

Pass or fail? Assessing assessment

A EuroClio (hybrid) Webinar Series
Online | 6 July - 25 August 2021

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	2nd	3rd	Sem	3rd
Gen. Science	B	B	A	C B B A-B B B B
Home Economics	A	B	A	A A A B B B B B
Citizenship	A	A	B	A A B A A A
English	B	A	A	A B A A B A A
Phy. Ed.	B	B	B	- B B C B - B B
Days Absent	0	0	2	0 1/2 0
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Regular attendance and promptness are essential for good progress in school. In order to maintain the best home-and-school relationships, a note signed by the parent or guardian is required for any absence or tardiness.

Concept Note

EuroClio – European Association of History Educators is delighted and honoured to present “The webinar series on Assessment”. The webinar series will take place online from 6 July to 25 August 2021.

EuroClio, the European Association of History Educators, is an international Non-governmental organisation that promotes the development of responsible and innovative history, citizenship, and heritage education by promoting critical thinking, multiperspectivity, mutual respect, and the inclusion of controversial issues.

Together, we will welcome between 30 and 50 motivated history and citizenship educators, as well as experts on assessment, from all across Europe. We will offer a programme of both live, and pre-recorded sessions. During the live sessions, participants will be able to engage in interesting discussions, and enjoy networking opportunities. During the pre-recorded sessions, participants will have the chance to learn from experts in their respective fields, and gather their thoughts for the final discussion groups and sharing of best practices. The programme will focus on empowering educators to utilize assessment in education in order to support the learning process from various perspectives. Furthermore, participants will be introduced to how to embed assessment in their lesson planning, rather than adding it after the planning has been finalised..

This concept notes serves as a guide to the webinar series themes and aims.

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The Learning to Disagree Guide on Assessment

Part of this webinar series is based on knowledge and insights acquired by EuroClio and its partners during the Learning to Disagree project, and collected in the Learning to Disagree teachers' guide. Part three of the guide (which was authored by Majella Dempsey and Anthony Malone of the National University of Maynooth) is indeed dedicated to assessment. This part includes practical tips on assessment tools, and places a strong emphasis on the importance of incorporating assessment practices into teaching through lesson planning. In addition, the guide focuses on teaching controversial and sensitive issues, which are strictly connected with the teaching and assessment of attitudes and values, which will be the focus of your first session. Whether or not historical reasoning is a part of the educational process, assessment practices differ.

We invite you to have a look at the Teachers' Guide, which you can find [at this link](#) in multiple languages, for insights on questioning as an assessment tool, on the use of rubrics, on students' self and peer assessment, and on oral assessment.

Why thinking about assessment matters

If there is one thing that we at EuroClio have learned during the past few years, it is that assessment is a rather complex and multifaceted part of (history and citizenship) education, and that not all teachers feel equipped for and comfortable to assess their students when it comes to formative assessment in the context of topics that might be controversial or sensitive for some of them¹. At the same time, during the plenary workshop on assessment that took place in November 2020, all participants agreed that assessment is a key part of (history and citizenship) education: we assess to

- a. validate the teaching and learning process (formative assessment); or
- b. grade/rank/score/evaluate students' learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard/ benchmark/a set of criteria, where the focus is the achievement of the learning outcomes of the curriculum or the syllabus (summative assessment).

Irrespective of whether we are looking at formative or at summative assessment, the act of evaluating what is happening in the classroom is influenced by a variety of factors, which are becoming more and more relevant:

¹ This is, for example, one of the results of the Needs Assessment carried out in 2017-2018 within the Learning to Disagree Project: https://www.euroclio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Learning-to-Disagree_Needs-Assessment-Report.pdf

Curriculum constraints (especially the need to cover a lot of content in a short timeframe) and **centralised exams** and their design have an impact on how summative assessment is approached, and on whether there is space, during a lesson or a set of lessons, to dedicate time to formative assessment as well²;

More and more institutions are paying special attention to the teaching and assessment of democratic and civic competences. As a consequence, subjects such as history, citizenship, geography, economics, and social sciences are asked to equip students with relevant **competences and skills**, and to guide them in the development of new **attitudes and values**³. All these are also subject of assessment;

Classrooms are becoming more and more **diverse**, and it is rare that a one-size-fits-all approach to assessment will yield positive results and be able to successfully capture the development of specific knowledge and competences or to evaluate the learning process of all students. This, in turn, is likely to have an impact on the **well-being** of our students. As a consequence, more personalised and differentiated assessment methods are to be researched and developed;

Due to the recent outbreak of Covid-19, and to protect the health and safety of our teachers and students, many school systems have moved to a distance learning format. If teaching online was something that not all schools and teachers were trained to do, and that we had to learn by doing, this was all the truer for **online assessment**⁴. One year and a half into distance learning, online assessment remains for many a painful part of distance learning and teaching.

This webinar series, blending pre-recorded and live sessions, will try to tackle some of these topics, to kick-start a discussion on where we stand when it comes to assessment, and how we can develop new approaches to assessment that are better suited to fulfil not only our needs as educators, but also our students' needs.

² For example, the Needs Assessment Report developed within the Learning to Disagree project highlights how “exam formats play a crucial role in the way assessment is conducted: teachers from countries where exams are geared towards historical reasoning are apparently used to teaching and assessing discussion, dialogue and debate to greater extent than teachers from countries where this is not the case.”

³ See, for example, the COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (2018/C 195/01) ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0607\(01\)&rid=2](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0607(01)&rid=2)), and the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture [RFCDC] project (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/rfcdc-volumes>)

⁴ We have tried to tackle this, briefly, in our online course on online teaching in June 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-JRUuSKEel&list=PLBO8poGFF8AbfY9LH7eKrCCooVwk3kcEg&index=7>

Key questions

The key questions that will be addressed during the training are:

1. What are the ethical implications of assessing values and attitudes?
2. How can we complement planned external exams with creative assessment tools?
3. How can we engage in online formative assessment?
4. How can we use formative assessment to improve learning by encouragement?
5. What kind of tools can we use to design and differentiate assessment?

The learning curve

The "Webinar Series on Assessment" will consist of seven online sessions, which will either take place or be published every Wednesday from 7 July to 18 August. It will open with a live keynote lecture on the ethical implications of assessing values and attitudes, followed by a short Q&A session. After this, there will be an opportunity for the participants to share their initial thoughts and hopes about the coming sessions.

The keynote lecture will be followed by another live session, where the focus will be on the connections between creativity and state-examinations, and how to leave space for competences while staying within the curriculum.

The following four sessions will be pre-recorded. During these sessions, different speakers will be talking about online methods for formative assessment; how to use formative assessment to update lessons on the go; how to keep the assessment process open and transparent to all respective parties. Finally, we will introduce several tools, including the Council of Europe Competences “Butterfly⁵”, and examples of rubrics.

The webinar series will end with a live interactive session, during which the participants will be able to discuss the topics of the webinar series with both their peers, and the respective speakers. During this session, participants will be able to share their thoughts, in addition to what they will take away from the webinar series.

More information on the programme of the webinar series is available at the event page: [add the event page](#).

⁵ In 2016, the Council of Europe issued the “Competences for Democratic Culture”, a document which highlights various competences and skills that we should help our students develop to be active and engaged citizens. The butterfly the “butterfly” is a visual organizer that shows what the Competences for Democratic Culture are.

Aims of the training

During the webinar series, you will:

- Discuss the ethical implications of assessing values and attitudes;
- Investigate the tension between central exams, curriculum constraints, and assessing skills and competences;;
- Investigate the relationship between creativity and external exams;
- Discuss your experiences regarding the challenges of assessment methods, as well as share best practices;
- Be introduced to tips and tricks for online formative assessment ;
- Be introduced to the “Competences for Democratic Culture” developed by the Council of Europe;
- Learn about best practices in terms of rubric use for differentiated assessment.

Expected outcomes

- Increased understanding of the role that attitudes and values play in learning about historical events and how to consider these in assessment
- Increased knowledge of how to promote creative thinking and acknowledge it through assessment
- Increased understanding of how to promote and value inclusivity in the classroom through differentiated assessment practices;
- Understanding of formative assessment as a way to update learning to promote positive development;
- Understanding of the importance of open assessment practices;
- Increased access to (online) tools for assessment of knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes, and values;
- Recognition of developed competences in history education through lifelong learning in the international context;
- Dissemination of educational materials and resources provided by the designated speakers
- Improved (English) language competence through facilitated and engaged dialogues.

Why thinking about assessment before planning the lesson matters

When consulted on what is important to discuss when approaching assessment, former members of the Learning to Disagree team underlined how assessment is best understood as a tool to plan the lesson from the very beginning. They say that:

“When planning a learning activity, starting out with the assessment part can be very helpful in developing learning outcomes, enquiry question, as well as the structure of the activity.

Particularly when the focus of the outcomes is aimed at being on skills and competences. If e.g. this question for group work: Was this lesson useful in training our skills in empathy and conflict resolution? is planned to round up the lesson, the teacher will have a clear direction for developing the activity.”⁶

We realise that the webinar series will take place during a time when most educators are on summer holiday and schools are closed. However, this time frame is no accident. We believe that a webinar series about the versatile nature and opportunities of assessment is best to be organized during a time when a whole new school year, new lessons, and possibly a new class of students, await. As we believe assessment should be a tool that helps you develop each of your lessons, we want to make sure that we would talk about assessment before the beginning of the school year! In this way, you will immediately have the opportunity to implement what they have learned from the webinar series first-hand.

⁶ Benny Christensen, EuroClio Ambassador and former member of the Learning to Disagree team.