

Prototype template: Take charge of your own learning

Hello students!!

This guidebook is focused on improving your learning experience and making it more valuable. This self-assessment tool is provided for you to think, revisit and enhance your experience, monitor your growth and help you achieve the desired results as an individual and together as a group.

This assessment template is meant to be used as a group. Therefore, if this is not used as a part of a course's framework, the first step is to form a group. The size is not fixed, but in order to have a productive and balanced discussion, aim for a group of 4-6 people. You can form groups among people you know beforehand, but it may be more interesting to get out of your comfort zone a bit and connect with people you know less or not at all. Try asking around in your class, in groups on social media, or even use social media channels or your network of friends to connect with people you don't know at all beforehand. The tool can also be used by students on different courses. In the case where your group would consist of students evaluating different courses, a bit of background discussion on the topics and methods of the course is desirable to facilitate the conversation later. It can also be interesting for everyone's learning experience to work with people having different interests, goals and motivations as well as various approaches to learning, which is an additional reason to not work only with your closest friends.

In case you encounter any issues within the group during your work, remember the importance of communication. If something disturbs you, aim to establish an open and respectful discussion around the topic to find a solution together. In addition to expressing your own thoughts, remember to listen to others. If you cannot find a solution, consider asking for help from an external mediator. This could simply be any person outside the group who can have a more objective view on the situation and help find a solution, but you could also consider contacting study advisors. While this may be a task you perform autonomously outside of the formal framework of studies, they are here to help you with your studies holistically and can help find solutions in case you face a conflict or other issue in your group reflection process.

Through this quick assessment, you will be able to take the driving seat of your education and enjoy more autonomy in your learning.

This assessment is divided into three parts:

1. At the beginning of the course.
2. Before the course examination
3. End of the course.

Duhhh

Use each section accordingly and discuss their content with your group.

Make sure to **make notes** during the discussion to be able to **revisit** your points at a later time.

You may wonder why this is important and how it can be useful for you. The answer is simple. It has been proven that the student's interest and involvement in the subject expand when they are given the freedom to choose. This assessment is aimed at triggering that tickle bone of yours and making this course more personal to ensure the development of your interests.

At the beginning of the course

Let's Begin!

Step 1:

The primary thing to consider is your **motivation**.

List out the reasons that made you choose this course. Did you choose it because you are interested in this field? Was it obligatory? If yes, would you have chosen it otherwise? Why or why not? Why do you think the university has made this course obligatory? Do you agree with the reasons you came up with?

Write down your views and discuss in groups of 4-6 members and understand their perspectives. Does everyone have a similar opinion about the course?

Let's dig deeper!

When you read the course description for the first time, what were your thoughts about this course? Take your time to discuss in the group which contents grabbed your attention and why. Next also talk about the not so fun aspects of the courses and think about why you do not enjoy/ not expect to enjoy them. Which parts of the course do not excite you very much and why? What is the difference between the parts you enjoyed and you didn't? Make notes about your expectations and reasons behind the way you perceive the course.

Before you begin with your learning process in this course, take a moment and think about what you want to achieve in this course? List out your goals and discuss them with their reasons with your team.

Analyze the pattern of goals and expectations among the groups. Did you find other students with similar goals? Also, write down other interesting goals you came across during your discussion.

Next up its time to take a look at yourself as a learner and student.

Start off with thinking about your own weaknesses and strengths when it comes to studying. In case you know the other group members better, this might be a good opportunity to even ask them. Write down 3 strengths and weaknesses, and then present them to the other members of the group.

In addition, please rate your weaknesses on a scale from 0 to 100 (with 0 equaling the worse chase of this weakness and 100 being the opposite of it). Keep this scale for the later parts of this exercise.

Example:

Very Distracted 0-----50-----100 Very Focused

Further, discuss how each of you expects your **strengths and weaknesses** to affect your final examination of the course you are preparing for? What do you think will be your biggest obstacle during this particular course? Please write down a plan of how you are doing to overcome those weaknesses and how you are going to capitalize on your own strengths. Keep in mind that those goals should be realistic. Make the goal **SMART**.

If you are unuse if your goals are smart, please consult others in the groups.



This is the perfect time to discuss with the group how you are able to improve the most and exchange ideas about the strengths and weaknesses. Also further discuss any flaws in the plans to improve while keeping the course and the SMART rules in mind.

After reflecting on the above questions, create a preliminary action plan for this course with the information you already know. If you need more details to plan, feel free to contact your professor. This is a part of your course and thus, the teachers have been advised to be completely transparent while answering any of your doubts regarding the curriculum. It might be small or big. Don't worry! Shoot!

Remember you are just at the beginning of your course!

Similar to the before activities, discuss these points with your group. Making a plan together with the others like that should create a sense of commitment as you will now hold each other accountable for your ideas and plans.

At the end of this step, focus on thinking about your grades. What are the grades that you aim to achieve? This could be a part of your goal. Of all the evaluation methods proposed, which one is your favourite and most preferred one and why is that so? Where do you think you will require more help from your team and how have you decided to work on it? List down your thoughts.

Suggest a couple of more different and creative evaluation methods that would help in developing the course and students in the upcoming years. Discuss this in your team and finally decide on the best five methods per team.

Try to stick with this group for the rest of the course, since it is highly probable that you have a similar goal. However, you are still free to approach other students if you think they can help.

Tip:

As you go, document all your achievements on a weekly basis. Be specific here and cover how you managed to achieve specific goals. This will help you keep track of how you are doing and boost your confidence.

Before the final evaluation of the course

The examinations are right around the corner, but this is not the time to be stressing out. Try to take a step back and take the time to evaluate how the course went so far. In the groups, look back at the notes you made in the previous meetings and discuss how your expectations have been met so far. Here you take a look at the goals you wrote down during the first meeting and rate based on your personal rating system. Have you met your goals? If you have not met them yet, please write down why? If you met them, please also note down how you have done that. Present this to the other group members.

After everyone has discussed their **course evaluations and expectations**, take around 10 min each to evaluate and discuss the strengths and weaknesses that you have noted down in the very first meeting. Are you still working on your weaknesses? How far have you improved yourself? Rate your weaknesses now again on a scale from 0 to 100 (with 0 equaling the worse chase of this

weakness and 100 being the opposite of it). It is important here that you first give a rating to yourself and then ask others to rate you. This will give you a more realistic view of your own skills while still staying critical.

Example:

Very Distracted 0-----50-----100 Very Focused

In the groups please discuss and write down ways you still can improve. Really take this opportunity to share knowledge and tips and trick with each other. It is important to see weakness as something that can be changed and receiving help from others might be just the way to change the way you perceive your own weaknesses.

Remember to keep the examination in mind and make the Goals to improve your weaknesses **SMART.**

As a next step focus on the method of examination and material which is going to be examined. What is important according to the syllabus? What is important in your opinion? How much work needed for evaluation? How much of the material do you already understand? How are you expecting the evaluation to go with your current knowledge?

Please make some brief notes to each of these questions and discuss extensively in the group what you have observed.

If all the members study the **same course** please take your time to explain to each other what of the necessary material you have understood and discuss the material that is still missing. Discussing with others and even teaching them some material is a proven way to memorize and internalize necessary information. Now make a plan of attack towards the material still missing. Please keep in mind the examination and how relevant the material is.

In case the members of the group are preparing for **different courses**, take the time to teach each other what you have learned in your own course. Explain to the others in words they would understand what you have learned and let them ask you questions. Teaching others is a great way to reflect upon your own knowledge and internalize information. Next please explain to them what information you still are missing and discuss together how to study this information. Write down a brief and realistic plan of attack on how you personally will prepare for the examination and how you will improve in the areas you are still missing.

Before the examination, come together one last time and repeat the last two steps again in order to prepare well and track your progress.

Discussing the material of the examination should give you confidence and a deeper understanding of your own learning. Make the best out of this experience and we wish you the best of luck!!

Tip:

If you have to write an essay or present an oral presentation as a form of examination, take this opportunity to present this to the group members too. In case you do not have the time or feel confident to present this in front of the other, make use of the media you have at hand. Share your essays via email or drive with them, film yourself giving the oral presentation, do a Livestream to the other members. Let them give you feedback on your material and presentation of knowledge. It does not matter if you study for the same course as getting insight from different fields or from a third party will help you to more critically evaluate your own learning and knowledge.

Tip for oral presentations:

Filming yourself giving a speech is the way most professionals work on improving their public speaking skills. Most people are very nervous as they have a specific view of how they are probably standing there and looking like when they present. Having a video of yourself will give you a more

objective viewpoint. For example, most people believe they are blushing a lot when they talk, however, being able to see that one, in reality, is not blushing can take away a lot of anxiety from individuals. This is also a good opportunity to improve and tackle any more noticeable weaknesses.

End of the course reflection

Congratulations, you made it through the course and got a few ECTS in your pocket!

Before moving on to the next course, it's good to **reflect a bit on your performance** during this course in order to apply some of the things you learnt in the courses to come.

First of all, take a moment to discuss general feelings and impressions about the course with the group. Did you enjoy the content, the working methods, your own participation? Was there something you would have organized differently? Do you find that the course was essential for your studies as a whole, or rather a deepening course on a specific topic? After the discussion, make sure to pass on constructive feedback also to the teacher to help them improve the course in the future!

Next, think back to the beginning of this course and the goals you set for yourself. Did you achieve them? What could you have done better? Discuss everyone's goals with the group in

order to get a general picture of how the course went. Make sure to also get your group's opinion on your performance, and not only share your own view.

Please make detailed notes again as they will help you to achieve a better overview.

Moving on to your **strengths and weaknesses** that you assessed at the beginning of the course.

Did you manage to leverage your strengths as much as you wanted to? Did you manage to do so in ways you didn't expect? Did you find new strengths that you didn't realize you had? Did you work on your weaknesses during the course, or rather avoided anything that would require to deal with them? Do you feel that you went through some personal growth related to your weaknesses? Did you find something challenging that you didn't expect to be?

Finally, take a look going forward. What do you want to keep improving about yourself and your study skills in upcoming courses? What did you do well in this course that you want to keep in the future? What would you do differently?

Before turning the page to the next course, take a moment to praise yourself and the other members of the group. No matter the grade you get, if you did your best to attain the specific goals you had, you can be proud of yourself.

**Now just repeat the same steps for the next
course!!**