**Holistic Assessment: An Overview**

* *Holistic Assessments are assessment activities which allow learners to demonstrate breadth, challenge and application and are taken from one of the four contexts for learning*

A Holistic Assessment task will demonstrate the following:

1. **Breadth of learning**, which**:**
   * Has been acquired over an extended period of time
   * Covers a number of Experiences and Outcomes from across different organisers **or** subject areas
2. **Challenge**, which:

* Promotes Higher Order Thinking Skills – creating, evaluating, analysing
* May also involve:
  + problem solving,
  + tackling multi step tasks,
  + interpreting tasks
  + selecting the format of the response

1. **Application**, which**:**
   * Requires learning which has been acquired over an extended period of time to be used in new and unfamiliar situations

It will also come from one of the **four contexts of learning:**

* **Curriculum areas and subjects**
* **Ethos and life of school as a community –** tasks around school events, trips, values…
* **Interdisciplinary learning (IDL) –** incorporating Literacy, Numeracy or HWB; working with other subjects
* **Opportunities for personal achievement -** tasks which engage with personal tracking of achievements; additional tasks which can be given to motivated students

Holistic Assessments should be created at the same time as the planning is taking place.

Using Holistic Assessment should also allow schools to tackle bureaucracy as it reduces the time for assessment by focusing on bundles of Experiences and Outcomes.

**Practical Examples**

Think about how existing practice can be adapted to include Holistic Assessments. You may already have tasks planned which could be tweaked slightly to ensure it’s a Holistic Assessment. For example…

* OLD TASK: a worksheet in which pupils have to label shapes.
* **Vs.**
* NEW TASK: pupils are asked to use a variety of shapes to create a picture and label them. Then they need to add up how many of each shape they used and say which one they used the most and which one they used the least.

The new task is holistic because it allows the learner to demonstrate:

* Breadth – comes from a range of organisers (shape, addition, number processes…)
* Challenge – requires learners to create
* Application – calls on skills (like addition) that they have learned previously to be used in a new context

Some practical examples of using Holistic Assessments could include:

* As a progress check before a summative assessment to find out whether any course content needs to be revisited
* As a means of assessing prior learning before a new topic
* When doing a task for a second time (ie. a second Critical Essay, a second painting in a similar style…)
* Based on real life events for pupils (ie. going on holiday, budgeting to buy something they like)
* Preparation for a school event, like a trip, show or open evening (ie. costing, planning, creating materials for it)
* Aftermath of a school event (ie. some form of writing task – challenge can be increased by varying the format of writing from the usual format, eg. a letter, a poster, a diary entry, a newspaper article, etc)
* Tasks which connect to groups in the school (eg. monitoring the weather for the Eco-Schools Group; a survey about a particular issue for the School Council)
* Tasks about issues raised in the community (ie. persuasive posters/letters/articles about littering, anti-social behaviour, etc)
* As a transition task (eg. budgeting for their first day/week)
* Written up interviews with individuals (ie. a new pupil, a new member of staff, a visitor to the school)

Education Scotland provided the following prompts for moderating Holistic Assessment pieces:

|  |  |  |
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|  | Prompt | Evaluative comments/suggested improvements |
| Es and Os | Do the Es and Os link concepts appropriately?  Are they taken from a range of organisers? |  |
| Holistic Question | Is the task at the appropriate level? |  |
|  | Does the task enable the teacher to gather evidence of learning against the selected Es and Os? |  |
|  | Will this task require the learner to draw on a range of learning? |  |
|  | To what extent does the task promote higher order thinking skills?  Which skills will be most needed? |  |
|  | Are breadth, challenge and application evident? |  |