

Blended Learning Masterclass

How to Assess Learning Outcomes in Blended Learning

At Altissia, we launched our Blended Learning Masterclass to help foreign language instructors from all over the world familiarise themselves with the concepts of distance learning and blended learning.

In this seventh webinar, we are discussing the topic of assessing learning and learning outcomes in a blended learning setting.

Assessment is a central element of our teaching practice, as it not only allows us to assess our learners and their achievements, but also provides a lot of important insights into our teaching practice, what and if our learners are understanding, as well as the necessary statistics and numbers for our institutions. When we talk about assessment, we not only mean summative assessment, but also formative and continuous assessment.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a **very complex concept** as it requires us as teachers to find the right balance between criteria in the learning programme (such as the CEFR or political requirements), institutional criteria and our own personal criteria.



Assessment is also not something that should be planned as an afterthought, but rather be considered as an important part of the whole teaching sequence and thus should be planned – at least broadly – in the first phase of course creation along with the teaching objectives and teaching method, which should be the basis of any kind of assessment.

Assessment, while meant to be an objective assessment of our learners' learning achievements, does have a subjective dimension, which is why once again it is important to find your own style and to use what works for you and your classes.

In the case of blended learning, we have two additional factors to bear in mind when planning our assessment:

We CAN assess in both modes, face-to-face and online

We MUST assess the material and content covered in both modes

The first of these two points allows for increased flexibility, as this allows us to, for example, split our final exams into several parts, with some taking place in class, while others take place remotely.

The second point seems obvious, but unfortunately the online component is frequently left aside in the assessment. This can lead to it being perceived as secondary by the learners who will then neglect this part of the course. As we have frequently insisted on throughout the webinar series, making a clear and visible LINK between the online and face-to-face components of blended learning is crucial for learner motivation and engagement. This rule extends to assessment as well, the materials covered in both components should be assessed

in one or the other (or both) media. This does not apply to **summative** (final or high stake) assessment only, but it should also be applied to **formative assessment**.

Another way to strengthen the link between online and face-to-face learning, and to emphasise the importance of the online component, is the **valorisation of online working time in continuous assessment**. Here are three ways that can be used to achieve this, depending on teacher or institutional preference:

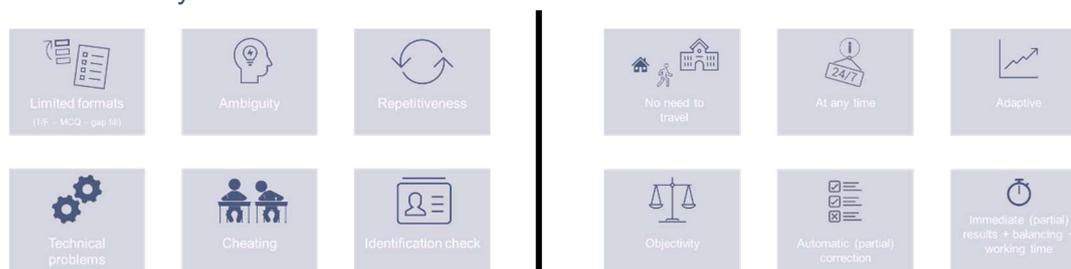
- Give marks for time spent working online
- Carry out tests and/or quizzes to check the mastery of the content studied online
- Give marks for exercises completed OR passed

To round up this short discussion of the various types of assessment, there are two more types of highly engaging assessment that are frequently underused, even though they are very efficient and quite easy to implement in either medium (online or face-to-face). These are **self-assessment** and **peer assessment**. The idea here is to have our learners assess themselves or each other through, for instance, can do statements that they can check at the end of each course section. This type of assessment has been proved to increase learner autonomy and critical thinking, as well as foreign language collaboration in the case of peer assessment.

Whichever types of assessment you choose for your courses, what matters is that the WHATs and HOWs should always be clearly communicated to our learners. They need to know not only what is expected of them at what time, but they also need to be prepared for the exact method of assessment. This is especially true for online assessment, where teachers are not necessarily present to help fix problems or misunderstandings.

ONLINE ASSESSMENT – A WORLD APART?

Just like e-learning, online assessment has a number of advantages, as illustrated below, one of the main ones being the increased flexibility in time management. However, online assessment is frequently defined by its constraints, leaving us unable to see not only the numerous advantages it can provide, but also the impressive progress that has been made in the field in recent years.



Implementing online assessment does require one thing, and that is **TIME**:

- Time for research to find the right tools
- Time to train teachers AND learners in the use of tools
- Time to adapt the types of questions and activities
- Time to test to make sure that everything is clear and that there is no ambiguity

This brings us back to the planning stage of our course. If prepared ahead of time, you can use multiple types of assessment in your blended learning course. Multiple forms of assessments allow for more variation in time, type of activities and can reflect the learners' abilities better than just one exam at one specific point in time. What matters is that everybody knows what to do and where to do it.

What about you? Have you used online assessment before? What did you do? Tell us about it!

Altissia specialises in the creation and implementation of language learning projects using new technologies. People are at the centre of everything we do. That is why we have made it our business to accompany communities and individuals and create a better language learning experience for all. We provide tools and services to measure and improve language skills. We work with each of our partners to make sure that every project is a success. We also work with teachers to help them bring out the best in their students. Visit our website www.altissia.org to find out more and follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to keep up to date with our latest news.



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