



## Assessments: Friend or Foe?

### Description

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my 16-year-old son has had all his formal high school exams canceled. While he is delighted, I am concerned that he has missed out on the chance to put himself under pressure to perform and better understand his strengths and weaknesses before moving on to the next stage in his education.

This experience has forced me to pause and think about my own attitude to development, evaluating performance, and assessments. As someone who spent 10 years of my life sitting for an annual set of exams (high school, university, and professional), I did have a few years in my early career where I was very pleased that I would no longer be assessed and graded. I'd had my fill of the pressure of relentless study followed by exam performances and the anxious wait for results.

After several years as an accountancy exam tutor, coaching others to perform and attain results that would act as a gateway to the next stage in their career, I now look at learning and assessment in a different way.

In my professional world, I am deeply involved in the concepts of learning and development. Most of us are not fully professionally developed—there will always be new situations and challenges arising that we haven't been trained to deal with. If we accept that we won't always have all the answers, and it is fine not to, then this will empower us to use these challenges as learning experiences which in turn will develop us to tackle similar problems in the future.

This is what workplace learning should be about. But how can we identify—quickly and easily—the skills we should concentrate on as individuals? This is where workplace assessments come into play.

In the last five years, the term “assessment” has taken on a far broader meaning to include 180s, psychometrics, and other workplace-based testing. This type of assessment should be approached in a completely different way than sitting a formal exam.

If we can accept that we'll always have development areas that we can and should improve upon, then these assessments will help us to focus and put learning effort into where it truly matters.

Many of us are time-poor but still keen to develop, both as individuals and professionals. Being able to pinpoint skills that are underdeveloped and then address them head-on is something I find valuable.

If we avoid assessments, there is a risk that we won't fully understand our strengths and weaknesses and may even have a false sense of what skills we possess. This might result in us leading particular workplace initiatives or projects that we are not equipped to deal with.

Much like the situation my son now finds himself in—he's had to select subjects for his next stage of schooling that will narrow his higher education and career choices without having explored his strengths through assessments at the lower, more general level.

We set up [Kaplan Performance Academy](#) to revolutionize workplace learning. One of the key components of the Academy is the ability to undertake a personalized learning journey, based on the output from a 180 performance tracker, as well as, for many topic areas, a confidence/competence assessment. This is invaluable in helping an individual to focus their precious time on the skills they most need to develop.

In addition, the Academy supports coaching, and the role of the coach is to help the individual embed the learning by applying the skills in the workplace. The ability to discuss professional development with an independent coach will enhance the effectiveness of the learning.

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**Ready to see how you can meet your organization's learning and development needs? [Learn more](#) about the unique digital learning environment of [Kaplan Performance Academy](#).**

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**Date Created**

September 2020

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