

# Assessment as Learning: Maximizing the Potential of Assessment in CBL



Fot. Bart van Overbeeke

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## Assessment as Learning: A definition\*

Assessment as learning (AaL) is an educational approach where the responsibility for the assessment process is shared between the teacher and the students with the ultimate goal to empower students to become self-directed learners. While the aim of traditional assessment is to measure learning outcomes (i.e., products) at the end of a learning experience, assessment as learning aims to foster reflection, evaluative judgment, and student ownership of the learning process. By sharing the responsibility for the assessment process (both how to be assessed and what to be assessed on), students develop stronger communication and collaboration skills while deepening their understanding of content knowledge. AaL encompasses many assessment methods (standardized and non-standardized, process- and product-oriented) and invites educators to see these approaches as complementary to each other. Common AaL methods include (non-exclusively) student self-assessment, peer feedback, feedback dialogues, student-initiated feedback, or the use of exemplars. Students may also be involved in generating evaluation criteria and rubrics.

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\*Definition developed by the TU/e Assessment as Learning Working Group, as shown in the internal document put forward by the TU/e CBL Task Force “Towards CBL as educational concept 2025-2030”, December, 2024.

## Key Question

What are the challenges of Assessment of Learning (AoL) and Assessment for Learning (AfL) in promoting student agency in Challenge-Based Learning?

### Key Challenges Identified

| Theme                        | Summary of Challenge   |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Practical Constraints     | AfL is time-intensive for teachers; AoL is rigid and not process-oriented.                   |
| 2. Criteria Clarity          | Students and teachers struggle with unclear or shifting assessment goals.                    |
| 3. Feedback Literacy         | Students undervalue peer feedback; teachers lack time to support feedback skills.            |
| 4. Motivation & Grades       | Grades dominate motivation; learning often stops after grading (“zesjescultuur”).            |
| 5. Student Readiness         | Many students are not yet skilled in self-assessment or managing autonomy.                   |
| 6. Group & Stakeholder Roles | Group work and external stakeholder input create complexity in fair, transparent assessment. |
| 7. Conceptual Ambiguity      | Overlap between AoL and AfL causes confusion; roles and relationships remain unclear.        |

## Reframing Assessment through Assessment as Learning (AaL)

**Assessment as Learning** is not just a third category; it’s a **paradigm shift**. It places students at the center of the assessment process, empowering them to:

- Define their own learning goals
- Reflect on their learning process
- Evaluate their own progress and make adjustments
- Engage in feedback dialogues with peers, teachers, and stakeholders
- Develop lifelong learning and metacognitive skills

## Comparative Table: AoL, AfL, and AaL in CBL Contexts

| Dimension                 | Assessment of Learning (AoL)                     | Assessment for Learning (AfL)                         | Assessment as Learning (AaL)<br>(Synthesized)  |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>What is assessed</b>   | Final outcomes, products, knowledge, skills.     | Progress during learning, misconceptions, gaps.       | Reflection, self-regulation, feedback use, personal growth, identity development.                        |
| <b>Why</b>                | To certify and report achievement.               | To improve teaching and guide student learning.       | To empower students as self-directed, lifelong learners.   |
| <b>How</b>                | Tests, final projects, standardized tasks.       | Teacher-designed quizzes, observations, peer reviews. | Portfolios, self-assessment, open formats, co-created rubrics, reflection logs.                          |
| <b>When</b>               | End of course/unit.                              | Continuous, as defined by teacher.                    | Student-initiated, adaptive, with optional structured points.  |
| <b>Who assesses</b>       | Teachers, examiners.                             | Teachers, sometimes students and peers.               | Students, peers, teachers, and external stakeholders (e.g., challenge providers).                        |
| <b>Who organizes</b>      | Teachers and examination boards.                 | Teachers, with some student collaboration.            | Students, supported by teachers and institutions; includes external experts.                             |
| <b>Who is in the lead</b> | Teachers.  | Teachers, with student input.                         | Students lead the process; teachers scaffold and guide.  |
| <b>Feedback focus</b>     | Summative, judgmental, often after the task.     | Formative, improvement-oriented.                      | Continuous, iterative, and reflective. Feedback is part of the learning, not just a reaction to it.      |
| <b>Impact on learning</b> | Can motivate or demotivate; often ends learning. | Improves understanding and teacher decision-making.   | Builds student agency, metacognitive ability, and professional identity. Prepares for lifelong learning. |

## Final Takeaways

- **Assessment as Learning (AaL)** directly supports the goals of Challenge-Based Learning by developing **agency, reflection, autonomy**, and **lifelong learning capacity**.
- It complements existing assessment methods but **requires a shift** in roles, responsibilities, and mindsets.
- **Teachers and institutions are enablers**: with appropriate scaffolding, students can take charge of how they learn and how they are assessed.

Once again, thank you for your thoughtful participation. Together, we are reshaping assessment to better serve **students as learners, collaborators, and future professionals**.

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The ideas generated during the session were processed and summarized with the aid of Chat GPT.