

Differences between formative and summative assessment

Use this job aid to help you create effective assessments.

	Formative	Summative
Purpose	To improve learning – assessment for learning	To prove learning – assessment of learning
Use	Provides feedback to students to help them build skills to achieve outcomes. Helps with the learning process.	Measures how well students have achieved outcomes. Helps with final judgement about learning.
Timing	Occurs during an instructional segment.	Occurs at the end of an instructional segment.
Frequency	Occurs on a continuous basis (e.g. daily, weekly) – ‘of the moment’.	Occurs at a particular point of time to determine what students can do at that point of time.
Role of teacher	To make decisions and monitor teaching based on student performance.	To measure level of performance and determine mark/outcome/result.
Role of student	Active involvement. Can assess performance of self, or peers. Can use either assessment type to improve and prove their learning.	
Examples	Observations, interviews, quizzes, work samples, group discussions, portfolios, reports, projects, tests, presentations.	
Grading	Not usually. Can be graded to indicate current performance to student, but grade not reported.	Yes. Grade reported and recorded as final mark/outcome/result.