

Optional Assessments in 3-6 sample mathematics units

Optional assessments are a new feature of the 3-6 mathematics sample units. They are short, flexible activities to monitor student understanding and guide teaching decisions. These formative assessments align with the Department's advice on [effective assessment](#).

These optional assessments help teachers:

- identify where students are in their learning
- adapt teaching to meet the diverse needs of learners
- reinforce learning intentions by providing opportunities for real-time feedback on student understanding.

Key features of the optional assessments



Flexible and adaptive: teachers determine how and when to use optional assessments based on their class needs.



Targets key mathematical ideas: aligns with the core lesson learning intention and embeds the working mathematical processes.



Supports monitoring student progress: highlights various assessment activities and student response systems such as effective questioning, mini whiteboards, and response cards.



Provides insight into student understanding: helps identify gaps and misconceptions.



Informs teaching decisions: guides teaching decisions by providing a way to check “have we got this?” at the lesson level and plan the next steps in teaching.



Complements existing assessments: provides additional assessments at the end of a lesson for students to demonstrate their learning and reinforce key concepts.

Factors to consider when choosing an optional assessment:

- aligns with student needs and class context
- serves a purpose in guiding the next steps in teaching
- supports the lesson's learning intention and success criteria
- fits within available time constraints
- engages students
- accommodates accessibility and differentiation needs.

Teachers are encouraged to make **intentional** and **responsive** decisions about which optional assessments to use based on their class's needs. For example, a teacher may choose to implement the optional assessment for Lesson 2 after completing Lessons 1 and 2 to gauge students' understanding before introducing new content in Lesson 3. Another teacher, confident in students' understanding during the lesson, may opt to use only the optional assessment from Lesson 7 to determine the next steps in teaching. The optional assessments are **not mandatory**.

Considerations for implementing optional assessments:

- use with whole class, small groups, or individual students
- choose some or all optional assessments based on student needs
- adapt or modify assessments to align with lesson learning intentions
- decide whether to record assessment data.

In collaboration with their stage and executive team, teachers are best positioned to decide how and when to use optional assessments. For example, a stage team may choose to implement optional assessments for Lessons 1, 4, and 8 for all students to discuss in a consistent teacher judgement (CTJ) session. Alternatively, a teacher unsure whether particular students have grasped a key concept, may use an optional assessment with them individually or in a small group. There is **no single correct way** to use optional assessments.

Optional assessments are aligned to the modes of assessment. These slightly structured, formative assessments are designed to be short, specific activities to identify what students know and can do to inform next steps in teaching. They provide focused assessment of key ideas or concepts necessary to access other learning to take place. The choice of assessment approach may differ if it is focused on individuals, small groups, or a class of students. Feedback is often provided either immediately or slightly delayed, depending on how the teacher decides to assess the learning.

Modes of assessment

Less formal

- Assessed frequently
- Fewer outcomes assessed (targeted)

More formal

- Assessed infrequently
- More outcomes assessed (broad)

	Unstructured	Slightly structured	More structured	Most structured
Modes	General classroom observation	Pre-planned observation opportunities	Pre-programmed class assessment	Large-scale standardised assessment
Examples	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unplanned observations and questioning of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - skills - dispositions - content understanding 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quizzes • hinge questions • planned observations • reviewing student work • peer and self-assessment 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scheduled in-school assessments • on-demand assessments • practical assessments • reviewing work samples against criteria 	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAPLAN • Check-in assessments • VALID Science • HSC examinations

Embedded timely, effective feedback

The different modes of assessment each provide valuable information to assist teachers in making on-balance judgements of student learning.

Optional assessments do not replace other school-based assessments. Assessment information should be combined to make balanced judgments about student achievement. Informal approaches like classroom observations and reviewing student work are valuable sources of information for helping teachers make informed instructional decisions. Both less formal and more formal assessments should be considered together to form accurate judgments of student progress. Schools are required to have a clear and consistent approach to assessment in line with their assessment and reporting procedures.

Additional resources

- 🔗 [Planning, programming and assessing Mathematics K-6](https://edu.nsw.link/plan-program-assess-maths-k-6) edu.nsw.link/plan-program-assess-maths-k-6
- 🔗 [Assessment](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/assessment) education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/assessment