

From Assessment Results to Development Plans

A practical guide to turning feedback into a useful next step.

Nirvana Intellect | Assessment practice series | Edition 2

The results are in. You have a score, perhaps a report, and a conversation to prepare for. But what do you actually say to the person sitting across from you? And how do you agree on something more useful than "keep practising"?

This guide helps you move from an assessment response to a focused development plan. We'll look at what the work shows, choose one priority, plan a conversation and agree on practice you can come back to review.

Our example follows a fictional learner who reads a report's figures accurately but needs help explaining the uncertainty behind a recommendation. You'll find space to work through a real example of your own on each page.

Use the guide for learning and development. It isn't a set of rules for hiring, promotion or certification, and the examples don't promise a particular outcome. The aim is simpler: help someone understand their work and take a useful next step.

1. Start with the work behind the score

Before the conversation, open the person's actual response. Read the question and the scoring guidance beside it. What did they do well? Where did their answer leave you unsure?

A total can be a starting point, but it won't tell you everything you need for useful feedback. Look for an action you can point to. "You compared the figures accurately, but gave one explanation without considering another possibility" gives you something to discuss. "You need better analytical skills" leaves the person guessing.

Check the context, too. Was the work reviewed? Were there interruptions? Was this assessment designed to answer the development question you're asking? If something is unclear, make a note to check it before drawing a conclusion.

Capture what you can see - Task, date and scoring-guide version:

_____ - **Something the person demonstrated:**

_____ - **The part of the response that supports this:**

_____ - **Something you'd like to understand better:** _____ -

Conditions that might have affected the work: _____ - **What you still need to check:** _____

Be careful with the leap from work to person. "The answer didn't include another explanation" describes the response. "They can't consider alternatives" is a much bigger claim. Your next conversation can help you explore the gap.

2. Pick one thing worth working on It's tempting to turn every lower score into a development goal. Before you build that list, ask what would make the biggest practical difference in the person's next piece of work.

Invite them into that decision. They may have read the question differently, found a term unfamiliar or run out of time while checking an earlier answer. Their account doesn't replace the evidence, but it can help you decide what to explore next.

Talk through these questions - Where will you need this skill next? - Which part of this response should we look at together? - What are we still unsure about? - Where could you realistically practise? - Who could give you useful feedback?

For our report example, the priority might be explaining uncertainty before recommending an action. The learner already uses figures accurately. Now we want to help them consider another explanation and say what would help them choose between the possibilities.

Before deciding how much support they need, try a different report and ask them to talk through their thinking. You may learn something the written answer didn't show.

If two tasks tell different stories, keep both in view. Ask what changed between them rather than smoothing the difference into an average. Choose a priority you can explain with a concrete example from the work.

3. Make feedback a conversation You don't need a perfect speech. Bring one clear example, a few open questions and enough time to listen. Where practical, share the work and scoring guidance beforehand so the person has a chance to reflect.

Start with their experience of the task. Then describe what you noticed without turning it into a judgement about who they are. Give them room to explain how they reached their answer.

You could say - "Which part felt straightforward, and where did you get stuck?" - "Your comparison uses the right figures. I'd like to talk about how you reached the recommendation." - "Did you consider any other explanations?" - "Where might this come up in your next report?" - "What would help you practise that part?"

Listen for the difference between a learning need and a scoring concern. If someone thinks their work was marked incorrectly, explain the review route and record the issue. You don't have to settle a disputed score in the same conversation as a development plan.

Leave with a shared understanding Write down the strength you discussed, one priority, the person's perspective and the action you've agreed. Keep the notes about the work and learning purpose; avoid personality labels or unrelated personal details.

Before you finish, ask: "What are you going to try next, and what support do you need from me?" It's a simple way to catch different expectations while you're still together.

4. Plan practice you can come back to

"Attend a course" may be a useful activity, but it doesn't tell you what someone will do differently afterward. Give the plan a practical task, a source of feedback and a piece of work you can review together.

For our learner, the target is to offer two plausible explanations for a trend and say what evidence would help distinguish them. They could practise with two unfamiliar sample reports, discuss each attempt with a colleague and revise their explanation after the feedback.

After four weeks, they might try a fresh report and review it against the same criteria. That's an example schedule, not a rule: agree on timing that fits the person's workload and gives them a real chance to practise.

Build your plan together - What action will you practise?

_____ - Why will it help in your work or learning?

_____ - What task will you use, and when?

_____ - Who will give feedback?

_____ - What work will you keep for the review?

_____ - What will you look for in that work?

_____ - When will you meet again?

_____ - What could get in the way, and what's your alternative? _____

Check that the support is real. Has the colleague agreed to help? Is the sample task available? If those pieces aren't in place, simplify the plan until it is something the person can actually start.

5. Look for change, then decide what's next

At the follow-up, put the new work beside the earlier response. Ask what the person does differently now, where they still need support and what helped them along the way.

Keep the comparison sensible. A higher score on an easier task doesn't automatically show progress. Neither does remembering the answer to an identical question. A fresh, relevant task can give you another chance to see the same skill in use. Note any differences in difficulty or help provided.

Use these prompts at the review - What new task did you try?

_____ - What can you now show in the work?

_____ - Where do you still want help?

_____ - Which part of the practice helped most?

_____ - What are we still unsure about?

_____ - Should we continue, change or close this priority?

_____ - What's the next action, and who will do it? _____

If progress is hard to see, check the plan before assuming a lack of effort. Did the person get the practice time? Did the feedback address the right action? You may need to change the task or the support.

Keep the record focused on the agreed learning purpose. Follow your organisation's access and retention rules, and explain how the person can ask for a correction.

One thing to do this week Take one recent response and write a sentence describing what it shows. Share it with the learner, agree on one practice activity and put a follow-up date in both calendars.