the phenomenon under investigation. Transferability of findings in similar contexts, as opposed to their exact replication is a characteristic of reliability in qualitative research (Coles and McGrath, 2010). Transparency of data collection and analysis is a critical concept in assessing the reliability of research findings. This is where researchers must provide what is known as an 'audit trail'. This means the provision of sufficient information in the final research report for the reader to understand why, how and what the researcher did.

Qualitative research commonly produce large volumes of data, as is the case with this study. However challenges occur when attempting to interpret and draw conclusions from this data. Triangulation is a key strategy in providing evidence of research reliability as well as. It is a process of comparing information from different data sources to determine corroboration and from which robust research findings might be interpreted (Oliver-Hoyo and Allen 2006). It involves the use of two or more research methods, researchers, categories of respondent or time periods (Cole and McGrath, 2010). The aim is for the researcher to investigate the research questions from more than one viewpoint. In the context of this study, the teacher-researcher collected data using different methods, as detailed in Section 3.4. Triangulation was also achieved by collecting data over time from different groups i.e. teachers and students. For example, the study saw the triangulation and analysis of intervention evaluation, student and teacher opinion and the comparison and contrasting of questionnaire responses over time. Triangulation supports reliability in that it facilitates the presence of an audit trail while also aiming to achieve a more accurate and valid estimate of qualitative research.

Finally, bias is a feature that can have an influence on the conducting of a research study. In qualitative research it is important that the researcher be aware that data can be (overly-) influenced by their and participant's personal views and opinions. It would be

considered impossible to conduct qualitative research in the absence of personal views and opinions. However the aim is to keep bias to a minimum. In the context of this study, the teacher-researcher recognises bias will have some part in the research. However the counteracting of bias requires the researcher to firstly engage with, digest and debate a wide range of assessment theory literature. Secondly, when analysing data, alternative interpretations must be sought, in particular if initial findings confirm the researcher's views. Thirdly, explanation of and justification for the research methodologies and analysis must be presented to the reader. The reader should then be able to judge to what extent bias has (over-) influenced the research. The audit-trail is also a means for a reader to determine the extent to which bias has been minimised.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter detailed the research study and justified the chosen research methodology. An overview of the study was given which briefly detailed the main aspects of the study. The study context, timing, employed resources and data collection and analysis methods were then outlined. Considerations regarding ethics, validity and reliability were presented later as a conclusion to the chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The teacher-researcher set out at the beginning of this study to improve her knowledge and use of formative assessment in order to develop students' ability to effectively self-assess their own learning. This is an ongoing process of improving professional practice for the benefit of student learning, which simultaneously led the researcher to share knowledge and beneficial strategies with other teaching colleagues. This chapter is an account of the outcomes of the process in which this particular teacher-researcher engaged. An overview of the data collection tools will be presented first followed by the detailing of the outcomes of two separate implementation phases of the overall study i.e. Phase 1, the initial study and Phase 2, the main study. Discussion of each phase will detail the development and amendment of elements of the Folder.

### **4.2 Data Collection Overview**

Table 4.1. below presents the numbers of student participants versus the actual instances of data returned in the form of individual questionnaires and individual Folders and associated resources. There were 52 participant students in Phase 1 of the study and 122 in Phase 2. However the equivalent number of questionnaires and Folders was not collected by the end of the study. Moreover the teacher-researcher's French participant groups in Phase 1 and Phase 2 were the only groups to return 'full' Folders, where all resources were consistently used. The teacher-researcher went to considerable effort to encourage the appropriate use of all resources and to emphasise the importance of the completion of all administered questionnaires and to facilitate the collection of these data tools. However full return of questionnaires and of Folder resources did not occur. In terms of reduced numbers of questionnaires returned, absenteeism was observed as having a role in effecting these numbers in all participants groups. The collection of Folders by participant teachers occurred at the end of May, a time leading into exam week where students would no longer be in class. The teacher-researcher believes that this led to difficulties in collecting and 'chasing up' students who had yet to return their

Folders. This in turn led to reduced numbers of returned Folders with the exception of the History group where the participant teacher had kept all the Folders in class.

**Table 4. 1 Stage 1 and Stage 2 n-Values and Percentages: Completion Rates for Folder Resources and Data Collection Tools**

		Phase 1			Phase 2					
No. of...		French	English		French	Maths	Home Ec	German	History	
Students		26	26		26	21	19	27	29	
COMPLETION RATES FOR FOLDER RESOURCES										
Divider Sheet Sets*		15	20		19	5**	8	14	26	
		58%	77%		73% (full)*	24%	42%	52%	89%	
TRG <sup>1</sup>		15	20	S-A F <sup>4</sup>	19	3	7	0	0	
		58%	77%		73%	14%	37%			
					<sup>6</sup> No. each:7	<sup>6</sup> No.each:1	<sup>6</sup> No.each:1			
TGG <sup>2</sup>		15	20	RG <sup>5</sup>	26	0	0	0	0	
		58%	77%		100%					
					No.each <sup>6</sup> : 2					
D/GRS <sup>3</sup>		15	20							
		58%	77%							
COMPLETION RATES FOR DATA COLLECTION TOOLS										
		Phase 1			Phase 2					
Stu. Quests. <sup>7</sup>	1	23	26			24	21	19	27	29
		88%	100%			92%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	2	26	22	24		14	10	17	24	
		100%	85%	92%		67%	53%	63%	83%	
	3		21							
		81%								
Teach. Quests. <sup>8</sup>	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	
	2	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	
	3		1		1	1	1	1	1	
	4				1	1	1	1	1	
				Teach FG <sup>9</sup>	1	1	1	1	1	
				Teach Int. <sup>10</sup>	1	1	1	1	1	

\* Returned at end of year and analysed. 'Full' indicates fully completed resources.

\*\* Maths teacher considered that her own resource of a notes copy served much the same purpose as the divider sheets, hence the number here indicates 'notes copies' evaluated, no Divider Sheet sets.

<sup>1-5</sup> Resource abbreviations: 1. Tracking Results Graph 2. Tracking Goals Graph 3. Difficulties / Goals Record Sheet 4. Self-Assessment Form 5. Review Graph

<sup>6</sup> Number of examples of the resource returned by each student

<sup>7-10</sup> 7. Student Questionnaires 8. Teacher Questionnaires 9. Teacher Focus Group Meeting 10. Teacher Semi-Structured Interviews

However this can only be seen as part of the reason for reduced numbers in returned Folders and associated resources. A lack of engagement with the Folder was also

observed in all participant groups with the exception of the teacher-researcher's groups. This will be discussed further in Section 4.3 and 4.4.

Teacher participants were randomly selected for participation in the study and they had varied teaching and AfL experience. The specifics of the teaching and AfL experience is summarised in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4. 2 Teacher Participant Teaching and AfL Experience**

	<b>French</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>German</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>Home Ec</b>
<b>Participation in Study</b>	Phase 1 & Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 2	Phase 2	Phase 2
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	6 years	7 years	7 years	Over 30 years	4 years	8 years
<b>AfL Training</b>	trained in England where broad training in AfL techniques received			sporadic CPD training sessions	reported no formal training in AfL	
<b>Prior AfL use in class</b>	certain AfL techniques embedded in teaching and learning	considered themselves to have reasonable experience with employing AfL techniques in the classroom		expressed enthusiasm for employing any strategy that may improve teaching and learning	aware many of her teaching and learning techniques could be classed as AfL techniques	expressed concern over pressure to cover curricular content which left no time for AfL techniques

Amongst teacher participants, there are similarities in terms of length of teaching experience and AfL training. Three out of six of the participant teachers were trained in England where the use of AfL is considered to be developed and commonly employed (Harlen and James, 1997). However in comparing individual participant teachers' use of AfL in the classroom, experience varies from the teacher-researcher embedding several AfL techniques in teaching and learning. This contrasts with the Home Economics' teacher's belief that she was afforded very little time to embed AfL as a result of pressure to cover curricular content. While some participant teachers underwent more extensive training in formative assessment strategies than others, this should not be read as an indicator of greater use of these strategies by those teachers. This information is valuable in discussing study conclusions and will be returned to in Chapter 5.

### **4.3 Phase 1**

Phase 1 took place from August 2010 to June 2011. Data collected from both the French and English participant groups are presented in this section. Folder

#### **4.3.1 Development of the Folder**

The development of the Folder resulted from the wishes of the teacher-researcher to translate professional values on better supporting student learning into professional practice, while attempting to guide other colleagues in this process. The Phase 1 Folder design was shaped by the teacher-researcher's developing knowledge and understanding of formative assessment.

The English version of the Folder saw design amendments in relation to the Divider Sheets and the Difficulties / Goals List. This was done by the English participant teacher in order to make these resources English subject specific. The Results / Goals Record Sheet, the Tracking Progress Graph and the Tracking Goals Graph remained identical to those used by the teacher-researcher's French group. Training in the implementation and use of the resources was provided by the teacher-researcher prior to the beginning of the study in September 2010. Advice and support was given via email and phone as and when requested by the participant teacher.

#### **4.3.2 Outcomes of Phase 1**

##### **4.3.2.1 Can the use of the Subject Learning Folder facilitate the development of student self-assessment skills?**

As highlighted in the Literature Review, numerous authors and education professionals (See for example: Ausubel 1968, Sadler 1989, Gipps 1994, Boud 1995, ARG 1999, Clarke 2005, NCCA 2005a/b, Heritage 2007) have and continue to stress the need for assessment methods that support student learning in an on-going way as opposed to

focusing on the reporting of students' academic performance through summary marks or grades. To this end the teacher-researcher designed and produced the Phase 1 Folder. As presented in an organised folder, the format of this Folder saw the use of Divider Sheets onto which learning progression was highlighted. It was envisaged that learning strengths, areas for improvement and progress would be assessed and tracked via the use of the Tracking Results Graph, the Tracking Goals Graph, the Results / Goals Record Sheet and the Difficulties / Goals List.

However - in this phase - some elements of Folder design and data collection tool design could be seen as denoting an inherent summative bias; a predisposition for the teacher-researcher to foreground certain summative assessment characteristics. Firstly this can be seen in the design of the Tracking Progress Graph (Appendix D). The graph only allows for the recording of information in the form of marks and/or grades where students were mostly directed to record test results. Thus the resource aligns 'progress' with increases in mark and/or grades. Moreover, during the implementation of the Folder, the recording of this information came after task completion, another summative characteristic. Simultaneously the same summative characteristics were reinforced with the Results / Goals Record Sheet (Appendix C) where there was space to once again record a task mark/grade along with areas for learning improvement and learning goals. Moreover the tick-box format of the Divider Sheets (Appendix A) allowed for simple tracking of completed topics throughout a syllabus, this format however did not encourage or facilitate the sharing of learning objectives, learning outcomes or task criteria. Consequently the teacher-researcher omitted to develop these strategies during Phase 1.

In terms of the data collection tools, the teacher-researcher aimed to explore the extent to which students could already assess their own learning and whether this was a consistent approach used by teachers in class. It was envisaged that data might then be collected through the year to indicate whether or not the Folder had been effective in developing student self-assessment skills.

However summative bias can also be identified in the formulation of some of the questions presented in the Phase 1 Student Baseline Questionnaire (Please see Stage 1 Appendix F) and the Student Halloween Questionnaire (Please see Stage 1 Appendix D). Examples are given below (Likert scales used to record responses are not shown):

- What have your results been like for this subject?



- Do you record (write down somewhere specific) your results for the following?
- If you get a result you're not too happy with what do you do?
- How important is it for you to record your results?

The language used in the above question focuses on 'results' and as highlighted in the Literature Review and mentioned above. Formative assessment seeks to draw attention away from grades and/or marks as the main product of assessment.

Consequently, the teacher-researcher considers that the Phase 1 Folder design could only partially be considered an effective tool in facilitating the development of student self-assessment skills. However of significant value was the developing awareness on the part of the teacher-researcher of her own biases and the need to counteract these. This was considered a solid basis on which to develop a revised Folder. In addition many Phase 1 participants expressed that there were benefits to engagement with the Folder, even if for some it was only in a limited way. These benefits as well as challenges will be detailed in the following Section 4.3.2.2 and Section 4.3.2.3.

#### **4.3.2.2 How transferable are the resources across a variety of post-primary subjects?**

This section will present and discuss data collected for the purpose of analysing the transferability of the Folder. Although Section 4.3.2.1 concluded that there were issues in terms the appropriateness of the Phase 1 Folder design. The evaluation of teacher and student engagement with these types of resources is valuable to the study.

Below in Table 4.3 implementation of the Phase 1 Folder by the English teacher and the teacher-researcher is compared in terms of how the resource was used as well as its frequency and accuracy of use.

**Table 4.3 Phase 1 Folder: Employment and Frequency of Use**

Resource (Phase 1 Appendix)	How resources were used		Average frequency of use		% of accurate student usage as evidenced in Folder			
	English	French	English	French	English		French	
					very	some	very	some
<b>Divider Sheets (A)</b>	boxes ticked	- boxes ticked -notes filed	Every 2 weeks	Weekly	8%	48%	92%	8%
<b>Difficulties Goals List (B)</b>	- reference for assessing work - goal suggestion	- reference for assessing work - goal suggestion	Monthly	Every 2 weeks	<i>Percentages as for Results/Goals Record Sheet*</i>			
<b>Results/ Goals Record Sheet (C)</b>	record of results & limited record of difficulties/ goals	record of results / difficulties / goals	Monthly	Every 2 weeks	0%	54%	76%	24%
<b>Tracking Progress Graph (D)</b>	plotted test scores	plotted test scores / target score	Monthly	Every 2 weeks	12%	44%	80%	20%
<b>Tracking Goals Graph (E)</b>	unused	plotted goal setting / goal completion	----	Once every two months	----	----	80%	20%

\* The Difficulties / Goals list was a reference sheet with no need for filling in and as such, on it's own accuracy cannot be calculated. It was used in tandem with the Results / Goals Record Sheet, hence accuracy related to the use of this resource.

What emerges from the data in Table 4.3 above is a divergence in how frequently and how accurately the resources were used by each subject teacher. A high accuracy of student usage would be expected from the teacher-researcher's group, as the Folder's designer. The evaluation of the French Folders reveals an average rate of 82% for Very Accurate Usage<sup>1</sup> across all resources. However the teacher-researcher was aiming to design an assessment tool that would also afford ease of use by other subject groups. A relatively high level of accurate usage would have been the desired outcome for use by the English participant group. This was not the case as the average for Very Accurate Usage across all resources for English is 5% with the equivalent total for Some

<sup>1</sup> Accurate Usage was evaluated based on consistent ticking of topic boxes & the recording of 'Goals Set' and 'Goals Achieved' information

Accurate usage being 37%. These figures appear to indicate challenges to the transferability of the Phase 1 Folder.

One reason for the contrast in accurate usage could come from data illustrating that the English group used the resources less frequently than the French group. Based on the data referred to in Table 4.3, three out of four resources were employed by the English group roughly twice as little as the French group. The Tracking Goals Graph was not being used at all by the English group. Data also indicate that resources were not fully employed in the manner suggested during training, neither were they adapted. Frequency and manner of use were decided by the English participant teacher and as such, data indicates that she did use them as initially intended or as frequently. Frequency of use would be important in order to embed the resources and to allow teachers and students to become more familiar with and confident in using them. This indicates a certain lack of engagement with the Phase 1 resources. Reasons for this will be explored in the following Section 4.3.2.3 and Section 4.3.2.4.

#### 4.3.2.3 Are there benefits and challenges for students?

It has been highlighted in Section 4.3.2.1 that the Phase 1 Folder required extensive revision and amendment. Nevertheless there are data to suggest that some benefits were observable. Data from the student questionnaires relating to their perception of student self-assessment and how their skills were developing is noteworthy. Students from both subject groups reported high levels of perceived ability to carry out certain self-assessment strategies. This is exemplified by Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4. 4 Student Questionnaires:  
Responses to Questions highlighting ability to carry out self-assessment strategies**

Question (same question asked in baseline and Halloween questionnaire)	English: % of Often - Always Responses		French: % of Often - Always Responses	
	Baseline 26 responses	Halloween 25 responses	Baseline 23 responses	Halloween 26 responses
When you make a mistake, how often do you understand what you've done wrong?	81% (21)	64% (16)	87% (20)	85% (22)
When you have an area of weakness, are you clear on what you have to do to improve?	69% (18)	80% (20)	69% (16)	85% (22)

A majority of students in both groups had a strong belief in their ability to "understand their mistakes" in September 2010, as highlighted by baseline questionnaire data with 81% for the English group and 87% for the French group. This figure dropped for the English group yet remained similarly high for the French group when the same question was asked at Halloween. Similarly, baseline data indicates almost seven in every ten students believed they possessed the ability to improve on areas of weakness. At Halloween this level increased to 80% for both groups.

It is not discernable from questionnaire or Folder data why exactly figures dropped and increased at this stage in the study for the participant groups but a few suggestions could be made:

- The English group were first year students. Perhaps some lost confidence in their ability to understand their mistakes as the year progressed possibly based on a greater level of difficulty as they experienced secondary level English for the first time.
- The Folder was designed to encourage students to focus on and improve mistakes. Perhaps some students realised as time progressed that they weren't as confident as they first believed in understanding their mistakes.
- The Difficulties / Goals List was in use by both groups between September and Halloween. Perhaps its use lead to improved confidence in knowing what to do to improve on an area of weakness.

In support of the possible increases in student self-assessment confidence, the English participant teacher commented in the Halloween Teacher Questionnaire that "students were enjoying keeping track of what they complete" and that the Folder "helps them understand what they have to cover in the course of a year". She also believed that her students were "getting very good at identifying their own weaknesses and strengths" and this was the "most beneficial part of the folder", with one reason being that it "made the students read the comments in their copies". In response to the same questionnaire the teacher-researcher commented positively also, in particular noting "most students are matching up difficulties and example goals independently" and that in terms of the usefulness of the Difficulties / Goals List, she believed "having a reference for the identification of strengths and example goals is essential as they are not used to coming up with information themselves". These sentiments were further reinforced in the third Teacher Questionnaire in February where the English participant teacher also

highlighted that she was more aware of "the importance of including students in their own assessment".

Data collected from the students has indicated a belief that they were benefitting from the implementation of at least some of the Folder resources. Table 4.5 below summarises percentages of students who believed the Folder to be 'quite' or 'very useful' by the time of the second Student Questionnaire at Halloween.

**Table 4.5 Halloween Student Questionnaire: Perceived Usefulness of Folder Resources French / English**

	<b>Divider Sheets</b>	<b>Tracking Progress Graph</b>	<b>Tracking Goals Graph</b>	<b>Results/Goals Record Sheet</b>	<b>Difficulties / Goals List</b>
<b>French (26 responses)</b>	89% (23)	62% (16)	46% (12)	66% (17)	65% (17)
<b>English (25 responses)</b>	80% (20)	100% (25)	88% (22)	100% (25)	60% (19)

The above figures indicate that the English student participants were more positive in their estimation of the usefulness of the Folder resources as across all five resources satisfaction with the Folder averages at 85% as opposed to 66% for the French group. They also made considerably less comments in terms of explaining their responses in comparison to the French group. With the exception of the Tracking Goals Graph, a majority of French student participants found the Folder resources to be at least quite useful. Notably however, the most useful part of the Folder as considered by participant teachers at Phase 1 i.e. the Difficulties / Goals List, did not receive equivalent support from the student participants of both groups. Students might have not yet realised the importance of being able to assess their work themselves. Deferring to the teacher for confirmation of learning progress could still have been the definitive gauge by which students judged their progress.

Comments made by students indicate that the Folder was considered useful as it helped "track progress in specific parts", 'it makes you more organised' and if a student wants to revise they 'know where to find all the information for that topic'. More specific formative benefits were also highlighted by 12 English students and 16 French students in that, the Folder helps them indentify "what you are finding difficult and find the goal that will help you". The continued importance of summative results was also highlighted by over two-thirds of both English and French students in their comments on the usefulness of the Tracking Progress Graph and the Results / Goals Record Sheet, where it was important to be able to "clearly see if your results are going up or down"

and students needed "to know if you are getting better results or not". However this might also be seen to reinforce a student equivalent of the summative bias described in Section 4.3.2.1; a predisposition by students to consider mark and/or grades as the crucial indicators of learning progress. However roughly a fifth of student comments from both groups also indicate that they are developing ways to counteract this summative bias in the form of "recognising where we are going wrong and how to improve". Overall roughly half the number of English and French students appear to be able to broadly articulate why the resources are beneficial but they have not yet had the consistent practice to fully reap these benefits.

In terms of benefits to students as perceived by both teacher participants comments suggest that the Phase 1 Folder had gone some way to at least begin to develop the students' ability to reflect on their learning. It had also possibly developed the teachers' own attitudes in relation to the role of the student in assessment.

Section 4.3.2.1 has already highlighted that summative bias remained to be a characteristic of Folder design and a predisposition did exist for the teacher-researcher to incorporate 'hard-wired' summative pedagogical habits. As Brown *et al.* stress (1997, cited in Price M., 2008), it is the type of assessment that defines what students regard as important and this directly affects how they learn. In the above discussion on Student Benefits, it was highlighted that students subsequently commented on the importance of clearly seeing "if your results are going up or down". In terms of the challenges encountered with Folder implementation, summative assessment remained in a prominent position within the Folder resources. Hence the importance of summative assessment to students was reinforced which would have made it difficult to change students' learning habits.

In the Second Teacher Questionnaire at Halloween, the English participant teacher drew attention to the fact that focusing on marks and/or grades could be "disheartening for those who continuously achieve low marks". The teacher-researcher also reported that where resources focused on summative grades and/or marks this could have a discouraging effect on students struggling in French. In terms of commentary detailing the challenges of the Folder resources, a total of two comments were made by French group students in the Second Student Questionnaire at Halloween. One expressed that she "will never look at" the Tracking Progress Graph and another expressed that she doesn't "like planning ahead". It could be inferred that either students here are de-

motivated by the complexity of the Folder and/or showing a reluctance to reflect on learning and are expressing a type of anxiety in relation to focus being drawn to low marks and/or grades. The teacher-researcher has witnessed this behaviour in her own teaching experience where, for students, coming face to face with their mistakes is a daunting and uncomfortable prospect. However it is exactly this type of attitude which hopefully can be transformed through a supportive learning environment and effective formative assessment.

The teacher-researcher mostly identified in the Halloween Questionnaire that she had begun to recognise that a stream-lining of resources was required as "overlap of purpose" was evident. For example there was a requirement to highlight learning strengths and areas for improvement in three separate resources. This meant that "completing all the resources simultaneously can be more time consuming than required" which could impact on perceived benefits of the Folder. This was a considerable challenge for students as well as teachers, as the use of the Folder was overcomplicated and this impacted adversely on attitudes towards itFolder. Table 4.3 in Section 4.3.2.2 indicates higher levels of inaccurate usage of Folder resources in the English participant group. Inaccurate usage might also be explained by the challenge of the over-complicated nature of the Stage 1 Folder.

In questionnaire commentary at Easter the English teacher highlighted areas where she believed the Folder to be challenging. She mentions some practical difficulties with the Tracking Progress Graph, that some students find the graph plotting confusing.

The English participant teacher also commented that she believed that "some pupils do not necessarily progress". This is a significant statement in the opinion of the teacher-researcher as it may indicate that the English teacher believes to some extent that learning ability is fixed. However research by Dweck (2000) which has contributed to formative assessment theory supports the concept that ability is not fixed and can develop. The supporting and fostering of this attitude to learning is crucial. In addition the English teacher found an aspect of attending to these gaps i.e. checking learning goals "the most problematic and difficult area" of the Folder. This is indeed a challenging task for any teacher to manage. However effective formative assessment encourages the attention to these learning gaps as and when they occur (Sadler 1989). The difference possibly here is that checking learning goals -which may be similar to checking homework- has yet to become common place within the teacher's professional

routine. It could be suggested that in day-to-day practice, the English teacher might believe there are obstacles in the way of being able to grasp this type of learning opportunity. However her comment in relation to recording and tracking results in the form of grades and/or marks, that this "can be disheartening for those who continuously achieve low marks or regress in certain areas of the curriculum" is particularly valid. This is one of the prevailing arguments for more comprehensive use of formative assessment according to research (Sadler 1989, Black at al. 2003), that countless students have been and are being alienated by assessment systems that prioritise the summarising of learning in the form of marks and/or grades over the supporting of learning improvement in a formative manner.

In terms of the challenges reported by the students from the English group, only one student described the Results / Goals Record Sheet as being 'Not So Useful' at Halloween but had decided by Easter that it was useful. Even though there was a high level of inaccurate Folder usage, no student highlighted this as a challenge. They simply stated at times that they did not know how to use a resource. Out of a total of 21 students who responded, 20% 'didn't know' whether the Divider Sheets were useful, 12% 'didn't know' whether the Tracking Goals Graph was useful and 40% 'didn't know' whether the Goals List was useful.

#### **4.3.2.4 Are there benefits and challenges for teachers?**

Since the 2008-2009 academic year, the teacher-researcher had been using a Folder format with all junior and senior students as an organisational tool and curriculum guide. In this way, the teacher-researcher commented at the Second Teacher Questionnaire at Halloween that the Phase 1 Folder better facilitated framing of topics and tasks as the pupils were able to see where a lesson or group of lessons fit within the French subject curriculum. The Divider Sheets could also facilitate quicker recall of topics covered for the purposes of revision for larger tests such as the Christmas test as each Divider Sheet was a record of topics covered. A topic with less boxes ticked indicated that this topic required further learning or revision. Simultaneously the Divider sheets were also a record of topics yet to be covered. The English participant teacher also noted that the Folder was beneficial as an organisational tool and revision guide.



The teacher-researcher also found that the Difficulties / Goals Record Sheet facilitated more focused discussion of student progress at the Parent-Teacher Meeting<sup>2</sup>.

Overall both the teacher-researcher and the English participant teacher considered benefits observed for students to simultaneously be benefits to their own teaching practice. Consequently these benefits have been discussed in Section 4.3.2.3.

Teacher challenges are also linked closely with student challenges. As mentioned above in Section 4.3.2.3, the over-complicated nature of the Folder posed a challenge for both teachers and students.

As with the implementation of any new resource or strategy, time is required to introduce and become familiar and confident in employing it. The Folder was clearly complicated in nature and time-consuming to implement for both teachers. In spite of this the teacher-researcher and her student group maintained a consistent level of engagement with the resources. Hence it cannot be underestimated how teacher ownership of resources also impacted on consistency or lack thereof, in terms of resource implementation in Phase 1.

#### **4.4 Phase 2**

Phase 2 of the study took place between August 2011 and June 2012. Additionally a Post-Study Review Questionnaire was completed in December 2012. Data collected from five participant groups will be discussed and analysed here. Once again the research questions will serve as a framework for this discussion and analysis in order to determine the Phase 2 Folder's suitability and effectiveness as a tool which provides a framework for a student self-assessment cycle. The transferability of the Phase 2 Folder will be summarised and discussed in the final sub-section 4.4.2.4 of Section 4.4.2.

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<sup>2</sup> Some parents also appreciated that their daughters were taking time to purposefully reflect on their areas of weakness.

#### **4.4.1 Amendment of the Folder**

The teacher-researcher felt that much had been learnt from the resource design and research process during Phase 1. She felt more confident now in designing a theoretically more effective Folder for the main study. Data had already highlighted the over-complicated nature of the Phase 1 Folder and a lack of engagement by the English group participants. The improvement in the delivery and quality of feedback (Sadler 1989, Torrence & Pryor 1998) while encouraging learning goal as opposed to performance goal orientations (Dweck, 2000) is critical to supporting and improving learning. The Self-Assessment Form (Phase 2 Appendix C) was designed to replace the Results / Goals Record Sheet and Tracking Goals Graph. This form was to be used at the beginning, during and/or after a task to record assessment details. As the form focussed on the assessment of a single task, it was felt that providing space for task criteria, as opposed to learning objectives / outcomes and task completion examples, was an appropriate option to help students successfully complete a task. Consequently drawing on all components of the The AfL Cycle as detailed in Figure 2.5 of the Literature Review, a student self-assessment cycle was represented by the following headings on the form:

- 'What I need to do' - Sharing and using task criteria
- 'What went well' - Identification of learning strengths
- 'What needs improvement' - Identification of areas for learning improvement
- 'What are my goals' - Setting and completing learning goals

Students were given the opportunity to discuss as well as write a commentary on all the above areas. The need for more detailed and constructive feedback was also somewhat highlighted by data collected from the Baseline Student Questionnaire in September where an average of 37% of all participant students reported rarely getting the opportunity to write a comment on their learning and a further average percentage of 39% who reported never getting the chance to do this.

The teacher-researcher was satisfied that this form represented an improvement on equivalent attempts to include student self-assessment strategies in the Phase 1 Folder. Here, all principals of the AfL Cycle were incorporated into this resource. Crucially there now existed within the Folder a resource which was aimed at facilitating effective feedback as framed by the task criteria - feedback that the students could provide for

themselves. As stressed by Sadler (1989) in order for students to be able to improve they must develop the ability to monitor the quality of their own work while they are working. It was envisaged that effective task assessment criteria could aid in the development of this ability. Furthermore the teacher-researcher believed it to be advantageous that one resource might more or less help a student to complete a simplified self-assessment cycle.

The Tracking Results Graph was redesigned to allow for the facilitating and recording of student reflections based on information in the Self-Assessment Forms compared with summative results that they were achieving. It was also renamed the Progress Review Sheet.

The revised Divider Sheets and Skills List required re-writing to facilitate their adaptation to the other subjects. The Divider Sheets were initially adapted by the teacher-researcher with close reference to NCCA Subject Curriculums. The separate Phase 2 Folders were then presented to the participant teachers during our training session at the beginning of the year. Participant teachers were requested to check the Divider Sheets and inform the teacher-researcher of any revisions needed. Critical to teacher ownership of resources, only the maths teacher highlighted an issue and thus a certain level of critical reflection on the resources. She decided that the Divider Sheets were roughly a duplication of a strategy that she already used with her students. She used a hardback notebook to record all important notes and to detail what work has been covered. As a result she decided not to employ the resources in a Folder format. The participant teachers were also requested - should they have time- to devise their own Skills List for their subject. No participant teacher found the time to do this however.

As the Phase 2 Folder remained to be a 'new' tool to participants it was deemed that a staggered implementation of the separate resources was appropriate.

The teacher-researcher was now more acutely aware of the need for more effective training and support. The provision of training for the English teacher realistically only amounted to an extended information giving session at the beginning of the year and the opportunity for any follow-up guidance and review was provided via email. In actuality the participant teacher provided feedback on implementation primarily as a result of questionnaire completion. Moreover the teacher-researcher could not provide any follow-up on-site support for the English teacher. The area of effective and continuous training is crucial in the implementation of new assessment methods (Sugrue 2011,

Concannon-Gibney and Murphy 2012). In addition to effective CPD, the Literature Review also highlighted key requirements in effecting change (Joyce *et al.*, 2009):

- the right attitude to learning and preparing the right classroom environment
- effective training for teacher and students
- time; teacher and student need time to acclimatise to a new learning environment, time to practise and amend new strategies and time to reap the benefits

The area of training and support was a complicated area for the teacher-researcher to facilitate and manage. The researcher hoped to improve on training given in Phase 1 and to avoid the more traditional format of CPD 'information-giving' sessions for a more continuous supportive training format. However it was her first time training a group of staff. Moreover the effective implementation of the resources, requires a lot of time, effort and persistence on the part of each participant teacher. Firstly there was difficulty in finding an appropriate time for all participant teachers to come together. Ideally the training session should have been scheduled prior to the beginning of the school year in order for all teachers to study and digest materials to be used during the training session and to formulate questions and reflect on possible amendments. However this was not possible and from the outset it appeared that time was limited.

In preparation for the session and as a support throughout the study, the teacher-researcher compiled and distributed a brief 'Teacher's Guide' for the Folder (See Appendix Q). At this session, an overview of the Folder was given and the first resource to be used, the Divider Sheets were, explained in detail. As with the Phase 1 Folder, resource implementation would be staggered. An e-mail group was set up amongst all participant teachers in order to provide on-going support. Advice and discussion was also facilitated informally in the staff room as and when required.

## 4.4.2 Outcomes of Phase 2

### 4.4.2.1 Can the use of the Subject Learning Folder facilitate the development of student self-assessment skills?

Data relating to the usage of the separate resources by all the subject groups will be presented, contrasted and compared here. To begin with the data pertaining to the teacher-researcher's French group will be discussed first. The evaluation of usage by the other participant groups under the same headings is not possible due to the differences in engagement with the resources.

The Divider Sheets are analysed below in Table 4.6 illustrating overall accuracy of usage. Accuracy of usage was gauged against a high frequency of 'Lesson Learning Goals' present in written form on the Divider Sheets and the marking of a level of understanding beside these 'Lesson Learning Goals'.

**Table 4. 6 Divider Sheets: Levels of Accurate Usage - French**

Resource (19 examples)	Accuracy of usage		
	Little	Some	Full
Divider Sheets -Objective Entry		27% (5)	73% (14)
Divider Sheets -Checking Understanding	37% (7)	63% (12)	

The data presented indicates that overall, there was a high level of learning objective entries made by students as 73% of examples showed full accuracy in learning objective entries. This can be explained mostly by the fact that the teacher ensured these were projected onto the whiteboard in a digital form of the same Divider Sheet that the students were writing onto. The students were only then required to copy this information down accurately. The purpose of recording and tracking this information was explained by the teacher-researcher, each time information of this nature was recorded on a Divider Sheet. This data appears to suggest that students' focus was being drawn to learning progression in the form of sharing of learning objectives and outcomes, on a regular basis. In relation to the reviewing of understanding some accuracy was observed in over 63% of Folders analysed (12 examples). This activity

was facilitated by whole-class plenary and discussion on learning that had taken place. This data appears to suggest that a number of students were beginning to reflect on learning strengths and areas for improvement in a brief manner when reviewing 'Lesson Learning Goals'.

In contrast, the data collected from the other participant groups does not allow for a break down of accuracy as is the case with the French group above. Table 4.7 below presents available data for German, History and Home Economics. The Maths group is not included as this group did not use the Folder format with Divider Sheets. The number of available examples under analysis, is shown in the bracket beside the subject. There numbers of examples collected at the end of the study year varies greatly. Data show there was a lack of engagement with the resources which lead to Folders being left unused and possibly misplaced. The participant teachers attempted to gather as many as they could in order for them to be returned to the teacher-researcher.

**Table 4. 7 Divider Sheets: Analysis of Usage German History Home Economics**

Resource	German (14)		History (27)		Home Ec. (10)	
	Frequency of use	Date of last entry	Frequency of use	Date of last entry	Frequency of use	Date of last entry
<b>Divider Sheets -Objective Entry / checking understanding</b>	infrequent <sup>3</sup>	25 Jan. 2012	Infrequent <sup>3</sup>	11 Jan. 2012	Mostly unused	25 Oct. 2011
<b>Divider Sheets - Filing of notes</b>	Some notes filed		Some notes filed		Very few notes filed	

Table 4.7 suggests that implementation appears to have been inconsistent. *Patchy* implementation, as it is referred to by Black *et al.* (2003) is a noted feature of formative assessment research. What is clear from this data is that subject groups used the Divider Sheets infrequently and all groups had ceased using them by 25<sup>th</sup> January. The participant groups were showing a lack of engagement with the Divider Sheets and Folder format. As a result these resources were not succeeding in facilitating the development of student self-assessment skills in the German, History, Maths and Home Economics groups.

The possible reasons for this will be discussed in Sections 4.4.2.2 and 4.4.2.3 on the benefits and challenges of the Folder.

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<sup>3</sup> Learning objectives entered sporadically with several weeks or longer between entries

The next resource under analysis is the Self Assessment Form. Data from the teacher-researcher's French group are presented in Table 4.8. The table summarises accuracy<sup>4</sup> of usage for the first two forms and consistency of usage for forms three through seven. It is worth analysing the main headings under which student reflections are recorded as each heading corresponds to a key principle in the student self-assessment cycle.

Accuracy of usage for the various sections was gauged against:

- Level of detailed and succinct language used
- Reference to other appropriate information on the form e.g. which task criteria could be mentioned as strengths or areas for improvement
- Whether goals were actionable and appropriate

As highlighted by Table 4.1 on completion rates for resources, figures in the table are based on a maximum of seven self-assessment forms collected from a maximum of 19 students over the course of Phase 2. Percentages are based on the amount of examples available for a certain part of the form i.e. on occasion some sections of the form were left blank. For example in the case of 'What needs improvement' information, some students might not have felt the need to improve as they had completed a task to a high standard. The total number for examples available is given in the bracket beside the percentage.

**Table 4. 8 Self-Assessment Form: Levels of Accurate Usage - French**

Self-Assessment Form Heading	Form 1 : Accuracy of usage			Form 2: Accuracy of Usage			Forms 3-7: Consistency of Usage ***		
	Very little	Fair	Full	Very little	Fair	Full	Very little	Fair	Mostly
<b>What I need to do *</b>			100%			100%			100%
<b>What went well</b>	43% (16)	57%				100% (16)		32% (19)	68%
<b>What needs improvement</b>	57% (16)	43%				100% (9)		32% (19)	68%
<b>My Goal</b>	78% (16)	22%			6%	94% (15)		32% (19)	68%
<b>My Goal **</b>	---				31%	68% (16)		32% (19)	68%

\* High accuracy percentage is explained by the fact that students always copied task criteria from those provided by the teacher on the board

\*\* Teacher had checked goal completion by marking this on Self-Assessment Form

\*\*\* Percentage identical for all resources as an average percentage was calculated from overall use of the Revised Folder.

<sup>4</sup> Phase 2 Appendix O illustrates examples of Self-Assessment Forms 1-6 from an individual student

When employed for the first time with the class, the teacher-researcher explained very little to the students about the filling out of the form, with the exception of providing the task criteria. At this point around half of students presented 'very little accuracy of usage' in relation to identifying learning strengths and areas for improvement. This figure rose further to almost 80% inaccuracy in relation to the students ability to set an appropriate and actionable learning goal<sup>5</sup>. This could be viewed as an indicator of how challenging a concept, learning goal setting is for students. For the purposes of this first 'blind' attempt at a self-assessment cycle, it should also be noted that although students were required to attempt to devise their own learning goal which would address an area for learning improvement, it was not necessary for them to complete it. This was because the goals the students devised lacked sufficient 'actionable' information for them to be carried out and completed.

For the second Self-Assessment Form, full support and direction was given by the teacher-researcher. Accuracy of usage for all parts of the form can be seen to increase as a result. For Self-Assessment Forms 3 - 7, the teacher-researcher found that less and less support and direction was required as the students got used to the activity. Different types of task were used in conjunction with the form e.g. class work, tests, exam corrections.

The teacher-researcher found that the most challenging area for students to independently reflect on was the formulation of actionable learning goals. The students had the tendency to describe them in vague or broad terms e.g. I want to improve my grammar. If grammar improvement is taken as the broad area for improvement, a more appropriate and actionable goal might be illustrated as: I will improve my adjective endings grammar by putting 10 adjectives from my notes into simple sentences, remembering to add the correct adjective endings. Research in the area of feedback identifies the development of student capacity to set goals and plan learning as a considerable obstacle to and a critical requirement for student self-assessment and self-regulation (Carless *et al.*, 2011). To help the students with the formulation of their own personal goals the teacher-researcher provided examples of actionable and appropriate goals and also prompted the students to consider this activity as 'setting themselves a homework'. Examples of vague, broad and clear, specific 'homework' tasks were given on the board and the students were asked to say whether they would be able to do this

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<sup>5</sup> An appropriate and actionable learning goal was one which gave clear instructions on what learning would take place in order to attempt to address an area for improvement i.e. a specific learning task



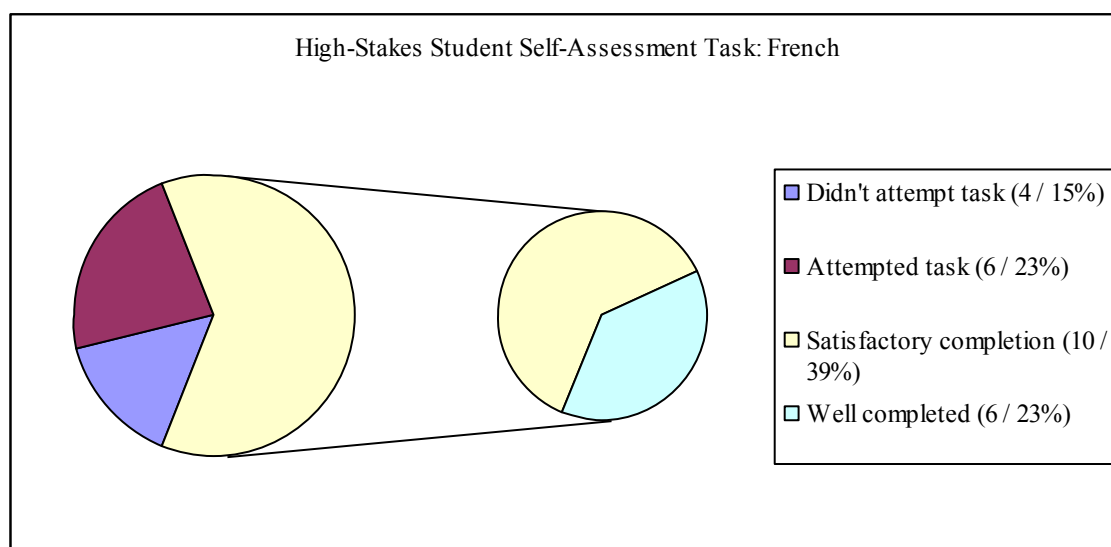
homework if presented as on the board. This activity helped students begin to understand the importance of using clear specific actionable goals.

Based on the data collected on forms 3 - 7, 68% of students gradually began to complete simple self-assessment cycles independently and with consistent accuracy. By the 7th Self-Assessment Form the teacher-researcher observed that student ability to independently complete the self-assessment<sup>6</sup> cycle had increased from no students illustrating full accuracy of completion for the first Self-Assessment Form to 68% of students (13 out of 19) consistently illustrating full accuracy of completion for Self-Assessment forms 3-7. The figure of 68% is encouraging in terms of how students now appeared to be developing some degree of student self-assessment skills.

At this point given the apparent successful use of the Self-Assessment Form by students, the teacher-researcher wished to investigate whether students were perhaps only successfully 'filling out a form' as opposed to developing their ability to independently reflect on learning. The teacher-researcher set a self-assessment task to be completed independently by students as part of the Summer exam at the end of Phase 2. A core task in written production French was the focus of the self-assessment task. High levels of task success are achieved by those students who can monitor grammatical and spelling accuracy while they are writing or actively checking their writing at the end of the task. It was hoped that this task might provide evidence that students were developing self-monitoring skills (Sadler, 1989). During the year, a set of task criteria had been used repeatedly to teach students how to actively check their work while writing or at the end of the task. Students were required to remember these criteria and apply them independently during the exam. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the degree to which the task was attempted and completed by the French participant group.

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<sup>6</sup> A completed cycle was one where the student evaluated and recorded learning strengths and areas for improvement against the task criteria and noted and completed an actionable learning goal based on an areas for learning improvement



**Figure 4. 1 High-Stakes Student Self-Assessment Task:  
Attempting and Completion by French Group**

The data that resulted showed that 22 out of 26 students appeared to attempt the self-assessment task thus showing willingness to attempt to reflect actively on their work. Of these 22 students, the letters of 10 students showed evidence of having completed the task to a satisfactory level with 6 further students completing the task to good level. In summary 61% of the whole student group managed to at least complete the self-assessment task to a satisfactory<sup>7</sup> level with 23% of students included in this figure completing it to a good level. The teacher-researcher believes that this is further evidence that some students were developing self-assessment skills. Particularly encouraging is that this task shows evidence of student willingness to apply these skills during a high-pressure summative exam.

Once again in contrast to the apparent progress in facilitating the development of student self-assessment skills as evidenced in the French group, the other participant groups were witnessing little progress.

The Maths and Home Economics group were the only groups who managed to use the Self-Assessment Form. However these groups only managed to attempt the student self-assessment process once each, although the maths teacher reported having done this several times, this was not discernible from the hardback notebooks collected. The first attempt was to be 'blind' as with the first attempt with the French group. This involved

<sup>7</sup> A satisfactory level of self-assessment of task involved the correct identification of various types of words by providing a legend (task criteria noted done) and underlining/highlighting them appropriately. Grammatical accuracy of at least half of these highlighted words was considered by the teacher-researcher to be a 'satisfactory' outcome.

having the students complete the Self-Assessment Form independently and without any guidance from teachers or other students. Evaluation of these forms therefore cannot be used to highlight any discernible progress towards developing student self-assessment skills.

The final resource to be assessed in terms of facilitating the development of student self-assessment skills is the Progress Review Sheet. Table 4.9 represents data related to the analysis of 26 Progress Review Sheets and details information based on two examples of use. The figures represent numbers of students in terms their completion of self-assessment cycles, their use of clear reflective commentary<sup>8</sup>, their setting of a 'goal line' of achievement (a line on the graph which indicates the average mark they wish to achieve) and their actual achievement in relation to this goal line. The information represented in the bracket e.g. (Max. 4), indicates the maximum number of Self-Assessment Forms that could have been completed at that point.

**Table 4. 9 Progress Review Sheet: Levels of Accuracy - French**

Progress Review Sheet	No. of Self-Ass. Forms completed			Clear, specific & reflective language used			Goal line realistic/challenging? *		Summative results at/above goal line			
	4	3	2	brief	some	mostly	yes	no	all	most	some	most below
<b>Review 1 Feb 2012</b>	15	7	2	4	11	9	22	2	4	12	5	2
<b>Review 2 Apr 2012</b>		1	22	2	17	2	21	2	20			2

\* The Goal Line was suggested by the student and then set or amended based on discussion with the teacher

\*\* Figures along this row indicates numbers of students out of a maximum of 26

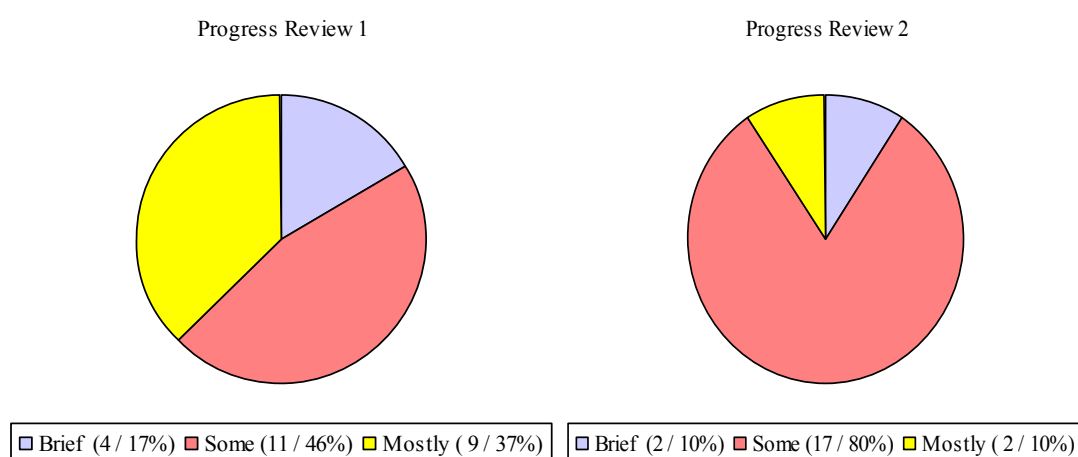
Students plotted their summative results at two separate points in the year and wrote a commentary based on the comparison of this summative information and formative information provided by the Self-Assessment forms. Students had to write the reflective commentary independently however broad guidelines were provided by the teacher-researcher. These guidelines were also the means by which the teacher-researcher judged the quality of reflective language development used (See Phase 2 Appendix P for example of Progress Review Sheet detailing brief, some and mostly reflective language development).

<sup>8</sup> Clear reflective commentary was evaluated based on reflection of marks in reference to areas of learning strength, areas for improvement and associated learning goals.

The guidelines were as follows:

- reference to specific learning strengths
- reference to specific areas for improvement
- reference to learning goals
- reference to progress in relation to Graph Goal Line

The drawing together of this information in a succinct manner is a skill in itself and did prove to be a challenging task for students. Figure 4.2 below is a comparison of data presented in Table 4.9 above on the quality of written language used by French group students on the Progress Review Sheet.



**Figure 4. 2 Progress Review Sheet: Quality of Language Used**

The data for the first review in February indicates that at least some clear, specific and reflective language was used by at least 83% of students, with 37% of these students showing an increase in the quality of this language. At the second review in April, once again at least some clear, specific and reflective language was used by 90% of students, with 10% of these students showing an increase in the quality of this language.

Although an overall increase in the numbers of students using some clear, specific and reflective language can be seen there is also a reduction on figures for mostly clear, specific and reflective language from Progress Review 1. Although not discernable from data collected, this decrease might be explained by the observation that as 91% of students presented summative marks above their goal line for the second review. This possibly resulted in less written reflection being present on the corresponding Progress Review Sheets as students believed that as their goal mark was being achieved there was less need to comment in detail. Subsequently there was less commentary available for the teacher-researcher to analyse. The teacher-researcher believes that a reduction in

the quality of reflective language might not necessarily have occurred, only a reduction in the quantity of language available to analyse. The information relating to the students' Goal Line will be further discussed in Section 4.4.2.2 on student benefits. However data collected from the evaluation of the Progress Review Sheet appear to suggest that students were developing self-assessment skills.

Once again in contrast to the apparent progress in facilitating the development of student self-assessment skills as evidenced in the French group, the Progress Review Sheet was also having little impact in this process in terms of the experiences of the other participant groups. The Maths group and Home Economics group are the only groups who managed to use the Progress Review Sheet and this only included use by means of plotting of summative results in the graph section. Reflective language development as evidenced in written form in the context of this resource is not discernable.

In summary data analysis is encouraging in terms of the teacher-researcher's French group engagement with the Folder resources. There appears to be evidence that the resources were facilitating the development of student self-assessment skills. The same cannot be said for the other participant groups as there is no evidence discernable from the evaluation of resource examples due to the lack of engagement on the part of German, History, Home Economics groups and Maths to a lesser extent. This in itself is a notable finding and the next step is to explore the reasons for this in Sections 4.4.2.2 and 4.4.2.3 on student and teacher benefits and challenges.

#### **4.4.2.2 Are there benefits and challenges for students?**

The teacher-researcher observed apparent development of self-assessment skills in French group participants as outlined in Section 4.4.2.1. This is supported here by comments made by the teacher-researcher in the End of Year Teacher Questionnaire. She noted that "students were developing a clearer view of where their learning was positioned within the curriculum" and as a result of the use of clear task criteria, "students showed improved ability in successfully completing tasks". Moreover the teacher-researcher was encouraged by the fact that "learning confidence was being fostered by the consistent identification of learning strengths" and "focus was shifting

from the "need" for summative feedback provided by the teacher to formative self-assessed feedback".

Despite the lack of discernable evidence from the evaluation of Folder examples completed by students of other student groups, other participant teachers also commented on observable benefits of the use of the Folder on the End of Year Teacher Questionnaire. For example, the Maths teacher commented that:

Students are more organised [...] they can see their progress at a glance from the graph [...] they questioned grading more and wanted to know where they lost marks. (Maths teacher)

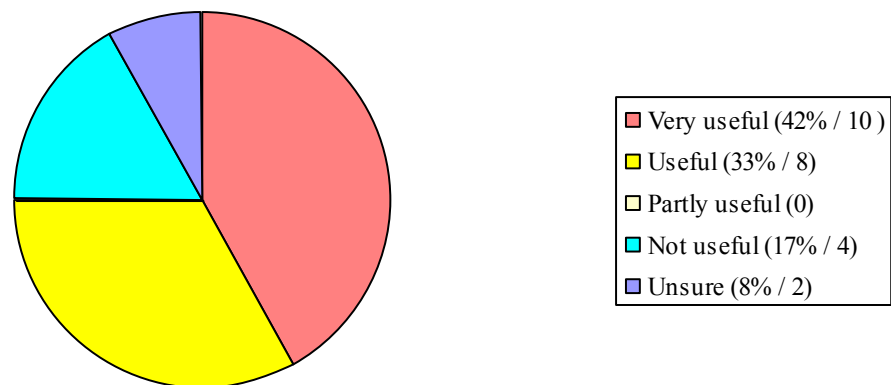
This can be seen as evidence of students taking a more active role in feedback however it also indicates a continued focus on summative results, which from this comment can still be seen as an important focus for the Maths teacher. The History teacher's comments illustrate a less traditional view of the benefits of the Folder and are more in line with formative assessment principles. She recognises that:

Students have become aware of pitfalls and stumbling blocks and the need to set themselves clear, specific targets. (History Teacher)

It would appear that exposure to the AfL principles might be influencing this participant teacher's teaching and learning strategies outside of implementation of the Folder. This point will be further discussed in the following Section 4.4.2.4 on benefits to teachers.

In support of the above comments, French participant students also expressed their belief in the usefulness of the Folder resources. The End of Year Student Questionnaire produced data on student opinion of the usefulness of the various resources. Firstly data is presented from the French Group below in Figure 4.3.

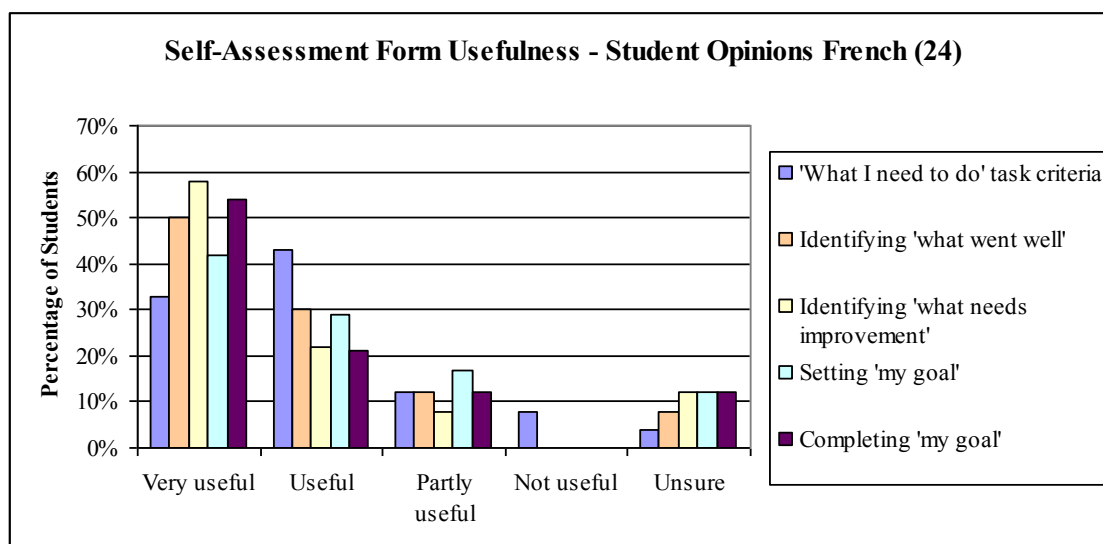
Have the Divider Sheets been useful to your learning? French



**Fig. 4. 3 Usefulness of Divider Sheets: French (24 responses)**

The above chart shows that 75% of students considered the Divider Sheets to be at least useful to their learning. Student commentary supplied with these responses details that in using the Divider Sheets "it was easier to find work from a long time ago than in a copy" which might support the importance of scaffolding learning and not throwing away 'old learning'. This might be considered the case when old copy books etc. are thrown out while still containing a valuable record of familiar prior learning. Also in line with participant opinions in Stage 1 of the study, students commented that the Divider Sheets helped them "be more prepared and organised". There were four students who believed the Divider Sheets not to be useful mostly in term of the practical challenges as "it's confusing to lose sheets as the folder is building up and always breaks". Although generally the teacher-researcher observed that students were at ease with this new organisational tool, she believes that some further revision will be necessary in order to attend to student concerns of this nature. One student commented that she "never understands what the sheets mean" which indicated that the purpose of the divider sheets was not clear to the student. It would therefore also be vital to gauge the needs of all students in terms of clarifying the purpose of the resources.

Moving on to the student perceived benefits of the self-assessment form, Figure 4.4 below is a graph representing French student opinion on its separate components.



**Figure 4. 4 Student Opinion: Usefulness of Self-Assessment Form - French**

In comparison with the Divider Sheets, there was a similar proportion of students who considered the Self-Assessment Form to be at least 'useful' or 'very useful' - an average of 75% of students (18). The components 'What went well' and 'What needs improvement' were considered to be the most useful - 80% of students (19) considered both these components to be at least useful. These are encouraging figures as the Self-Assessment Form was the principle resource used to foreground key formative assessment principles. Student commentary highlighted that at first "it was hard but after a while it was easier to make goals and to see how to improve". This can be seen to support teacher-researcher commentary on accuracy of use of the Self-Assessment Form. Also supportive of teacher-researcher commentary on the benefits of task criteria in enabling students to better complete tasks is the comment by one student who observed that "what I need to do was useful as there was no confusion in seeing what needed to be done". More general comments such as "I think I have learned lots using these techniques" and "it has helped me with everything, it's simple and it's easy" point to a overall satisfaction with the Self-Assessment Form on the part of some French participant students.

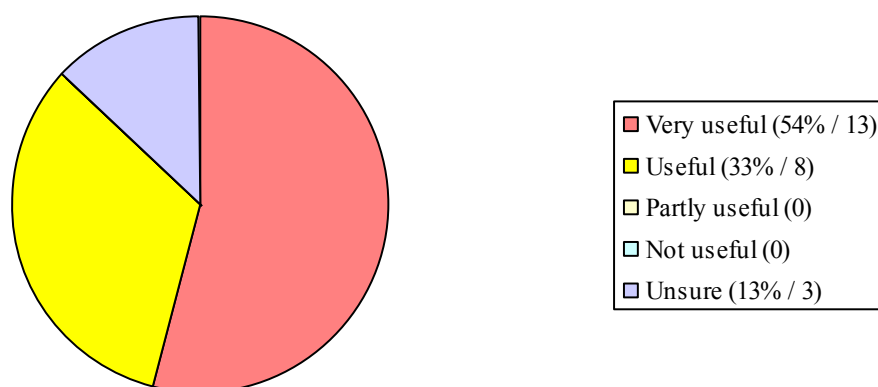
Understandably, commentary collected from participant students in the German, History, Maths and Home Economics groups does not detail specific benefits based on actual use of Folder resources. However, similarly to their teachers as will be discussed further on in this section, some students were coming to a realisation that the principles promoted by the Folder could be beneficial. For example, two students, one from German and one from History, commented that "it was useful to see what I needed to



work on" and "maybe if we used it a bit more consistently it might have been useful". Contrasting responses from the same questionnaire highlight a good deal of confusion on the part of many participant students in terms of Folder usage. For example, 2 students commented that "it confused" them and "they didn't understand how it was supposed to help". Many students did not understand the purpose of the Folder and saw it often as a "waste of time" which did not make a positive impact on learning for important exams.

Figure 4.5 below shows that 87% of French participant students (21) considered the Progress Review Sheet to be at least useful to their learning.

Has the Progress Review Sheet been Useful to your Learning? French



**Figure 4. 5 Usefulness of Progress Review Sheet: French ( 24 responses)**

Student commentary highlighted that this resource was helpful in identifying which topics had been well learnt and which required improvement. It also visually illustrated drops in results which indicated more revision was needed. Some students appeared to still enjoy receiving summative assessment information and this was also seen as an indicator of progress. However it appears that students might have come to the realisation that it is not the only indicator of progress as their own assessments of progress were being fore-grounded in class on an on-going basis.

If an average across all resources is calculated, a total for those students who considered the Phase 2 Folder to be at least useful amounts to 79% (19 students out of 24).

Interestingly the Progress Review Sheet was considered the most useful resource according to students, although opinion on the other resources is not far behind. This is a similar overall opinion to that of Stage 1 participant students, where the Tracking

Progress Sheet was considered the most useful by all participant students. Although the teacher-researcher considers the Phase 2 Folder to be an improved version of the Phase 1 Folder.

Table 4.10 below also provides insight into student opinion on the development of their independent learning skills overall. It contrasts the opinions of students in all participant groups based on responses from the End of Year Student Questionnaire in May.

History, German and Home Economics responses are grouped together as they were considered to have had similar experiences of engagement with the Folder.

**Table 4.10 Student Opinion: Working more independently - All participant groups**

<b>I can work more independently</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
<b>French (May - 24)</b>	50% (12)	33% (8)		4% (1)	13% (3)
<b>Maths (May - 14)</b>	14% (2)	36% (5)	21% (3)		29% (4)
<b>German, History &amp; Home Ec (May - 51)</b>	14% (7)	31% (16)	9% (4)	10% (5)	35% (18)

Here data indicates that 83% of French participant students were of the opinion that they could work more independently after completing the Folder. This figure for French is the highest out of all other participant groups. This contrasts with the figure for the Maths participant group where half of students were of the opinion that they could work more independently. This group was deemed to have engaged with the resources more than the final three groups of German, History and Home Economics, where the equivalent figure also contrasts with the French group at 45%.

Further data which appear to point to increases in self-assessment confidence can be seen in the comparison of responses to the same questions in the Baseline Student Questionnaire and the End of Year Student Questionnaire as completed by the French participant group. Students were prompted to state their level of agreement with six statements that focused on key components in student self-assessment. Table 4.11 below shows the comparison of data from 24 student questionnaires returned in September and May. The responses to statements could be a possible indicator of student confidence in carrying out key student self-assessment skills. Confidence is a

component of a positive attitude and crucial to preparing the way for effective change in assessment practices along with effective CPD and time (Joyce *et al.* 2009).

**Table 4. 11 Contrasting Levels of Student Self-Assessment Confidence  
September to May - French**

<b>FRENCH (24 student Questionnaire)</b>		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
<b>I'm sure about what I'm going to learn</b>	Sep	4% (1)	37% (9)	21% (5)		38% (9)
	May	34% (8)	58% (14)			8% (2)
<b>I'm sure about where my learning fits into the syllabus</b>	Sep	4% (1)	34% (8)	4% (1)	4% (1)	54% (13)
	May	50% (12)	21% (5)	8% (2)		21% (5)
<b>My teacher provides me with a clear guide to completing tasks</b>	Sep	17% (4)	67% (16)	4% (1)		12% (3)
	May	50% (12)	38% (9)	4% (1)		8% (2)
<b>I can recognise areas of my learning that need improvement</b>	Sep	12% (3)	80% (19)	4% (1)		4% (1)
	May	62% (15)	29% (7)			9% (2)
<b>I can recognise areas of my learning that I've done well</b>	Sep	12% (3)	71% (17)			17% (4)
	May	63% (15)	30% (7)			17% (4)
<b>I can set learning goals that help me improve my learning</b>	Sep	12% (3)	71% (17)			17% (4)
	May	54% (13)	30% (7)	8% (2)		8% (2)

Data suggest an overall increase in the numbers of students who felt confident in self-assessment skills from 68% to 85% over the period from September to May. An increase of 38% in the figures of students who strongly agreed with the six statements is also observable. Simultaneously a reduction in numbers of students unsure about their responses to six out of seven statements is also observable. This amounts to an average reduction of 15%. It would appear that the Folder resources have had a positive effect on students' levels of self-assessment confidence.

This data contrasts with that produced by the other groups when responding to the same questions. Tables 4.12 and 4.13 present equivalent data collected from these seven statements for the participant Maths group and combined for the German, History and Home Economics groups.

**Table 4. 12 Contrasting Levels of Student Self-Assessment Confidence  
September to May - Maths**

<b>Maths (Sep - 21 Questionnaires May - 14 Questionnaires)</b>		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
<b>I'm sure about what I'm going to learn</b>	Sep	14% (3)	58% (12)	14% (3)		14% (3)
	May	7% (1)	50% (7)	7% (1)		36% (5)
<b>I'm sure about where my learning fits into the syllabus</b>	Sep	9% (2)	34% (7)	19% (4)		38% (8)
	May	21% (3)	36% (5)	7% (1)		36% (5)
<b>My teacher provides me with a clear guide to completing tasks</b>	Sep	28% (6)	57% (12)	5% (1)		10% (2)
	May	36% (5)	29% (4)	7% (1)		28% (4)
<b>I can recognise areas of my learning that need improvement</b>	Sep	19% (4)	62% (13)			19% (4)
	May	36% (5)	28% (4)			36% (5)
<b>I can recognise areas of my learning that I've done well</b>	Sep	9% (2)	62% (13)	5% (1)		24% (5)
	May	21% (3)	43% (6)			36% (5)
<b>I can set learning goals that help me improve my learning</b>	Sep		38% (8)	38% (8)		24% (5)
	May	14% (2)	36% (5)	14% (2)		36% (5)

Data presented in Table 4.12 above appear to indicate a decrease in numbers of Maths students who felt confident in certain self-assessment skills from September to May. An average reduction in numbers of 17% is observable. Simultaneously an average increase of 29% in the numbers of students unsure about the responses to these statements is also

observable. These data may suggest that ineffective implementation of formative assessment strategies can be counter productive as previously alluded to here in Section 4.4.2.3 above. Another argument can also be presented here in that once students had a better understanding of self-assessment they might have been less inclined to rate themselves highly in relation to their confidence. If this is in fact the case, it can be argued that the increases in levels of confidence for the French group are even more concrete as these students were now more aware of what was required when developing self-assessment skills. There is a considerable difference in respondent numbers for both questionnaires and individual student circumstances that can have an impact on learning confidence, have not been taken into account. Nevertheless the teacher-researcher believes the inclusion of this data is justified by virtue of the comparison of these results with the equivalent from other participant groups. Table 4.13 overleaf now presents equivalent data for the German, History and Home Economics groups.

Data appears to indicate a further decrease in percentages of students who felt confident in certain self-assessment skills from the period of September to May for students in the History, German and Home Economics groups. An average reduction of 24% is observable, 7% more than the Maths group and simultaneously an average increase of 18% in the numbers of students unsure about their responses to these statements is also observable. Perhaps inconsistent implementation of the Phase 2 Folder has had an impact on student perceived self-assessment confidence. When the equivalent results from the French groups are held in comparison the other participant groups, consistent and effective use of the resources appeared to result in an overall increase in student perceived self-assessment confidence. In addition an overall reduction in the numbers of students unsure about their responses to these six statements was also shown. This appears to be a noteworthy difference in results in terms of where the Folder was confidently and consistently employed and where it was not.

**Table 4.13 Contrasting Levels of Student Self-Assessment Confidence  
September to May - German, History, Home Ec**

<b>German, History, Home Ec (Sep - 75 Questionnaires May - 51 Questionnaires)</b>		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
<b>I'm sure about what I'm going to learn</b>	Sep	15% (11)	65% (49)	9% (7)		11% (8)
	May	18% (9)	47% (24)	2% (1)	4% (2)	29% (15)
<b>I'm sure about where my learning fits into the syllabus</b>	Sep	9% (7)	39% (29)	12% (9)	13% (10)	27% (20)
	May	4% (2)	37% (19)	12% (6)	6% (3)	41% (21)
<b>My teacher provides me with a clear guide to completing tasks</b>	Sep	32% (24)	61% (46)			7% (5)
	May	21% (11)	43% (22)	2% (1)	7% (3)	27% (14)
<b>I can recognise areas of my learning that need improvement</b>	Sep	25% (18)	61% (46)	5% (4)	1% (1)	8% (6)
	May	12% (6)	45% (23)	10% (5)	6% (3)	27% (14)
<b>I can recognise areas of my learning that I've done well</b>	Sep	27% (20)	68% (51)	1% (1)		4% (3)
	May	18% (9)	41% (21)	6% (3)	6% (3)	29% (15)
<b>I can set learning goals that help me improve my learning</b>	Sep	16% (12)	47% (35)	12% (9)	4% (3)	21% (16)
	May	12% (6)	33% (17)	6% (3)	14% (7)	35% (18)

#### **4.4.2.3 Are there benefits and challenges for teachers?**

The Phase 2 Folder format was a format that the teacher-researcher was comfortable and confident in using. The teacher-researcher was also relatively confident that this revised Folder might have gone some way to better facilitating the development of self-assessment skills in contrast to the Phase 1 Folder. Taken from the Baseline Teacher Questionnaire in September, comments made by other teachers in relation to

participation in the impending study are presented below. Initially their attitude appears to be generally positive:

I am looking forward to the study. Any tool that has the potential to improve learning is worth a try. (Maths teacher)

I think it will encourage students to take more responsibility for their learning and progress. It will also highlight the different sections within the syllabus which the students are often unaware of. Outlining lesson objectives will help to focus each lesson however in this subject area it may be difficult to record every learning objective within a topic as there is a lot of content. (Home Ec. teacher)

I am looking forward to working with the resources. I am hoping it will force me to be more reflective of my own practice as concerns AfL and that I will learn positive habits as a result. (German teacher)

It can only be good to review how students and teachers alike learn and improve. (History teacher)

The comments above indicate that participant teachers could understand the potential of the formative strategies employed in the Phase 2 Folder i.e. the importance of reflection and subsequent action to improve by "students and teachers alike". However, the Home Economics teacher above was already flagging possible challenges with the implementation of the Folder i.e. possibly time constraints and/or Divider Sheet text box constraints due to a content heavy curriculum.

Despite these initially positive comments, data already presented in Section 4.4.2.1 on frequency and accuracy of use has proven that an overall lack of engagement with the Phase 2 Folder occurred for all participant teachers other than the teacher-researcher. The teacher's attitude to and engagement with the resources is pivotal in influencing the students' attitudes to and engagement with the resources. Comments made by the other participant teachers as the study continued are key to understanding their reasons for a lack of engagement.

Data was collected in a Review Questionnaire in November 2011 to examine how implementation was going. At this point the teacher-researcher had hoped that the

Divider Sheets were being used relatively frequently. Comments below appear to indicate that they were being used to a certain extent:

I have been using the Folder whenever we started or finished a topic. At the start, students filled the objectives and date into the appropriate section, and at the end they evaluated their understanding of the topic. I have not asked them to use it to file sheets or resources. (German teacher)

Using [it] to list topics to be covered & to tick off when complete using at beginning & end of each chapter. Putting tests into folder. (Home Ec. teacher)

I haven't used the Folder as much in the second term. I just found I didn't get the time but when I did I tried to use it at least twice a week. I would write the learning outcomes on the board, then get them to take them down and tick off at the end. The work is usually is generally learning as part of a topic, including reading, writing, reviewing. The biggest problem I find is that I never get the time to properly finish the end so I feel I rush the end and they are not really thinking about what they have learned. Perhaps I am setting too many learning outcomes. I have not tried to put in any project work yet. (History teacher)

Am not using this section at all as each student has a notes copy for maths and I notate each lesson on the board. This is their revision tool/bible and indeed some students that i have had since 2nd year still have all their notes copies in 6th year and find them useful. I regard this copy as the 'Divider Section'. (Maths teacher)

Commentary above indicates that all participant teachers at this stage were not using the Folder to replace the need for copies, as was the case with the French group. The Folder format might have been considered a very different manner of recording student work in contrast to traditional copy book or hardback copy usage. Participant teachers may have decided to stick with their own tried and trusted routines. A significant change in routine might indeed add to an already large and pressurised work load.

The German and Home Economics teachers were using the Folder to file certain types of information and the History teacher was under pressure from time constraints to use the Divider Sheets in the manner advised. The History teacher also mentions that she is uncertain about how to formulate the 'learning outcomes'. This is an important



comment. If participant teachers are unsure of what effective employment of formative strategies entails and thus what to write in relation to that required by the resources, how might they be able to get the most out of the resources and consequently the associated AfL concepts. At the same review, the German, Home Economics and History teacher all remarked that they either didn't have the time or had not yet managed to implement the Self-Assessment Form yet. The Maths teacher had done so and was using it to review learning at the end of each topic test.

At the same Review Questionnaire in November, data collected from the teacher-researcher contrasts with the above. Crucially the teacher-researcher was very encouraged by how the explicit recording of 'Lesson Learning Goals' onto Divider Sheets and task criteria had increased the level of purposeful dialogue about learning and associated tasks. At the same time it cut down on the answering of repeat questions as students had a task guide which reduced confusion on how to go about a task. She highlights that writing out task criteria "really focuses the students on accurately completing tasks". She also points out that after guidance and support, the students' articulation of learning goals was improving. In addition the 'Marking Criteria' text box on the Self-Assessment Form went unused by the teacher-researcher, thus highlighting the possible ineffectuality of providing summative assessment information within a student self-assessment cycle of this nature, in the case of the French participant group in any case.

The teacher-researcher also found it encouraging that the Self-Assessment Form posed no major obstructions in its implementation as evidenced by comments in the End of Year Teacher Questionnaire. Highlighted here is the importance of having a "clear path" for students to follow to successful task completion in the form of effective task criteria. When this is provided, students appeared to be able to independently complete the self-assessment cycle relatively well.

Finally the teacher-researcher was also greatly encouraged by data that appeared to indicate that although a new and 'time-consuming' resource was being implemented and employed, this appeared to have no adverse affect on students' summative marks. Table 4.6 in Section 4.4.2.1 provides data in support of this. At the February Progress Review marks recorded for 4 students were at or above their goal line. At the April Progress Review marks recorded for 20 students were at or above their goal line.

Nevertheless, the other participant teachers appeared not to be equally convinced about the pedagogical effectiveness of the Folder. Critically they were not certain about the value of the Divider Sheets and as a result this lack of confidence appears to have had a knock-on effect in relation to implementation and engagement with the Self-Assessment Form - arguably the most relevant resource to developing student self-assessment skills - and the Progress Review Sheet. What was becoming clear here, was that the order of resource implementation was critical. The teacher-researcher had directed that the Folder format and Divider Sheets were to be implemented first. This required considerable change to tried and trusted classroom routines.

More critically to the findings of the study overall however is discussion which attempts to explain the participant teachers' overall lack of engagement. As initially observed, all teachers were positive about the possible beneficial potential of the Folder. Moreover when later questioned about in the semi-structured interviews in January, all participant teachers acknowledged that student self-assessment could help share responsibility for learning between the teacher and the student. Commentary indicates enthusiasm for the concept from all teachers however some teachers reined in this enthusiasm by remembering the current pressures that they face. For example, the Home Ec. teacher commented that "YES! Definitely" in theory she "would love sharing of responsibility" in terms of assessment control but she didn't "think that students would go the extra mile if they are not expected to do it". The History teacher commented that formative assessment "needs to become second nature to teachers before it becomes second nature to students" however "time is a big constraint". It is evident that there are factors that influence a teacher's belief in the practical application of student self-assessment. There are obstacles in the form of pressure inside and outside the classroom. Carless *et al.* (2011) support this view based on their research of feedback practice within a small group of award-winning third level teachers. They highlight that amongst some teachers student self-assessment is a desirable goal but given the multiple demands of life as a teacher, it is difficult to achieve in practice. First of all both the History and the Maths teacher mention the issue of time constraints. The embedding of formative assessment in order for teachers to develop an ease and confidence with it is dependent on time. Teachers are under pressure to cover curricular content which leaves less time for other activities which are deemed "not essential", as remarked by the Home Ec. teacher during the semi-structured interviews in January 2012. She also mentioned the attitude of students, that they would not 'go the extra mile' in sharing responsibility for learning,

if they didn't have to. The German teacher also made assumptions about student attitudes to formative assessment, that she wasn't 'sure [they] see it as beneficial'.

It appears that these teachers might partly believe that students' opinions are fixed (as ability) and they might not have any influence over them. However it might be said that it is a teacher's responsibility to try to convince students of the benefits of student self-assessment.

Another main area of challenge was the suitability of the Folder and the lack of teacher ownership of the adapted Folders. Being that the teacher-researcher was the designer of the Folder, she was seen as highly motivated in terms of its implementation even given its 'time-consuming' nature. In contrast however for the other teachers as they possessed very little ownership of the adapted Folders. The History teacher expanded on this issue during the semi-structured interview in January. She had trouble adapting the Folder as it was, to her and her students' needs. The realisation that the Divider Sheets were unsuitable came too late and this led to lack of teacher engagement and a lack of interest which in turn affected the students' attitudes.

#### **4.4.2.4 How Transferable are the Resources across a variety of Post-Primary Subjects.**

Section 4.4.2.1 provides varied evidence on how the Phase 2 Folder has potential as a tool for the development of student self-assessment skills. However this potential was limited to the teacher-researcher's implementation. In the context of this study this potential did not transfer to the other subject groups - there was a lack of engagement with the Folder by all other teachers. This section will further discuss the possible reasons for this.

Data was collected after the completion of Phase 2 in order for teachers to reflect on their use of the Folder and their participation in the study. They were asked to name their top three challenges when it came to implementing new AfL strategies, such as the Folder. The pressure on teachers' time is most evident in the responses - all teachers either directly or indirectly mention this. The students' attitude has an influence on teaching and learning was also mentioned by three out of the four participant teachers.

The task of monitoring student self-assessment and the pressures of exam format were also mentioned.

Interestingly the concept of teacher ownership of resources was not mentioned in any response to this questionnaire. The teacher-researcher's ownership of the Folder and its resources afforded her increased motivation in its implementation despite the 'extra' time that this would entail. Ownership and thorough understanding of the resources also afforded the teacher-researcher increased confidence. A confidence which could be said to encourage similar confidence in the students. In terms of the comments from the other teachers above about student attitude, I believe the primary reason behind negative student attitude might be obscured. It is vital that teachers have confidence and a belief in the effectiveness of the resources they use, in terms of the teaching and learning needs of their students and their own teaching style.

Nevertheless participant teachers appear to have gained insight into other and possibly more effective ways of assessment to support learning. Even though lack of engagement prevented thorough use of the Folder, this did not prevent teachers from grasping the importance of the concepts in play. Furthermore all teachers explained that they took some of the strategies they encountered during the study year and adapted them for their own use the following academic year. Task criteria and identification of learning strength and areas for improvements were highlighted by three out of four teachers as strategies which they are currently using in their classrooms. What is apparent here is the transferability of the formative assessment principles as opposed to the transferability of the Folder itself.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarises and elaborates on the findings which emerged from the research. These findings will be presented and discussed in the context of the research questions. Possible areas for further research will be proposed and briefly elaborated on. The following section then will set about providing recommendations for the key stakeholders in education. The primary focus of an educational system should be to improve student learning. In this way all stakeholders must reflect on how to best support and facilitate effective learning for students, where all other purposes, responsibilities and influences are secondary. Closing comments to the thesis will then be offered based on the continuing journey undertaken by the teacher in striving to align her personal educational values with her actual professional practice.

As described in Chapter 1, the undertaking of this research study has been motivated by a desire to learn and improve professional practice of formative assessment. In turn it is hoped this can lead to learning benefits for her students.

### **5.2 Study Findings**

The research questions exploring the effectiveness, transferability and benefits and challenges of the Folder will now be revisited as headings in this section for the presentation and discussion of study findings. These findings were produced via a rigorous process of action research. Specifically this saw the running of two research cycles of diagnosis of the need to develop student self-assessment skills, the planning of an appropriate intervention, the implementation of the intervention and the evaluation and analysis of data produced.

#### **5.2.1 Can the use of the Subject Learning Folder facilitate the development of student self-assessment skills?**

Findings as presented in Chapter 4 suggested that the Subject Learning Folder did facilitate the development of student self-assessment skills in Phase 2 by the teacher-researcher and her participant French group. However this potential to facilitate self-assessment did not transfer across other participant subject groups. The issues

encountered can be seen as crucial in the implementation of assessment reforms in general. This will be discussed further in Section 5.2.3.

This process of intervention piloting and exposure to assessment theory was critical in drawing the teacher-researcher's attention to the essentials of formative assessment in a real and meaningful way. Although I may have been relatively well experienced in employing certain AfL techniques, teaching and learning activities in my classroom did not have as their focus the core principles of AfL, as described in The AfL Cycle in Chapter 2. Phase 1 highlighted that even with the best of intentions it is at times difficult to shake old preconceptions i.e. a predisposition to foreground certain summative assessment techniques. In coming face to face with these preconceptions, I was required to reflect on my own possibly less effective classroom practices. This process of reflection and action resulted in significant amendments to the Phase 2 Folder. In addition my engagement with the Folder intervention and formative assessment theory has led to significant efforts to counteract these preconceptions and improve professional practice. In brief I foregrounded written and oral comment based assessment framed by clear task criteria. I encouraged and guided students in articulating this information for themselves at every appropriate opportunity. This increased meaningful learning dialogue in the classroom and fostered a more open collaborative learning atmosphere. I adapted the pace of subject content coverage to allow time for students to set and complete learning goals. In addition I also dealt more efficiently with subject content by focusing on what is fundamental to developing language proficiency such as personal, creative and meaningful use of language, in particular oral language. Contrary to 'what comes up next in the book', this is continuously reinforced by accurate use of grammar essentials such as expression in the past, present and future tense based on interrogative, affirmative and negative sentence structures as well the accurate use of verbs, nouns, adjectives and other vocabulary of varying complexity. My primary teaching resources are those I have created myself in line with the needs of students, with text books being my secondary teaching resource. Overall I feel that my professional practice has greatly improved and has also led to benefits for student learning.

In Phase 2 data collected from participant commentary and evaluation of Folder resources in the teacher-researcher's group indicated that students' focus was being drawn away from reliance on the assessment product to an understanding of the importance of the assessment process. Students were developing self-assessment skills

e.g. skills of reflection, articulation of learning progress and directing further learning, through accurate and consistent application of core principals of AfL facilitated by the Folder resources. As stressed by Wiliam (2011), when formative assessment is an integral part of instruction it has the potential to improve learning. The benefits to student learning will be further discussed in the following Section 5.1.2.

### **5.2.2 Are there benefits and challenges for students?**

Although the Folder was only partially successful in facilitating the development of student self-assessment skills across a variety of subjects, there were observable benefits across all stages of the study and participant subject groups. As students were exposed to formative assessment principles, data showed that at various points in both stages of the study the numbers of French participant students confident in their ability to self-assess increased. Student participant commentary across subjects detailing the reasons for the usefulness of the resources highlighted benefits in terms of improved organisation and improved guidance for studying. Commentary also highlighted advantages associated with identifying areas for learning improvement and setting learning goals that would help improve student learning. Although not strictly a benefit in terms of formative assessment theory, some students did highlight that they took enjoyment from tracking their results. Overall 79% of French group students who commented appear to be able to broadly articulate why the resources are or could be beneficial. Although other students had not had consistent practice in student self-assessment, a fifth of them also came to realise the benefits of such principles. In addition data showed that French group students were developing self-assessment skills and applying them outside of the framework of the Folder. During an applied self-assessment task during the Summer exam in Phase 2, 61% of student completed this task to a satisfactory level with 23% of these students completing it to a good level. In terms of possible learning improvements reflected in summative results, data collected from the Progress Review in February and in April showed an increase in students from 4 to 20 whose results were at or above their goal line. Finally student confidence in their self-assessment skills increased over the course of Phase 2 from 68% - 85%.

Where students detailed the challenges associated with using the Folder, commentary from participant students other than the French group highlighted their worry that it was imposing on quality teaching time and its (inconsistent) use was causing confusion and

frustration. There were two French participant students who commented on the challenges. It could be inferred that either students here are de-motivated by the complexity of the Folder and/or showing a reluctance to reflect on learning and are expressing a type of anxiety in relation to focus being drawn to low marks and/or grades. Both the teacher-researcher and the English participant teacher in Stage 1 commented that this was a possible drawback in tracking summative marks and/or grades. However it is exactly this type of anxiety which hopefully can be transformed through a supportive learning environment and effective formative assessment.

Just as the teacher-researcher's understanding of formative assessment principles developed on exposure to the Folder and associated assessment theory, so did many of the students'.

### **5.2.3 Are there benefits and challenges for teachers?**

In her experience of using the Folder format, the teacher-researcher had observed its benefits as an organisational and revision tool and curriculum guide. Comments made by the English participant teacher in Phase 1 also supported the view that the Folder was a useful organisational and revision tool. During Phase 2 of the study, the teacher-researcher was also encouraged by its apparent suitability as a student self-assessment tool. French participant students also appeared to be able to apply their developing self-assessment skills in other contexts, such as the Summer Exam. Section 5.1.1 further highlighted how engagement with the Folder intervention and formative assessment theory was an enriching and beneficial experience in terms of overall professional practice.

Although other Phase 2 participant teachers recognised the possible benefits of the resources in both stages of the study, they were faced with the dilemma of contrasting these benefits with clear practical and pedagogical challenges, such as time constraints, covering curricular content, exam pressure, requirement to provide summative marks and/or grades the added responsibility of checking student learning goals, inexperience in employing AfL and student reluctance. Some participant teachers were reluctant to take a chance on new assessment tools which were unproven in terms of their classroom practice. There was an understandable need for teachers to be able to see and measure the benefits of these new tools before they added to an already large and pressurised workload. At this point however the teacher-researcher would also argue for better ownership of resources. The benefits of teacher innovation on professional practice and



student learning are somewhat exemplified by the engagement of the French participant group with the Phase 2 Folder. This confidence with which the teacher-researcher employed the self-designed Folder went some way to 'cancelling out' the oft-mentioned challenge of time constraints. Indeed the real challenge here is the development and fostering teacher professional confidence and innovation in order to facilitate the transfer of good low-stakes assessment practices across different subjects. As detailed in Section 2.4.3, Finland benefits from high levels of education achievement primarily supported and fostered by low-stakes formative assessment and a high quality of teaching. Such a system appears to be grounded in professional trust and confidence amongst stakeholders where state exams, school ranking and external inspections are not required. I can now identify with the beneficial effect that confidence and quality hold in improving learning for students. It has been through my journey of professional reflection and action that I have developed and improved professional confidence and teaching quality. It is a journey that I would strongly encourage all teachers to take.

In terms of research findings related to the transferability of the Folder, the fact that participant teachers did not have ownership of this resource impacted significantly on its implementation. The Maths teacher appeared to be the only teacher before the beginning of Phase 2 who critically engaged with the need to adapt the Folder to teaching and learning needs in her classroom. She took action by not employing the Divider Sheets as she believed them to be a duplication of an approach she already employed. The other teachers in Phase 2 critically reflected on the suitability of the Divider Sheets during implementation which led them all to discontinue use.

Unfortunately however the unsuitability of this resource appeared to lead these teachers to distrust the most relevant resource the Self-Assessment form, which in turn was mostly left unused. In contrast however, the Maths teacher once again critically reflected on the suitability of this resource, adapted it and as a result she employed it actively. Data showed that her commentary on its implementation was positive.

Despite the lack of transferability and engagement with the Folder during Stage 2, commentary by participant teachers made in a Review Questionnaire the December after the end of the study and detailed in Section 4.4.2.4 supports how might already have begun on a journey of reflection and action as described above. Similarly to the participant students who did not engage fully with the resources yet could articulate the possible benefits of them, these teachers had developed their own current assessment methods based on exposure to the AfL principles during the study. Teachers appear to

have gained insight into other and possibly more effective ways of assessment to support learning. Even though lack of engagement prevented thorough use of the Folder, this did not prevent teachers from grasping the importance of the concepts in play.

### **5.3 Areas for Further Research**

There are possible 'next steps' to be made in terms of this research study. First of all, the Folder was designed based on the core principles of AfL and student self-assessment. Hence its possible effectiveness was evaluated against these principles. Follow-on research could involve the training of teachers in the employment of a set of AfL techniques which support these principles either in order to assess whether the development of student self-assessment skills is further enhanced.

Although increases in student confidence in self-assessment were observable, what direct influence this had on learning was not discernable from data. This area might be explored in the context of learning confidence and motivation theory.

The provision of effective task criteria was an important component of this study and was vital to students being able to monitor the production of work as they were working. Further AfL research could be based how to devise more effective criteria i.e. fuzzy/sharp, manifest/latent, higher order / lower order (Sadler 1989) and other associated techniques such as work exemplars and success criteria. The effect that these different types of task criteria have on task outcomes could then be explored.

The implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework offers a wealth of opportunities for researching formative assessment in an Irish context. One possible area of research might be in exploring the role of teachers in formative assessment and the new level of responsibility attributed to teachers. Given that the participant teachers in this study did not engage fully with an attempt to enhance classroom practice, fostering engagement, confidence and teacher ownership at school level is an area for further investigation together with further research on developing, sharing and transferring resources across different subjects within the same school.

Another avenue of research might be how to provide a digital format for the Folder and the AfL Cycle incorporating and exploring the use of e-Folders and social learning

networks while also attempting to incorporate appropriate Key Skills as referenced by the Junior Cycle Framework.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **5.4.1 Recommendations for own Professional Practice**

*Keep learning, reflecting, innovating and taking action ... with students and teachers.*

The action research process I undertook was an undoubtedly beneficial and enriching experience, personally and professionally. I had initially hoped that the Folder might serve as a useful tool with which teachers and students could engage with core AfL principles. However I discovered that what translates as an effective resource for me might not translate equivalently for others. This realisation marks a clear departure from my thinking at the beginning of this project three years ago. I now possess a clearer understanding of what other teaching colleagues might need in order to develop and transform their professional practice and I remain committed to supporting them.

In addition my aim is to continue to put the learning needs of my students at the heart of all that happens in my classroom. I envisage this will involve undertaking many other planned or impromptu action research projects where the development of student assessment and learning control is core. I am currently trialling methods of authentic oral language learning in French and Irish. The focus is on remodelling and revitalising the traditional method of oral exam whereby the teacher directs and interrogates students, with no provision for cross-questioning by the student. Small student groups are applying core vocab and grammar skill to the creative devising of interactive dialogues. Observations so far indicate that students are taking enjoyment from the process and high levels of task success are evident from all students. They are also taking a clear interest in and responsibility for their own and each others learning.

#### 5.4.2 Recommendations for Teachers

*Faith should be placed in student ability to control their learning*

*Space should be made for developing innovative teaching practice*

In the data collected from Phase 2 of the study the 'reluctance of students' to engage with new teaching and learning methods was mentioned. However data post-study revealed that teachers recognised the importance of their role in breaking down barriers and pre-conceptions to formative assessment in order for student to grasp its importance. This highlights a key component of effecting change - attitude (Joyce *et al.* 2009). Responsibility does lie with the teacher to attempt to convince students of the benefits of embracing changes that stand to be beneficial to their learning. While at the same time encouraging patience and accepting that it may be a bumpy path which involves some risk-taking in terms of trying out new teaching and learning techniques. A new role for teachers is envisaged in the new Framework for Junior Cycle. This role will bring with it challenge and uncertainty but more importantly the opportunity for innovation, professional reinvigoration and improved confidence (Furtado & Anderson 2012).

As Yang and Carless (2013) stress, formative assessment does not aim to remove the use of grades and marks. They will continue to be the ultimate outcome of high-stakes examinations for second and third level education for the foreseeable future. I would advise teachers that the aim should be to evaluate their own teaching and learning methods based on how best to incorporate student self-assessment cycle based on core AfL principles and to make appropriate changes. A balanced approach which prepares students for the inevitability of high-stakes exams but equally values different learning styles, higher order thinking and deeper learning is required. In support of this process it is important to realise one may need to embrace life as a learner and an innovator in order to improve student learning. Only then can one build confidence in consistently applying new assessment strategies. Also one should bear in mind that previous experience with AfL techniques does not mean there is experience in employing an effective AfL cycle. Practical engagement with CPD will be necessary to continue to improve one's practice but also resourcefulness and a critical openness to innovative teaching despite time constraints and other pressures.

Finally, faith must be placed in and space must be made for students to take the reins in their learning and assessment as much as possible. Finding ways of incorporating student input to direct teaching and learning within the context of curricular requirements is key to developing students who can take more responsibility for and ownership of their learning.

### **5.4.3 Recommendations for Students**

*Strive to understand what helps you learn  
taking responsibility in this way will help you lead a successful life*

Zimmerman (2002) highlights the issue of young people living in an "era of constant distractions" (p. 64) and that it is hardly surprising that students cannot "self-regulate their academic learning very well" (p. 64). He describes how students often have no specific learning strategies for condensing and memorising information, they do not plan their study time, they cram right before a test, they may have only vague self-assessment skills and attribute inherent learning difficulties to a lack of ability. Students can be defensive about their study methods, methods that usually provoke anxiety. Eleven years on from this commentary, the sources and level of distraction have increased and levels of student self-regulation have not improved. Many students are 'wired up' to the internet and its distractions from the moment they wake up to the time they go to bed. They are becoming accustomed to expressing themselves via, often impulsive, status updates and a limiting 140 characters. Learning and the development of learning skills are having to fight hard for their place in the lives of students.

Zimmerman describes how a number of meta-cognitive and motivational processes merge to form a self-regulated learner. Processes such as goal setting, time management, learning strategies, self-assessment, seeking help or information, self-efficacy and intrinsic task interest. He stresses how self-regulation is important as it also leads to life-long learning skills.

In encouraging my own students to engage with student self-assessment, a key process in self-regulation, I believe it to be essential to impress on students the importance of finding the courage and confidence to face challenges and to be aware of the importance of developing self-monitoring learning habits. I would agree with Zimmerman's

assertion that there is a clear correspondence with self-regulation and self-reliance to success in life.

#### **5.4.4 Recommendations for School Management**

***Back to the 'chalk face':***

***Principals should strive to understand and address the needs of their teachers***

Whole-school assessment junior cycle reform will take strong, informed and innovative management skills. School principals will need to be as well informed about effective assessment implementation in the classroom, as they would hope their teachers to be. In fact the teacher-researcher proposes that principals and vice-principals may need to return to the 'chalk face' for an extended period in order to gain valuable hands-on experience with formative assessment implementation. Token classroom observation would not suffice. This would also be vital in experiencing the considerable challenges as faced by their teaching staff, in order to develop a CPD structure better suited to their needs. This could foster and acute awareness that a well-considered and long-term approach to CPD, which allows for the measured development of professional practice, is crucial in bringing about effective assessment reform. For example, the facilitation of teacher learning communities and a whole-school approach to innovation particularly in the area of assessment is desirable. If considerations such as these are not taken on board, the danger is that principals might take on an approach of 'AfL box-ticking' without actually knowing what AfL looks like in the classrooms of their own school. They might find themselves becoming out of touch with how students in their own school are learning.

#### **5.4.5 Recommendations for Teacher Training and CPD Providers**

***Train teachers effectively in embedding the AfL Cycle principles as supported by appropriate AfL techniques and innovative creation of tailor-made resources***

The teacher-researcher supports the views of the History teacher when she remarks that these formative assessment needs to become second nature to teachers before they

become second nature to students. Just as teachers have a responsibility to students to break down barriers and preconceptions to AfL, as too do Teacher Training and CPD providers. Ongoing and collaborative CPD where teachers- somewhat fearlessly- become students themselves in testing and improving their formative assessment skills, is a model promoted by considerable research in the area (see for example: Huber 2011, Jones and O'Brien 2011, Early and Porritt 2010, Frost 2012). This model has seen successful in improving teaching practices in comparison to the traditional 'information-giving' once off CPD sessions (Sugrue, 2011).

Interestingly however is that the need for better and continued CPD is not mentioned by participant teachers in this study. This might indicate that perhaps teachers believe that if only the time was available they might be using a lot more formative strategies. However without effective training in formative strategies teachers might still revert back to methods they trust and are confident in using. In addition three teachers also mention student attitude as a challenge in implementing formative assessment strategies. Once again effective CPD and time to develop ease and confidence would be key here in convincing reluctant students, and indeed teachers, of new assessment strategies. In terms of the Irish implementation of junior cycle reforms, as highlighted in Chapter 2 it is fundamental that the Department for Education and Skills and the new JCT facilitate the building of teacher learning communities. These can be considered a stable platform on and from which to reflect on actual practice and to take action to improve professional practice.

Once again support for innovation is also critical here. For example, teachers who wish to explore and innovate their professional practice, might have the opportunity to consult with experts on a more on-going basis rather than simply being exposed to once off instructional sessions.

In addition, in providing initial and CPD training it is vital that teachers are trained in methods that place value on allowing students to monitor their work as they are producing it.

Furthermore, teachers should be trained to embed the AfL Cycle principles as supported by appropriate AfL techniques and innovative creation of tailor-made resources.

#### **5.4.6 Recommendations for Department of Education and Skills and NCCA**

***Teacher consultation and input into Junior Cycle Framework is commendable  
but more direct guidance is needed***

The Department of Education and Skills and the NCCA have so far implemented a predominantly bottom-up approach with the Junior Cycle Framework pilot network of schools. In terms of the development of AfL in these schools, the teachers themselves have been handed the reins in trialling methods and sharing experience on an online social learning network, set up specifically for the pilot schools. This was considered necessary as traditionally there has been a top down approach in the development and implementation of educational reforms and this needed addressing (DES 2012). In the opinion of the teacher-researcher this has been an effective approach in facilitating the development of teacher learning communities and fostering innovation. However in the area of AfL implementation, considerable uncertainty still exists in the area of how to effectively implement it on a whole-school basis. For example, at the most recent network school meeting all participant teachers agreed that the priority for the next meeting was guidance on assessment reform which had been lacking up until that point.

The teacher-researcher applauds the levels of teacher consultation and input fostered by the NCCA in terms of the pilot schools network. However the area of assessment reform is arguably the single most important and challenging area for reform. The teacher-researcher recognises this from her own role in coordinating AfL implementation in her own school. Quite simply, the staff have and will continue to require a great deal of support and guidance. As a result the teacher-researcher hopes that in terms of national roll-out of the revised English specification in September 2014 and in preparing schools overall for assessment reforms, that a comprehensive and considered CPD structure is either in place or in development.

Chapter 2 detailed how other countries were foregrounding formative assessment. I would suggest that the NCCA nail its colours to the mast, so to speak, in terms of foregrounding the role of the student in directing their learning and assessment. For example in information they provide on their primary junior cycle website ([juniorcycle.ie](http://juniorcycle.ie)). They might reflect on how in the Scottish and New Zealand assessment authority sites (Education Scotland 2013, Ministry of Education New Zealand 2013), the language used is direct in their foregrounding of student directed learning facilitated by formative assessment. Crucially they stress how everything must be seen from the



perspective of the learner and teaching and learning strategies should focus on making students thinking visible. This mirrors their approach to formative assessment.

It must be acknowledged that the NCCA have put in place beneficial structures to help drive the reforms such as the pilot school network, the social learning network and off-site pilot school workshops. It is vital to encourage the further development of these but also the improvement of others i.e. the effective provision of formative assessment training on-site and the setting up of teacher learning communities. In addition teachers are currently being directed to view numerous resources from a number of different sources online. However all that 'twitters' is not gold! I feel teachers are being bombarded with information and new resources from all angles and it is proving difficult for them to determine what might be most appropriate and effective to teaching and learning needs in their classroom. Here there is the possibility of teachers not being able to 'see the wood from the trees'. Caution must be exercised as this might result in AfL being viewed as something else 'new' and that it's time will pass and be replaced by the next new assessment fad.

## **5.5 Closing Comments**

My desire to learn and reflections on certain significant personal educational experiences were the impetus to conduct this action research project. I can now consider this process of action research to be another, if not the most significant, personal educational experience that I have encountered to date. In addition, my desire to learn has been reinforced and even enhanced while the tension between my educational values and professional practice has lessened.

I was fortunate in that this action research process played out with the backdrop of the upcoming junior cycle reforms, where my own school was part of the pilot school network. Hence the research has not only had an immediate effect on teaching and learning in my own classroom but also it has been useful in the context of preparations for assessment reforms in my school - it has been a 'living and breathing' entity so-to-speak. What I have learnt from the research has fed directly into efforts to coordinate assessment reform in my own school. Here the first steps to reform have seen whole-staff development and use of effective task criteria to inform teacher and student feedback.

With the approaching transformation of the Irish educational landscape I feel the action research process has left me better equipped to deal with the associated challenges. Moreover the marked improvement in my critical thinking skills has heightened my ability to engage confidently with debate on issues of educational reform. My hope is that I can be successful in expressing and illustrating the power of the process of reflection and action in order to encourage, or better yet, to influence others to start out on their own journey of action and reflection. Real and meaningful improvements to classroom assessment are less likely to be brought about by professional compliance or obligation (Clarke *et al.*, 2012). The potential for real change is born of critical reflection on practice as I can testify to.

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## **Phase 1 Appendices**



## *Le Français – Cahier de Référence*

### **French Language Reference Folder Your Guide and Your Goals For Junior Certificate French**

#### Contents - Work to be covered for Junior Cert

- |   |   |                              |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| <b>1. Ma Famille et Moi</b>                           | - | <i>My Family and Me</i>      |
| <b>2. Mon École</b>                                   | - | <i>My School</i>             |
| <b>3. Ma Maison et mon Quartier</b>                   | - | <i>My House and My Area</i>  |
| <b>4. Les Sports et Les Passe-temps</b>               | - | <i>Sports and Past-times</i> |
| <b>5. Les Vacances</b>                                | - | <i>Holidays</i>              |
| <b>6. Grammar</b>                                     |   |                              |
| <b>7. Written Expression</b>                          |   |                              |
| <b>8. Listening and Speaking</b>                      |   |                              |
| <b>9. Vocabulary Collection Sheets</b>                |   |                              |
| <b>10. Tracking Progress and Achieving Your Goals</b> |   |                              |
| <b>11. Cultural Learning</b>                          |   |                              |


# 1.

## Ma Famille et Moi - *My Family and Me*

(\*Tick box when notes taken and vocabulary practised)

- introducing yourself, family and friends	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Goals Set	Goals Achieved
- describing yourself, family and friends	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Goals Set	Goals Achieved
- numbers/alphabet/spelling/colours	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Goals Set	Goals Achieved
- animals/pets	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Goals Set	Goals Achieved

### B : Difficulties / Goals List (English Example Extract)

 <b>Matching What Needs Work to a Goal</b>	
<b>READING</b>	
<small>NB: WRITTEN WORK GOES INTO SECTION 10 OF FOLDER</small>	
WHAT NEEDS WORK	GOAL
1. I didn't understand a <b>WORD</b>	A. I <b>found</b> the DEFINITION of the word/group of words in a dictionary and use the word in writing or speaking.
2. I didn't understand a <b>GROUP OF WORDS</b>	B. I <b>re-wrote</b> an answer IN MY OWN WORDS.
3. I <b>PARAPHRASED</b> huge chunks of the text without showing that I understood the text.	C. I <b>asked</b> the teacher for help or clarification.
4. I did not find the correct <b>QUOTE</b> or <b>EVIDENCE</b> to support my answer	D. <b>RE-READ</b> your answer. Ask yourself - is this <b>UTTER NONSENSE</b> ? Using text make another <b>LOGICAL</b> answer - you might be lucky and get this right. NB: Remember this for next comprehension
5. I misread the <b>TONE</b> of the text.	E. <b>RE-READ</b> every question and check answer. NB Remember this!
6. I was confused and the answer I gave <b>MADE NO SENSE</b> .	F. I <b>RE-READ</b> set material and <b>keep</b> a diary or notes about the text.
7. I didn't <b>READ</b> the <b>QUESTION</b> <b>PROPERLY</b> .	
8. I <b>DID NOT READ</b> the assigned text e.g. chapter in a novel set for homework.	

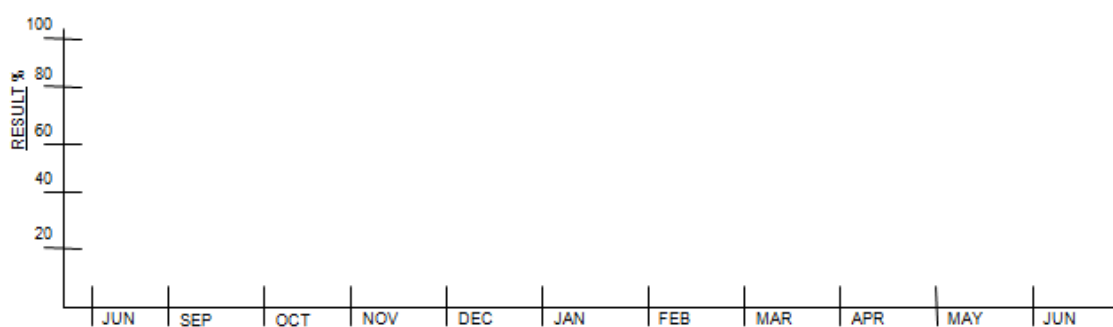
### C: Results / Goals Record Sheet

DATE	TOPIC	RESULT	WHAT NEEDS WORK ?	MY GOAL

### D: Tracking Progress Graph

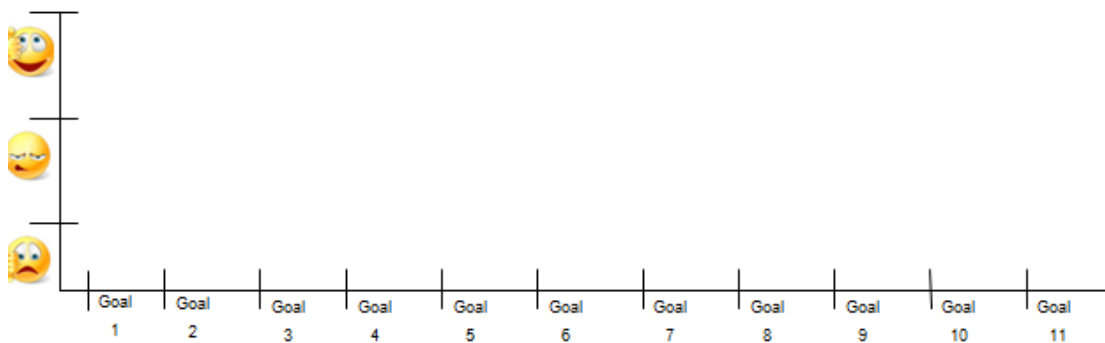
#### Tracking Progress

Plot your progress for tests on the graph - mark in result you will work towards



### E : Tracking Goals Graph

#### Working Towards my Goals



## F: Student Baseline Questionnaire: September

### Self-Assessment and Learning Objectives - Student Questionnaire ( / 9 / 2010 )

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer all questions by ticking boxes and/or giving comments:

Q1a.

What have your results been like for this subject?

Always Good	Mostly good	OK (up and down)	Mostly bad	Always bad

Q1b

-Do you record (write down somewhere specific) your results for the following:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Homework					
Class exercises					
Tests					
-Give details on where you record these results:					

Q1c

-How important is this to you?

Very important	Kind of important	Not important	

-Please detail WHY?

Q1d

Does the teacher set aside time to talk about how a task went?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	

Q1e

-If you wanted to remind yourself of **your strengths and weaknesses**, where would you find this information?

Tick more than one if you need to:

HW journal		Text Book		Copy Book		Hard back	
Teacher		Other		I'd remember		I wouldn't be able to	

- If you wanted to remind yourself of **what you had already learnt**, where would you find this information?

Tick more than one if you need to:

HW journal		Text Book		Copy Book		Hard back	
Teacher		Other		I'd remember		I wouldn't be able to	

- If you wanted to check **what you will learn in the future**, where would you find this information?

Tick more than one if you need to:

HW journal		Text Book		Copy Book		Hard back	
Teacher		Other		I'd remember		I wouldn't be able to	

### Q2a

- How often do you correct your own work in school?
- When you make a mistake, how often do you understand what you have done wrong?
- When you have an area of weakness, are you clear on what you have to do to improve?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

### Q2b

What do you do when you don't understand a mistake you have made? Please give details:

### Q2c

-Have you ever talked in any class about setting goals for you learning i.e. what's you need to do to progress/improve?

Yes	No	Can't remember	Don't know

-If so, please detail whether you record these goals anywhere and how important it is to you to achieve them:

### Q3a

-When you are **waiting on** a task result, like an exam or homework, what do you feel?

Anger	Annoyance	Fear	Worry	Frustration	
Embarrassment	Hurt	Confusion	Disappointment	Stress	
Shock	Don't care	Acceptance	Surprise	Reflective	
Amusement	Satisfaction	Relaxed	Relieved	Happiness	
Delight	Excitement	Other, give details:			

-When you **get** a task result, like an exam or homework, which wasn't too bad, what do you feel?

Anger	Annoyance	Fear	Worry	Frustration	
Embarrassment	Hurt	Confusion	Disappointment	Stress	
Shock	Don't care	Acceptance	Surprise	Reflective	
Amusement	Satisfaction	Relaxed	Relieved	Happiness	
Delight	Excitement	Other, give details:			

-When you make a mistake, what do you feel?

Anger	Annoyance	Fear	Worry	Frustration	
Embarrassment	Hurt	Confusion	Disappointment	Stress	
Shock	Don't care	Acceptance	Surprise	Reflective	
Amusement	Satisfaction	Relaxed	Relieved	Happiness	
Delight	Excitement	Other, give details:			



Q3b

- If you get a result you're not too happy with what do you do?

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Show parents					
Throw it away					
Look at mistakes					
Understand my mistakes					
Correct mistakes					
Other, give details:					

Q4a

What type of learning environment suits you best?  Please mark you <b>TOP 3</b> with 1 being the best:	1. Lively group work	
	2. Working and concentrating on my own	
	3. When the teacher comes around often and tells me I'm doing very well. Getting things wrong can be upsetting though.	
	4. When the teacher comes around often and tells me I'm doing very well	
	5. I don't have to be interested or curious but it's like I HAVE TO KNOW and I want to be the first to know and compete with others in the class	
	6. When I feel interested and curious about what I'm learning e.g. I really want to know some information or how to do something	
	7. When I feel I'm doing well like everyone else and I feel part of the group.	

Q4b

Do you enjoy getting feedback (how you did) about a task?

Yes because ...	
No Because ...	
Sometimes Because ...	

Q5

Do you think you are achieving to the best of your ability?

Definitely	I mostly am	Room for improvement	Not at all	Don't know
------------	-------------	----------------------	------------	------------

**Thank you very much for your time and effort in completing this questionnaire.**

## G: Teacher Reflections on Implementation

### In-Class Observation Schedule (Semi-Structured):

Date and Time:

Class:

Resources being used:

- What happened? (Include what went well/what didn't? and any observations of note)
- Why?
- Possible changes to be made?
- Comparative observations on own teaching style / student attitudes or behaviour while using new resources:
- *(Examples of effective language used to encourage pupils to reflect and review their work)*

### H: Teacher Questionnaire Halloween: Review of Portfolio Implementation

1. Folder divider sheets: How often did you use these ?
2. Folder divider sheets: How did the students react to these ? (positively/negatively/anything unclear etc.)
3. Folder divider sheets: Do you think this resource will be a benefit to the students and why?
4. Folder divider sheets: Is there anything you would change at this point?
5. Tracking Results Graph: How often did you use this?
6. Tracking Results Graph: How did the students react to this ? (positively/negatively/anything unclear etc.)
7. Tracking Results Graph: Do you think this resource will be a benefit to the students and why?

8. Tracking Results Graph: Is there anything you would change at this point?

9. Tracking Goals Graph: How often did you use this?

10. Tracking Goals Graph: How did the students react to this ? (positively/negatively/anything unclear etc.)

11. Tracking Goals Graph: Do you think this resource will be a benefit to the students and why?

12. Tracking Goals Graph: Is there anything you would change at this point?

13. Results/Goals Record Sheet: How often did you use this?

14. Results/Goals Record Sheet: How did the students react to this ? (positively/negatively/anything unclear etc.)

15. Results/Goals Record Sheet: Do you think this resource will be a benefit to the students and why?

16. Results/Goals Record Sheet: Is there anything you would change at this point?

17. Difficulties/Goals List: How often did you use this?

18. Difficulties/Goals List: How did the students react to this ? (positively/negatively/anything unclear etc.)

19. Difficulties/Goals List: Do you think this resource will be a benefit to the students and why?

20. Difficulties/Goals List: Is there anything you would change at this point?

21. Have you managed yet to check whether students have achieved goals they have set ?

22. Do you envisage any difficulties with this aspect of the resources?

I : Student Questionnaire 2: Halloween

# Self-Assessment and Learning Objectives - Student Questionnaire ( / 11 / 2010 )

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

The various resources you have been using are named as follows. Please look at these images to be sure of what some questions are referring to and how to name each part of the folder:



1. Tracking Results Graph



2. Tracking Goals Graph

DATE	TIME	RESULT	WHAT WERE YOU TRYING?	HOW DID YOU FEEL?	WHAT WERE YOU TRYING?	HOW DID YOU FEEL?
1. JUN						
2. JUN						
3. JUN						
4. JUN						
5. JUN						
6. JUN						
7. JUN						
8. JUN						
9. JUN						
10. JUN						
11. JUN						
12. JUN						

3. Results/Goals Record Sheet

DATE	TIME	RESULT	WHAT WERE YOU TRYING?	HOW DID YOU FEEL?	WHAT WERE YOU TRYING?	HOW DID YOU FEEL?
1. JUN						
2. JUN						
3. JUN						
4. JUN						
5. JUN						
6. JUN						
7. JUN						
8. JUN						
9. JUN						
10. JUN						
11. JUN						
12. JUN						

4. Difficulties/Goals List

DATE	TIME	RESULT	WHAT WERE YOU TRYING?	HOW DID YOU FEEL?	WHAT WERE YOU TRYING?	HOW DID YOU FEEL?
1. JUN						
2. JUN						
3. JUN						
4. JUN						
5. JUN						
6. JUN						
7. JUN						
8. JUN						
9. JUN						
10. JUN						
11. JUN						
12. JUN						

5. Folder Divider Sheets

## PLEASE ANSWER ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

### Question 1

#### Q1a

-Do you record (write down somewhere specific) your results for the following:  
(Please Tick)

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Homework					
Class exercises					
Tests					

-Give details on where you record these results:

#### Q1b

-How important is it to record your results?  
(Please Tick)

Very important	Kind of important	Don't know	Not so important	Not important

-Please explain your answer?

#### Q1c

-If you wanted to remind yourself of **your strengths and weaknesses**, in relation to a task you had done, where would you find this information?

- If you wanted to remind yourself of **what you had already learnt**, in relation to the different topics for the Junior Cert, where would you find this information?

- If you wanted to check what you will learn in the future, in relation to the different topics for the Junior Cert, where would you find this information?

## Question 2

### Q2a

(Please Tick)

After you've done a task e.g. test or class work:

- How often do you correct your own work?

- When you make a mistake, how often do you understand what you have done wrong in this task?

- When you have an area of weakness in this task, are you clear on what you have to do to improve?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

### Q2b

-Have you ever talked in any class about setting goals for you learning i.e. what's you need to do to progress/improve? (Please Tick)

If so, please describe an example of when you talked about this:

How often have you done this so far?

Yes		No		Can't remember		Don't know	

## Question 3

Do you enjoy getting feedback (how you did and talking about learning goals) about a task?

Yes because ...	
No Because ...	
Sometimes Because ...	

#### Question 4

-How useful is the **Tracking Results Graph** to your learning? (Please Tick)

- Please explain your answer?

-How useful is the **Tracking Goals Graph** to your learning? (Please Tick)

- Please explain your answer?

-How useful is the **Results/Goals Record Sheet** to your learning? (Please Tick)

- Please explain your answer?

-How useful is the **Difficulties/Goals List** to your learning? (Please Tick)

- Please explain your answer?

-How useful are the **Folder Divider Sheets** to your learning? (Please Tick)

-Please explain your answer?

Very useful	Quite useful	Don't know	Not so useful	Not useful	
Very useful	Quite useful	Don't know	Not so useful	Not useful	
Very useful	Quite useful	Don't know	Not so useful	Not useful	
Very useful	Quite useful	Don't know	Not so useful	Not useful	

#### Question 5

##### Q5a

Please **TICK** how much you agree or not with the following statements:

- "I am enjoying using the folder"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "Using the folder is helping me become more organised"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "Using the folder is helping me become aware of what I have learnt and have to learn"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "Using the folder is helping me become more motivated to try and do better"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "Using the <b>Difficulties/Goal List</b> , I can identify where I had trouble in a task"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "Using the <b>Difficulties/Goal List</b> , I can set myself simple goals to help improve my learning"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "I can identify where I had trouble in a task <b>on my own</b> "	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "I know where to find help and can set simple goals <b>on my own</b> , to help improve my learning"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "I have followed up on and attempted to achieve at least one <b>Goal</b> that I have set myself"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "I can recognise my difficulties in a task and guess my mark before the teacher corrects my work"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "I can track my results for tasks throughout the school year"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "I am clear on the various topics that I have to cover for the French Junior Cert"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "I would attempt to keep using the folder even if the teacher was not available to guide me"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
- "I am confident that I can organise my own study time"	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly

##### Q5b

-What parts of the folder would you be confident in using on your own without the teacher guiding you?

Please write in a number from 1-5 as follows:

1. very confident 2. confident 3. Don't know  
4. some confidence 5. no confidence

1. Tracking Results Graph	
2. Tracking Goals Graph	
3. Results/Goals Record Sheet	
4. Difficulties/Goals List	
5. Folder Divider Sheets (including putting work in correct section)	

J: Student Questionnaire 3: Easter

Self-Assessment and Learning Objectives - Student Questionnaire ( / 4 / 2011 )

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN SECTION A, SECTION B AND SECTION C

**SECTION A: Please answer questions in relation to how you learn and study in school**

Q1: Do you keep records of your learning progress in school **(Please circle)**      **Yes**      **No**      **Unsure**  
Please explain your answer

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Q2: Do you ever study any extra material in addition to what the teacher tells you?  
**(Please circle)**      **Yes**      **No**      **Unsure**  
If so when:

---

---

Q3: Do you think it's important to set goals when learning? **(Please circle)**      **Yes**      **No**      **Unsure**  
Please explain your answer

---

---

Q4: Do you ever set yourself goals when learning in school? **(Please circle)**      **Yes**      **No**      **Unsure**  
Please explain your answer

---

---

Q5: How do you generally organise your study?

---

---

Q6: Do you ever identify strengths or weaknesses in your school learning?

---

---

Q7: If you have identified an area of weakness in your learning in school, what do you do about it?

---

---





Q1: How useful did you find the separate parts of the folder?  
(Please Tick)

\*Please look at images above to know which part of the folder is which

	Very Useful	Useful	Not very useful	Not useful	Don't know
1. Tracking Results Graph					
2. Tracking Goals Graph					
3. Results/Goals Record Sheet					
4. Difficulties/Goals List					
5. Folder Divider Sheets					

Q2: What was the purpose of the 'Tracking Results Graph'?

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Q2a: Please detail a specific time when and how you personally used the 'Tracking Results Graph', including information on (1) what the task was and (2) whether your teacher and/or parents were involved in any way?

---



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Q3: What was the purpose of the 'Tracking Goals Graph'?

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Q3a: Please detail a specific time when and how you personally used the 'Tracking Goals Graph', including information on (1) what the task was and (2) whether your teacher and/or parents were involved in any way?

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Q4: What was the purpose of the 'Results/Goals Record Sheet'?

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Q4a: Please detail a specific time when and how you personally used the 'Results/Goals Record Sheet', including information on (1) what the task was and (2) whether your teacher and/or parents were involved in any way?

---



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Q5: What was the purpose of the 'Difficulties/Goals List'?

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---

Q5a: Please detail a specific time when and how you personally used the 'Difficulties Goals List', including information on (1) what the task was and (2) whether your teacher and/or parents were involved in any way?

---

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---

Q6: What was the purpose of the 'Folder Divider Sheets'?

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Q6a: Please detail a specific time when and how you personally used the 'Folder Divider Sheets', including information on (1) what the task was and (2) whether your teacher and/or parents were involved in any way?

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#### K: Teacher Questionnaire 2: Final Review of Portfolio Implementation

**To what extent do you strongly agree / agree / disagree / strongly disagree / don't know with the following statements?**

Since using the folder ...

- My students are more able to keep records of their learning progress:
- My students are becoming aware of the importance of setting learning goals:
- My students are becoming more organised:
- My students are improving in their ability to identify their learning weaknesses:
- My students are improving in their ability to identify their learning strengths:

**Please answer:**

- Has the folder influenced your teaching / assessment strategies at all? If so please detail:
- What did you find most and least useful about the folder?
- Would you like to make any further comment on your experiences or make any suggestions for future amendments to the folder?

## **Stage 2 Appendices**

A : Revised Learning Portfolio (French Example Extract) : Cover / Contents / Guide /  
Divider Sheets

## *Le Portfolio d'Apprentissage Française*

French Learning Portfolio: Your Guide, Your Goals

Junior French Syllabus



# French Learning Portfolio Contents

## French Learning Portfolio Guide

### Section A: The French Syllabus Topic Areas

1. Moi et ma Famille	Me and My Family
2. Mon École	My School
3. Ma Maison et mon Quartier	My House and My Area
4. Les Sports et Les Passe-temps	Sports and Past-times
5. Les Vacances	Holidays
6. La Grammaire	Grammar
7. L'Expression Écrite	Written Expression
8. Le Vocabulaire Important	Important Vocabulary
9. La Vie Française!	French and Francophone Culture: Real Life Learning

### Section B: Self-Assessment – Taking More Control of My Learning

- Skills List
- Self-Assessment Forms
- Progress Review Sheet (*kept by Class Teacher*)
- Success Showcase: Work I'm Proud of!

# French Learning Portfolio Guide

## 1. Lesson Learning Goal Divider Sheets: Identifies where your learning fits into the French Syllabus

- Your teacher will explain the lesson learning goals at the beginning of each class
- You will record them under the correct sub-section in order to identify where your learning fits in the French syllabus.
- Before the teacher moves on to the next topic, you will quickly review what you understood and what you didn't by marking a ✓ for understood, a ? for not sure/half understood and a ✗ for not understood.

## 2. Self-Assessment Form: Helps develop the skills you need to take more control of your learning, skills which will help you through-out your life.

- **What I need to do:** Write down what things should be done in order to do a certain task well
- **Marking Criteria:** If there are marks going for the task, write in how many marks should go for each part.
- **Skill:** Using your Skills List, note the code for the type of skill you are detailing.
- **What went well?:** From comparing your work with the 'What I need to do:' checklist, you will learn to identify what parts of the task you did well.
- **What needs Improvement?:** From comparing your work with the 'What I need to do:' checklist, you will learn to identify what parts of your task need improvement.
- **Self-Assessment Mark:** If there are marks going for the task, try and calculate the mark you deserve.
- **Teacher Feedback:** Your teacher can comment on how you have assessed your learning.
- **What are my Goals:** Set yourself a Goal to help you move your learning forward. This might be a Goal based on something that needs improving or a goal based on something that you could get really good at. All goals must involve having to do a specific task e.g. *I kept putting the 'ne' and 'pas' in the wrong place = I will ask my teacher to explain again and write out 15 practice sentences, putting the negative in the right place.* Later, your teacher will check whether goals have been achieved.

## 3. Skills List: Helps identify more clearly the part of French Language you are focusing on in a task.

- You should refer to this list when filling out the 'Skill' column in the self-assessment forms. It highlights different skills which are developed when learning French. These skills can either be an area of achievement or an area that needs improvement.

## 4. Progress Review Sheet: Helps you reflect on you learning progress over a longer period of time.

- Your teacher will keep this sheet and plot your results on the graph as the school year progresses
- You will be given the sheet at regular intervals during the year, when you will write down how many goals you have set and how many you have achieved.
- Write a short review of your learning progress. Consider whether:
  - ...the amount of goals you have or have not achieved had any effect on your results and learning progress?
  - ...you can start to summarise which skills find easier and which you find more difficult?
  - ...you are beginning to develop self-assessment skills which can help you take more control of your learning?

## Section A

### I. Ma Famille et Moi – *My Family and Me*

(\*Your teacher will detail the Lesson Learning Goals which should be noted below with a space between them. Mark each goal with marking a ✓ for understood, a ? for not sure/half understood and a ✗ for not understood)

- introducing yourself, family and friends

Date	Lesson Learning Goals

- describing yourself, family and friends

Date	Lesson Learning Goals

- numbers / alphabet / spelling / colours

Date	Lesson Learning Goals



## B : Skills List (French Example Extract)

### Skills List

Skill Code	YOUR LEARNING FOCUSES ON THE FOLLOWING PART OF FRENCH LANGUAGE
	<b>READING</b>
RV	Being able to read and understand <u>Vocabulary</u> specific to various topics
RFF	Being able to recognise when a French word that looks like an English word does not always mean the same thing i.e. <u>False Friends</u>
RG	Being able to understand the <u>Gist</u> of a piece of reading, without having to translate all the words.
ROrg	Being <u>Organised</u> about carrying out a reading task e.g. having a dictionary or a useful vocabulary list, giving answers that are logical and make sense, reading the questions properly.
RMem	Being able to <u>Memorise</u> key vocabulary
	<b>WRITING</b>
WV	Being able to understand and use <u>Vocabulary</u> specific to various topics in written expression. Also varying vocabulary and using more complex structures
WSp	Being sure that <u>Spelling</u> is correct. Remember: French accents should never be left out.
WT	Being able to identify which <u>Tense</u> to use before I start writing and then correctly constructing the tense.
WVer	Being able to identify and use the correct forms of <u>Verbs</u> , including knowing and using the common irregular verbs
WGen	Being able to identify and correctly use words like le / la / les and un / une / des which are important in French for identifying the <u>Gender</u> of nouns
WNeg	Being able to construct <u>Negative</u> sentences using common negative e.g. ne...pas, ne...plus, ne...jamais
WQ	Being able to construct <u>Questions</u>
WOrg	Being <u>Organised</u> about carrying out a writing task e.g. having a dictionary or a useful vocabulary list, having clear grammar notes and knowing how to use them.
WMem	Being able to <u>Memorise</u> key vocabulary and grammar in order to construct accurate sentences.

## C : Self-Assessment Form

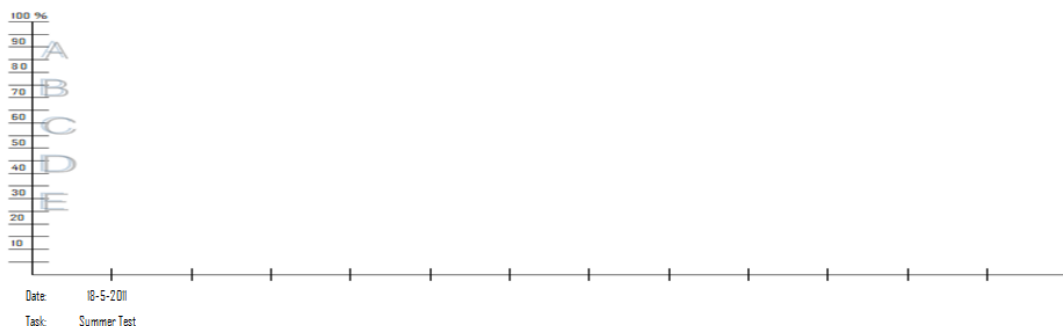
Self-Assessment Form No.		Task:		Date:	
What I need to do:	Marking Criteria	Skill	What went well?	Skill	What needs improvement?
Self-Assessment Mark		Skill	What are my Goals?		
Teacher Feedback:					

## D : Revised Learning Portfolio (French Example) : Progress Review Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Progress Review Sheet

\*Your teacher will keep a record of your results and plot them for you. At regular intervals you will review your learning progress. Think about whether there is a connection between the effort you put into following and achieving goals and the types of marks/grades that you are getting.



Progress Review No.	Date:	Progress Review No.	Date:	Progress Review No.	Date:
No. of Goals Completed / Goals Set:		No. of Goals Completed / Goals Set:		No. of Goals Completed / Goals Set:	
Comments:		Comments:		Comments:	

E: Student Baseline Questionnaire: September

Please answer the following questions as accurately as you can ONLY FOR THE SUBJECT which you are using the LEARNING PORTFOLIO for. Thank you very much for your time !

**\*1. Your details:**

Number	<input type="text"/>
Teacher	<input type="text"/>
Subject	<input type="text"/>

**\*2. At the beginning of a lesson, does the teacher make it clear to you, what you will learn?**

☐ Almost always    ☐ Regularly    ☐ Around half the time    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never

**\*3. If the teacher does make this clear, what exactly does he/she do?**

**\*4. Are you aware of all the different topics you get to learn for this subject in your first 3 years of secondary school?**

☐ Yes    ☐ No    ☐ Sort of    ☐ Unsure

**\*5. When you do a task in class or for homework, how do you know what to do to complete it?**

**\*6. Suppose you have an unmarked task:**

	Almost always	Regularly	Around half the time	Rarely	Never	Unsure
to what extent do you recognise the areas that need improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
to what extent do you recognise the areas you have done well?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
to what extent do you get to write a comment about how you did?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
to what extent do you get to calculate the result yourself?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**7. If it's the case you NEVER recognise areas of your learning that need improvement, why do you think this is?**

**8. If it's the case you NEVER recognise areas of your learning that you've done well, why do you think this is?**

**\*9. In relation to your learning, what do you do if ...**

you've something that  
needs improving:

you've something you've  
done well:

**\*10. What sort of learning / study methods help you learn well?**

**\*11. In relation to your own learning experiences, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure
"In class, I'm sure about what I'm going to learn"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I'm sure about where my learning fits into the syllabus"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"My teacher provides me with a clear guide to completing tasks"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I can recognise areas of my learning that need improvement"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I can recognise areas of my learning that I've done well"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I can set learning goals that help me improve my learning"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I work seriously to achieve my learning goals"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## F: Teacher Baseline Questionnaire: September

### SELF-ASSESSMENT: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE 1

[Exit this survey](#)

Please answer every question as accurately as you can. Thank you very much for your time.

**\*1. Your Subject:**

**2. At the beginning of a lesson, do you make lesson learning goals i.e. lesson objectives, clear to students?**

☐ Almost always    ☐ Often    ☐ Around half the time    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never

**\*3. If so, how do you make these clear?**

	Almost always	Often	Around half the time	Rarely	Never
Refer to topic briefly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain specific learning to be covered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain specific task(s) to be done	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highlight where learning area is in relation to syllabus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summarise learning area & task(s) on the board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summarise learning area & task(s) on the board for student to record	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

**\*4. If giving feedback what forms do you use?**

	Almost always	Often	Around half the time	Rarely	Never
1-on-1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Class discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Circulating, giving oral comments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written comment only	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mark/grade only	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mark/grade + written comment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I guide students to use mark/grade only self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I guide students to use written comment only self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I guide students to use written comment + mark/grade self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

**\*5. If giving feedback on a task, how often ...**

	Almost always	Often	Around half the time	Rarely	Never
do you highlight goals to students that will help them improve their learning? (by 'goal', a specific task to bring learning forward, is meant as opposed to highlighting a mistake and correcting it.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
do students get to take part in choosing goals to help improve their learning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
do you follow up on whether these goals have been achieved or not?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**\*6. You are being asked to introduce a new student self-assessment resource to be used consistently during lessons. Please detail briefly your feelings, positive and/or negative, about this:**

G: Focus Group Meeting Schedule: October

**The Subject Learning Portfolio: Research Project**

**Focus Group Meeting 1:**

**3rd October 2011**

Participant Teachers / Subjects:

Mrs JF / French

Ms JP / History

Ms MC / Maths

Ms MK / German

Ms IH / Home Ec.

Areas for Discussion:

1. What do you know about Assessment for Learning?
2. What do you know about Self-Assessment?
3. How do you feel about the briefing and other information you have received in preparation of the portfolio?
4. What have been the benefits of the portfolio so far?
5. What have been the challenges associated with the portfolio so far?

**THANK YOU SO MUCH AGAIN EVERYONE FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION !!**



## H: Teacher Questionnaire: Review of Implementation: November

### Nov 2011 Teacher Review of Practice

[Exit this survey](#)

Hi Ladies !

The following is just an informal survey for me to gage at what point we are all at. I hope it won't take to long to fill out, it's just so difficult to find time for us all to come together. DON'T WORRY if you feel things have been going slow and could be better. Everything you detail is hugely relevant, good, bad or indifferent. Byebyes, JoAnne

**\*1. Your subject:**

**\*2. Please detail briefly the way in which you have been using the Portfolio Divider Sheets and Divider Sections:**

E.G. frequency of use, when/how used during class, what sort of work gets put in the portfolio, students (not) getting used to using the resources, recapping on work, areas for amendment / improvement, other comments

**\*3. Please write out an example of what a recent lesson learning goal might look like, as written onto a Divider Sheet:**

**\*4. In terms of your own observations, what, if any, are the students attitudes to the Portfolio Divider Sheets and Divider Sections?**

**\*5. Please detail briefly the way in which you have been using the Self-Assessment Form:**

E.G. frequency of use, when/how used during class, what sort of tasks you use it with, students (not) getting used to using the resource, areas for amendment / improvement, other comments

**\*6. Please write out brief examples of how the 'what I need to do:', the 'What went went:', the 'What needs improving' and the 'My goals' boxes have been filled in.**

**\*7. In terms of your own observations, what, if any, are the students attitudes to the Self-Assessment Form?**

**8. Is there anything you would like help with or clarification on? Please feel free to add any other comments you feel are relevant:**

## I: Individual Semi-Structured Teacher Interviews: February

### **The Subject Learning Portfolio: Research Project**

#### **Individual Semi-Structured Interview**

\_\_\_ February 2012

Participant Teachers / Subjects:

☐ Ms JP / History

☐ Ms IH / Home Ec.

☐ Ms MC / Maths

☐ Ms MK / German

Areas for Discussion:

1. How have you found using the Portfolio so far - benefits/challenges - can these challenges be overcome for the remainder of the year?

2. How would you describe your role and the students role in the classroom?

3. Do you use feedback?

What form does this take?

How do you think feedback works for your students learning?

4. Do you think self-assessment can help share responsibility for learning between teacher and students?

5. What do you envisage the benefits of using the divider sheets/sections will be between now and the end of the year?

6. Are there any amendments to the divider sheets/sections, you would like to suggest/ make?

7. What do you envisage the benefits of using the Self-Assessment Form will be between now and the end of the year?

8. Are there any amendments to the Self-Assessment Form, you would like to suggest/ make?

[ The next resource: The Progress Review Sheet ]

**THANK YOU SO MUCH AGAIN FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION!!**

J: Student Final Questionnaire: May

**\*1. Subject:**

**\*2. Please detail how you have been using the various parts of the Portfolio throughout the year:**  
(NB: maybe your teacher took a part of the Portfolio and used it to suit things you already use in class e.g. drawing the Progress Review Graph into the Maths Notes Copy)

THE DIVIDER SHEETS:

THE SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM:

THE PROGRESS REVIEW GRAPH:

**\*3. To what extent have the Portfolio Divider Sheets been useful to your learning?**

☐ Very useful      ☐ useful      ☐ Partly useful      ☐ Not useful      ☐ Don't know

Please briefly explain your answer:

**\*4. To what extent has the Self-Assessment Form been useful to your learning?**

	Very useful	Useful	Partly useful	Not useful	Don't know
'What I need to do' task criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying 'What went well'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying 'What needs improvement'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Setting 'My Goal'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completing 'My Goal'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWERS:

**\*5. To what extent has the Progress Review Graph been useful to your learning?**

☐ Very useful      ☐ useful      ☐ Partly useful      ☐ Not useful      ☐ Don't know

Please briefly explain your answer:

**\*6. In relation to your own learning experiences, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
"In class, I'm sure about what I'm going to learn"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I'm sure about where my learning fits into the syllabus"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"My teacher provides me with a clear guide to completing tasks"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I can recognise areas of my learning that need improvement"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I can recognise areas of my learning that I've done well"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I can set learning goals that help me improve my learning"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I work seriously to achieve my learning goals"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I can work more independently"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\*7. Would you like to use the Portfolio next year?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Maybe      ☐ Don't know

Please briefly explain your answer:

K: Teacher Questionnaire: May

## SELF-ASSESSMENT: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE 2

**\*1. Subject:**

**\*2. Since our interview in February, how have you been using and /or adapting**

- 1) The Portfolio Divider Sheets
- 2) The Self-Assessment Form
- 3) The Progress Review Graph

**\*3. What have been the benefits of**

- 1) The Portfolio Divider Sheets
- 2) The Self-Assessment Form
- 3) The Progress Review Graph

**\*4. What have been the challenges in using**

- 1) The Portfolio Divider Sheets
- 2) The Self-Assessment Form
- 3) The Progress Review Graph

**5. What additional support would you find useful if you were to take part in the project again? (please tick as many boxes as required)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lengthened initial training (several sessions) | <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent discussion group forum (on-line) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More background/theoretical information        | <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent planning sessions                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent subject area meetings                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Management input                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent discussion group sessions (in person) | <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping a reflective journal              |

Other (please detail)

**\*6. What elements of the Portfolio would you continue to use, in their current form?**

	Yes	No	Maybe	Don't know
The Divider Sheets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Self-Assessment Form	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Progress Review Sheet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\*7. What elements of the Portfolio would you adapt and how?**

**\*8. Is there anything you would change about your implementation of the project?**

**\*9. What advice would you give to someone else trying to implement such a project?**

**L: Teacher Questionnaire: Final Review Dec**

1. Did you gain and/or learn anything from your participation in the study last year?
2. Have you continued to use any aspect of the portfolio (no matter how small)? (have you modified anything?)
3. If you have continued with an aspect of the portfolio, why did you do so?
4. Time and curricular content coverage were seen as considerable issues when it came to implementing new resources. Could you please name your top 3 challenges when it comes to implementing new AfL strategies. (1 being most challenging)

M: Plain Language Statement

**DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY**

**PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT**

You are invited to participate in the research project ‘The ‘Subject Reference Folder: Your Guide and Your Goals’. It’s use as a teaching and learning tool to improve junior post-primary students’ self-assessment and active learning skills.’, being carried out by JoAnne Ford (St Joseph’s College Lucan) with the participation of Lisa Carley (Drimnagh Castle). This research study is based on using new (assessment) resources developed by myself which aim to improve a student’s ability to self-assess e.g. their

ability to correct your own work, think of learning goals without the teacher etc. It also involves using resources to improve a student's responsibility for and involvement in their learning i.e. instead of having a teacher directing everything. The study will also concentrate on training teachers in a different way of assessment.

Participation will involve using these new resources on a daily basis in normal class time. If you are willing to be involved we shall seek your permission to conduct questionnaires, note in-class observations and audio record group discussions (Hand written notes can be taken if you so prefer). This too will all be part of normal class time. Any information collected including audio recordings will be destroyed no more than 12 months after the research report has been published.

### **Right to withdraw**

Your involvement is entirely voluntary however, should you decide not to take part. There is no disadvantage to you. Taking part is completely unrelated to any class assessments during the year. You have a right not to answer specific questions and ask for recording or note-taking to cease at any point.

### **Confidentiality**

Except with the consent of the participant, we ensure confidentiality of the participant's identity and data throughout the conduction, reporting and publication of the research.

### **If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:**

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel: 01 7008000

N: Informed Consent Form - Teacher Participant

## **DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY**

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM – TEACHER PARTICIPANT**

#### **I. Research Study Title**



The 'Subject Learning Portfolio: Your Guide and Your Goals'. It's use as a teaching and learning tool to improve junior post-primary students' self-assessment and active learning skills.

The research is being carried out by JoAnne Ford, a post-primary teacher of French, German and Irish in St Joseph's College Lucan and is being supervised by Dr. James Lovatt and Francesca Lorenzi, lecturers in the School of Education Studies, Dublin City University.

## **II. Clarification of the purpose of the research**

In this research the researcher aims to:

1. Evaluate the use of a generic Subject Learning Portfolio at the core of which are Assessment for Learning teaching strategies. These strategies foreground self-assessment training for students.
2. To further modify the Subject Learning Portfolio based on the outcomes of the research evaluation.

It is intended that the research outcomes will be made available to practicing teachers and teacher trainers through presentation of the findings at the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) annual conference 2012 and to publish them in the ESAI journal 2012-2013.

## **III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement**

*Requirements may include involvement in interviews, focus group meetings, completion of questionnaires, audio/video-taping of events. Getting the participant to acknowledge requirements is preferable, e.g.*

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

*Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement*

*Yes/No*

*Do you understand the information provided?*

*Yes/No*

*Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?*

*Yes/No*

*Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?*

*Yes/No*

*Are you aware that the discussions/interviews may be audio-taped?*

*Yes/No*

## **IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

Your involvement is entirely voluntary however, should you decide not to take part. There is no disadvantage to you. Taking part is completely unrelated to any class assessments during the year. You have a right not to answer specific questions and ask for recording or note-taking to cease at any point.

## **V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations**

Except with the consent of the participant, we ensure confidentiality of the participant's identity and data throughout the conduction, reporting and publication of the research.

## **VI. Signature:**

**I have read and understand the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in the research project.**

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name in Block Capitals:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

N: Informed Consent Form: Student Participant

## **DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY**

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM - STUDENT PARTICIPANT**

#### **I. Research Study Title**

The 'Subject Learning Portfolio: Your Guide and Your Goals'. It's use as a teaching and learning tool to improve junior post-primary students' self-assessment and active learning skills.

The research is being carried out by JoAnne Ford, a post-primary teacher of French, German and Irish in St Joseph's College Lucan and is being supervised by Dr. James Lovatt and Francesca Lorenzi, lecturers in the School of Education Studies, Dublin City University.

#### **II. Clarification of the purpose of the research**

In this research the researcher aims to:

1. Evaluate the use of a generic Subject Learning Portfolio at the core of which are Assessment for Learning teaching strategies. These strategies foreground self-assessment training for students.
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Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

*Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement*

*Yes/No*

*Do you understand the information provided?*

*Yes/No*

*Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?*

*Yes/No*

*Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?*

*Yes/No*

*Are you aware that the discussions/interviews may be audio-taped?*

*Yes/No*

### **IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

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### **VI. Signature:**

**I have read and understand the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in the research project.**

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name in Block Capitals:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Professional /Parent / Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Form 1 &amp; 2

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Self-Assessment Form No. 3		Task: CHAPTER TEST on		Date: 9/11/11	
What I need to do:	Marking Criteria	Skill	What went well?	Skill	What needs improvement?
1. Use the lesson sheet to prepare and learn for the chapter test. 2. Know the steps and step-by-step marking criteria for the test. 3. Know the steps and step-by-step marking criteria for the test. 4. Know the steps and step-by-step marking criteria for the test. 5. Know the steps and step-by-step marking criteria for the test. 6. Know the steps and step-by-step marking criteria for the test.			• I KNEW THE STEPS AND ERRORS FOR MAKING REGULAR ER/AIR/RE VERBS • I WAS ABLE TO MAKE SHORT SENTENCES USING REGULAR VERBS IN THE NEGATIVE OR QUESTION FORM • I KNEW WORDS FOR PERSONAL CLOTHES WHICH WAS NICE AND EASY TO REMEMBER AND LIKE.		
Self-Assessment Mark		Skill	What are my Goals?		
Teacher Feedback			• Write out a short sentence for each verb and eye colour <del>without</del> without the verb • Practice writing endings by learning off each ending and writing each ending out 3 times.		

Self-Assessment Form No. 4		Task: CHRISTMAS TEST 2011		Date: 9/1/12	
What I need to do:	Marking Criteria	Skill	What went well?	Skill	What needs improvement?
REUSE AND LEARN ALL THE CHAPTERS FROM SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER			Q1. MATCHING PICTURES OF CLOTHES TO THE NAMES Q2. LABEL CLOTHES A SEARCH Q3. MATCHING CLOTHES Q4. COMPREHENSION Q5. UNDERSTANDING SENTENCES Q6. THE WORD PHRASE Q7. THE WORD PHRASE Q8. THE WORD PHRASE Q9. THE WORD PHRASE Q10. THE WORD PHRASE Q11. THE WORD PHRASE Q12. THE WORD PHRASE Q13. THE WORD PHRASE Q14. THE WORD PHRASE Q15. THE WORD PHRASE Q16. THE WORD PHRASE Q17. THE WORD PHRASE Q18. THE WORD PHRASE Q19. THE WORD PHRASE Q20. THE WORD PHRASE Q21. THE WORD PHRASE Q22. THE WORD PHRASE Q23. THE WORD PHRASE Q24. THE WORD PHRASE Q25. THE WORD PHRASE Q26. THE WORD PHRASE Q27. THE WORD PHRASE Q28. THE WORD PHRASE Q29. THE WORD PHRASE Q30. THE WORD PHRASE Q31. THE WORD PHRASE Q32. THE WORD PHRASE Q33. THE WORD PHRASE Q34. THE WORD PHRASE Q35. THE WORD PHRASE Q36. THE WORD PHRASE Q37. THE WORD PHRASE Q38. THE WORD PHRASE Q39. THE WORD PHRASE Q40. THE WORD PHRASE Q41. THE WORD PHRASE Q42. THE WORD PHRASE Q43. THE WORD PHRASE Q44. THE WORD PHRASE Q45. THE WORD PHRASE Q46. THE WORD PHRASE Q47. THE WORD PHRASE Q48. THE WORD PHRASE Q49. THE WORD PHRASE Q50. THE WORD PHRASE Q51. THE WORD PHRASE Q52. THE WORD PHRASE Q53. THE WORD PHRASE Q54. THE WORD PHRASE Q55. THE WORD PHRASE Q56. THE WORD PHRASE Q57. THE WORD PHRASE Q58. THE WORD PHRASE Q59. THE WORD PHRASE Q60. THE WORD PHRASE Q61. THE WORD PHRASE Q62. THE WORD PHRASE Q63. THE WORD PHRASE Q64. THE WORD PHRASE Q65. THE WORD PHRASE Q66. THE WORD PHRASE Q67. THE WORD PHRASE Q68. THE WORD PHRASE Q69. THE WORD PHRASE Q70. THE WORD PHRASE Q71. THE WORD PHRASE Q72. THE WORD PHRASE Q73. THE WORD PHRASE Q74. THE WORD PHRASE Q75. THE WORD PHRASE Q76. THE WORD PHRASE Q77. THE WORD PHRASE Q78. THE WORD PHRASE Q79. THE WORD PHRASE Q80. THE WORD PHRASE Q81. THE WORD PHRASE Q82. THE WORD PHRASE Q83. THE WORD PHRASE Q84. THE WORD PHRASE Q85. THE WORD PHRASE Q86. THE WORD PHRASE Q87. THE WORD PHRASE Q88. THE WORD PHRASE Q89. THE WORD PHRASE Q90. THE WORD PHRASE Q91. THE WORD PHRASE Q92. THE WORD PHRASE Q93. THE WORD PHRASE Q94. THE WORD PHRASE Q95. THE WORD PHRASE Q96. THE WORD PHRASE Q97. THE WORD PHRASE Q98. THE WORD PHRASE Q99. THE WORD PHRASE Q100. THE WORD PHRASE		
Self-Assessment Mark		Skill	What are my Goals?		
Teacher Feedback			• Practice clothes by saying them 10 times and testing myself on them, ask friend • Write out the verb After 10 times		



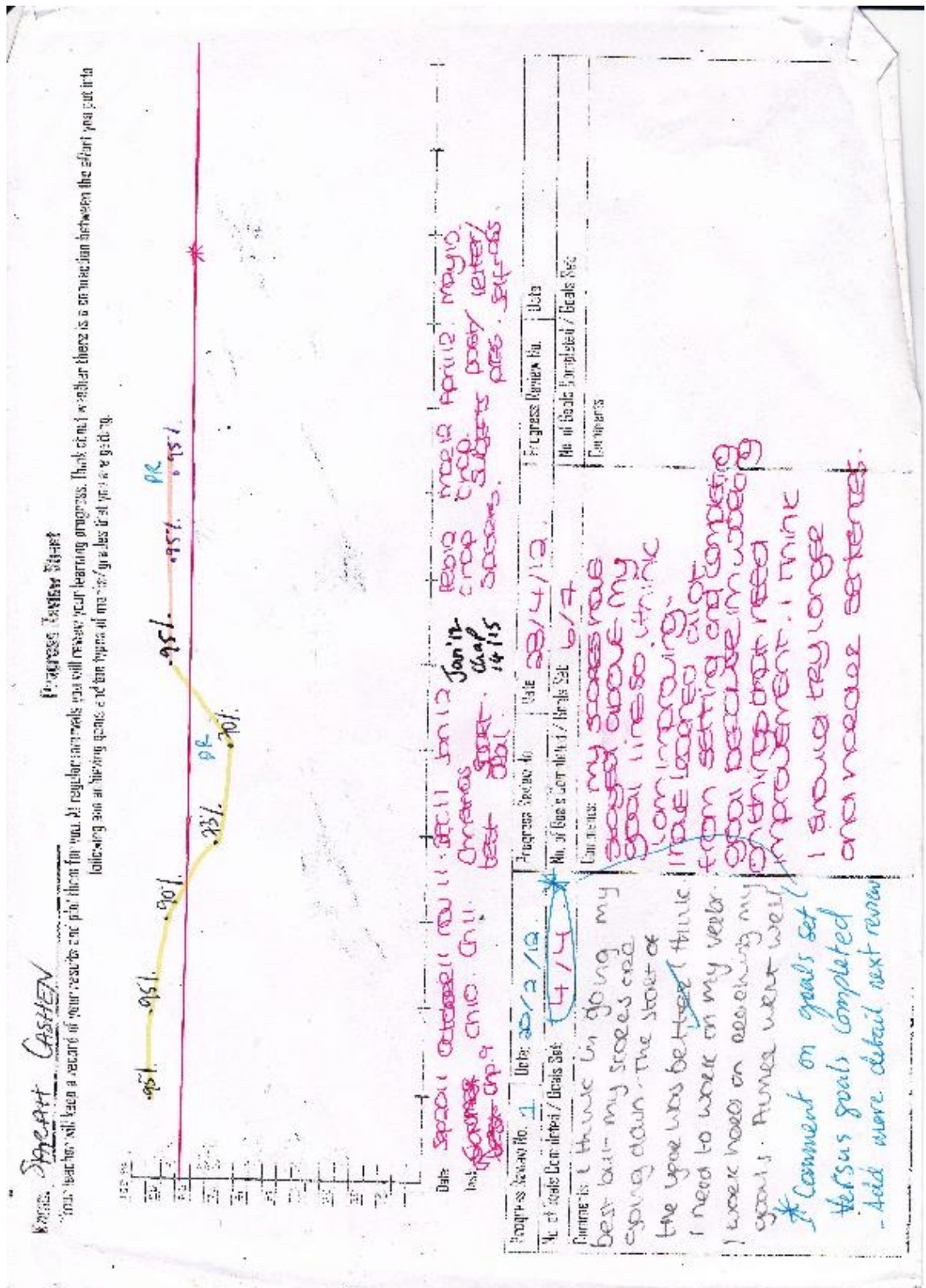


### Mostly reflective language





Some reflective language









# **Subject Learning Portfolio: Your Guide, Your Goals**

## **Junior Cycle Syllabus**

**TEACHERS' GUIDE – ENCOURAGING AND DEVELOPING SELF-ASSESSMENT SKILLS**

### **CONTENTS**

#### **1. Lesson Learning Goals Divider Sheets**

Resource Overview and Example

#### **2. Self-Assessment Form**

Resource Overview and Example


#### **3. Skills List**

Resource Overview and Example

#### **4. Progress Review Sheet**

Resource Overview and Example



SUBJECT LEARNING PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW						
RESOURCE	AIM	HOW TO USE IT	WHEN TO INTRODUCE RESOURCE	SUGGESTED FREQUENCY OF USE	LESSON PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS	TIME MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS
<b>Lesson Learning Goals Divider Sheets</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to clearly divide and detail a subject's syllabus and thus where notes and work can be filed.</li> <li>- to develop students' awareness of where and how their learning relates to a subject's syllabus and thus help to focus their attention on how they are progressing</li> <li>- to provide a space where lesson learning goals can be recorded and referred back to when understanding is being reviewed</li> <li>- to provide evidence of learning and to highlight to the student what areas of the syllabus have been covered or need more attention, for example, where understanding for an area of learning has not been achieved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The teacher writes out and explains the lesson learning goals on the board showing what will be taught and what type of task(s) will be used.</li> <li>- The teacher (or a student) then indicates where in the syllabus this learning fits by picking out the appropriate sub-section in which to write down the lesson learning goals.</li> <li>- A space should be left after each part of the lesson learning goals in order to allow space for the students to enter a ✓, ? or ✗ when reviewing understanding at a later point.</li> <li>- It would be beneficial for the teacher to get into the habit of providing task success criteria on the board for the main lesson tasks. Modelled answers can also be provided as appropriate.</li> <li>- In order to easily record and file work in the Portfolio, students should start to write out notes and do at least some tasks on A4 paper</li> <li>- Lesson Learning Goals can then be reviewed for understanding at a later stage. Coloured traffic light cards or a simple show of hands or thumbs would be useful here.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Week One</li> <li>- Practise using this resource from the outset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At the beginning of every lesson</li> <li>- At either the end of class or when Lesson Learning Goals have been covered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare Lesson Learning Goals</li> <li>- Prepare task success criteria</li> <li>- Remember to direct students to use A4 instead of copy books as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A few minutes at the beginning of every lesson</li> <li>- A few minutes once Lesson Learning Goals have been covered</li> <li>- A few minutes to record task success criteria</li> </ul>

## WORKING EXAMPLE OF LESSON LEARNING GOAL DIVIDER SHEET

\*Beginning of Class:

### Section 3

- daily routine / household chores

Date	Lesson Learning Goals
4-9-11	Aider à la maison: Record, learn off 'Faire' Record topic vocab. Practise making sentences with 'faire' + topic vocab.

### Section 6

- present tense: regular/irregular

Date	Details	✓ ? ✗	Date	Details	✓ ? ✗
4-9-11	'Faire' + chores sentence practise				

\*Task Success Criteria:

Achievement Checklist: Make up your own 10 sentences

- have correct vocab. and grammar notes open
- write out a part of the verb 'faire', check spelling
- add topic vocab. to finish sentence, check spelling
- translate the sentence underneath
- XTRA: Can you make some negative sentences or question forms?


E.G. Nous faisons la vaisselle.  
Tu ne fais pas le ménage !  
Elle fait les courses ?

\*End of class:

Date	Lesson Learning Goals
4-9-11	Aider à la maison: Record, learn off 'Faire' ✓ Record topic vocab. ✓ Practise making sentences with 'faire' + topic vocab. ?


Date	Details	✓ ? ✗	Date	Details	✓ ? ✗
4-9-11	'Faire' + chores sentence practise	?			


SUBJECT LEARNING PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW						
RESOURCE	AIM	HOW TO USE IT	WHEN TO INTRODUCE RESOURCE	SUGGESTED FREQUENCY OF USE	LESSON PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS	TIME MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS
<b>Self-Assessment Form</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to highlight clearly the criteria for task success so that students can have a reference point when assessing their own or a peers work</li> <li>- to help students practise and develop their ability to recognise learning achievements and areas for improvement in a task</li> <li>- to help students practise and develop their ability to give an overall appraisal of their work, by either reflective comment and/or mark/grade.</li> <li>- to help students practise and develop their ability to set and follow their own Learning Goals in order to take more control in advancing their own learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When explaining a chosen task, the teacher should write out the criteria for task success and model sample answers. The students then write out these criteria into the 'What I need to do' box as a reference checklist to guide them during the task. If the task is to be marked, a marking scheme can also be added.</li> <li>- On completion of the task, pairs or groups of students assess each others work using the 'Checklist' guide and also with the teacher's help if required. They list 'What went well' and 'What needs improvement'. Specific skills can be highlighted using the 'Skills List'. If required, they can also give their own overall appraisal of the task by grade or mark in the 'Self-Assessment Mark' box. With time they will learn to do this on their own.</li> <li>- In consultation with the teacher students will learn how to set their own Learning Goals. The type of goal depends on level of achievement in the task i.e. a goal to help improve or master a part of learning. At a later point the teacher should check whether the goal has/has not been achieved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Week Two</li> <li>- Practise using this resource with a simple task first</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least once every two weeks, if possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare examples of areas for improvement</li> <li>- Prepare examples of Goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A full class period</li> <li>- If possible, practise using resource for the first time in a double class</li> <li>- Time to be set aside for checking Goal completion</li> </ul>

## WORKING EXAMPLE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

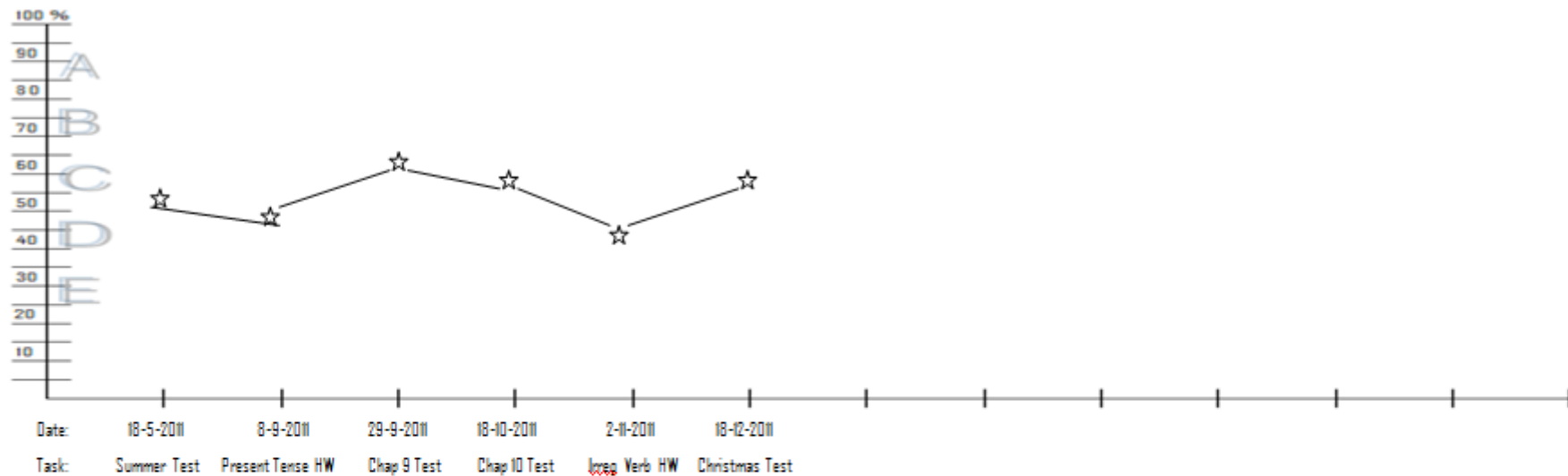
Self-Assessment Form No. 1		Task: Aider à la maison: Make 10 sentences				Date: 11-9-11		
What I need to do:		Marking Criteria	Skill	What went well?		Skill	What needs improvement?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- have correct vocab. and grammar notes open</li> <li>- write out a part of the verb 'faire', check spelling</li> <li>- add topic vocab. to finish sentence, check spelling</li> <li>- translate the sentence underneath</li> <li>- XTRA: Can you make some negative sentences or question forms?</li> </ul>		4 4 2  Total  10 x 10	WSP WNeg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I used all the correct notes</li> <li>- All the topic vocab. was spelt correctly</li> <li>- I correctly wrote 2 negative sentences - I'm glad about this as I was having trouble before with negatives</li> </ul>		WVer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I used the same misspelling for 'faire' 3 times. - je fait, tu fait, ils fait</li> <li>- I translated a part of 'faire' incorrectly twice.</li> </ul>	
Self-Assessment Mark		84 / 100 (84%)		Skill		What are my goals?		
Teacher Feedback: Well done on negative sentences - try some questions next time. I agree with your mark - well done! Your goal is well thought out too and will indeed help you improve. <i>(Comment length is of course at discretion of teacher)</i>				WVer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My notes for 'Faire' are not right. I will rewrite them correctly and make 5 new sentences and translate them.  <i>(this goal focuses on improving learning)</i></li> <li>(My classmate is having difficulty making a negative sentence. I will show her what I know and practise 5 sentences with her)  <i>(this goal focuses on mastering learning)</i></li> </ul> <div style="text-align: right; color: red; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">✓</div>		



SUBJECT LEARNING PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW						
RESOURCE	AIM	HOW TO USE IT	WHEN TO INTRODUCE RESOURCE	SUGGESTED FREQUENCY OF USE	LESSON PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS	TIME MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS
<b>Skills List</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to highlight the various subject specific skills on which students are focusing when doing a task</li> <li>- to help focus more precisely on where areas of achievement and areas for improvement are when assessing a task. This should be noted by an appropriate code on the 'Self-Assessment Form'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- when students are reflecting upon and assessing their learning while filling out the 'Self-Assessment Form' there is a column by the 'What went well?', 'What needs improvement?' and 'What are my Goals?' boxes to highlight the various subject specific skills on which students are focusing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Week Two with Self-Assessment Form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To be used alongside Self-Assessment Form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To be used alongside Self-Assessment Form</li> </ul>

SUBJECT LEARNING PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW						
RESOURCE	AIM	HOW TO USE IT	WHEN TO INTRODUCE RESOURCE	SUGGESTED FREQUENCY OF USE	LESSON PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS	TIME MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS
<b>Progress Review Sheet</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to allow a teacher to provide students with a graphic representation of their grades and marks over an academic year</li> <li>- to begin to highlight the relationship between the achievement, or lack thereof, of learning goals and learning progress</li> <li>- to further allow for students' own reflections on their learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- From the beginning of the year, the teacher decides what sort of results they wish to plot. Then for example, a teacher might decide to present this resource at regular intervals during the year to their students.</li> <li>- Students then consider their progress in task results and goal achievement by seeing what conclusions they can draw from information shown on the Progress Graph and in their Self-Assessment Forms.</li> <li>- Students then write down a few points in their own language onto the Progress Review Sheet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At selected time during the year, e.g. end of term / end of month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least twice during the academic year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plot students results onto individual graph</li> <li>- Prepare sample comments for first running of resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Half a class period</li> <li>- Time to be set aside for reading of comments by teachers</li> </ul>

## Working Example of Progress Review Sheet



Progress Review No. 1	Date: 12-1-2012	Progress Review No.	Date:	Progress Review No.	Date:
No. of Goals Completed / Goals Set: 4 / 8		No. of Goals Completed / Goals Set:		No. of Goals Completed / Goals Set:	
Comments: I think I'm doing ok but I could be doing better. It's nice to keep notes on what I'm good at. From the 'What needs improvement box?' I can see that I'm mostly having trouble with grammar. I need to put more effort into completing my goals because I didn't complete them all up until now. <i>(More specific recommendations for Learning Goals can also be made here)</i>		Comments:		Comments:	

