

Selecting an Assessment Method

Know what you want to know

What is the student learning outcome (SLO) to be assessed? The validity of any assessment method can only be judged in relation to the SLO being assessed. No single assessment method is good for measuring all possible SLOs. With apologies to Red Green, "Any tool can be the wrong tool" and assessment methods are tools.

Review the various types of assessment methods.

Become familiar with the advantages and disadvantages associated with each. While no single assessment method is good for measuring all possible SLOs, there is always more than one way of assessing something.

Know what level of quality is needed and what you can afford.

There is an inverse relationship between the quality of an assessment method and cost in time, effort and money. Select direct indicators of learning over indirect indicators (see following page).

Review what you are already doing.

Consider what assessment methods you are already doing that could be adapted to meet new requirements. For example, programs may be able to use course-embedded assessment, recycling student work used to determine course grades, to provide the information they need to assess student learning outcomes at the program level.

What will the students think?

Consider the effect that a method may have on student motivation. Will it provide value? Elicit their cooperation?

Try it out.

Once you have selected a method, give it a trial run with a small sample of students or have other faculty members review it. Does it appear to measure what you want to measure? Does it provide the information that you need? Just as we want to continuously improve the learning experiences we provide our students, so must our assessment methods improve and evolve over time.

Indicators of Learning (NCA-HLC)

Direct indicators allow students to demonstrate what they know or are able to do; not what they have been exposed to, what they perceive they have learned, or what grades they received. Indirect indicators are based on opinions or thoughts about student knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, and perceptions. Examples of each are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of Direct and Indirect Indicators

<u>Examples of Direct Indicators</u>	<u>Examples of Indirect Indicators</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre- and post-testing• Capstone experiences• Oral examinations/presentations• Written products/essays• Performance in supervised internships• Portfolio assessments• Research papers/theses/dissertations• Standardized exams• Locally developed tests• Performance on licensure, certification or professional exams• Performance-based assessments• Juried reviews and performances• Exhibitions/demonstrations• Practical exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information gathered from students• Information gathered from alumni• Information gathered from employers• Graduation rates• Retention rates• Transfer studies• Graduate follow-up studies• Job placement data• Curriculum and syllabus analysis