Assessment

taken from *Assessing Student Learning: a common sense guide*, 2nd edition by Linda Suskie

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- What is Assessment? (p. 4)

  Assessment is the ongoing process of:
  1) Establishing clear, measurable expected student learning outcomes
  2) Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes
  3) Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well students learning matches our expectations
  4) Using the results to understand and improve student learning

  The best assessment efforts use multiple, diverse approaches including the following: (pp. 20 – 34) MIX IT UP!

  <u>Direct</u> (tangible evidence that students are learning, e.g. 80% of students correctly answered a problem requiring calculating a limit on a calculus class final exam) and <u>Indirect</u> (signs that indicate students are learning, e.g. 90% of math graduates are accepted into Bachelor Degree programs) <u>evidence of student learning</u>

  Assessments of <u>student outcomes</u> (evidence of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc. students have once they successfully complete a course; these are *summative*, occurring at the end of a course or program; e.g. blueprinting the final exam), processes (evidence of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc. students are acquiring throughout the duration of the course; these are *formative*, occurring while the student learning is taking place; e.g. Classroom Assessment Techniques such as minute papers), <u>inputs</u> (analysis of things in place before learning begins that can affect the outcomes; e.g. incorrect placement or class size), and <u>context</u> (examination of the environment in which the learning takes place; e.g. prospective employers' demand for graduates of a program)

  <u>Qualitative</u> (cannot be counted but are analyzed by looking for recurring patterns and themes; e.g. online class discussion threads or notes from focus groups) and <u>quantitative</u> (can be counted and analyzed statistically; e.g. test scores, rubric scores, survey responses) assessments

  <u>Objective</u> (have one answer; e.g. multiple-choice question or solutions that are awarded partial credit) and <u>subjective</u> (have many answers of varying quality – require professional judgment to score; e.g. observing a student nurse draw blood or a writing sample) assessments

The specific strategies chosen should "match" the desired purposes of assessment. (p.34)

If you want to…	*Consider using…*
Assess thinking & performance skills	Assignments planned & evaluated using rubrics
Assess knowledge, conceptual understanding, or skill in application & analysis	Multiple-choice tests
Assess attitudes, values, dispositions, etc.	Reflective writing, surveys, focus groups, etc.
Draw an overall picture of student learning	Portfolios
Compare your students against peers everywhere	Published tests or surveys

Assessment strategies include the following:

Rubrics (pp. 137 – 153) – a scoring guide: a list or chart that describes the criteria faculty will use to evaluate or grade completed student assignments; rubrics must list all things that are looked for when an assignment is graded; rubrics include the following:

- *checklist rubrics* – simple lists indicating the presence of things looked for in a completed assignment
- *rating scale rubrics* – checklists with a rating scale added to show the degree to which things looked for are present in completed assignments
- *descriptive rubrics* – rating scale rubrics with brief descriptions of the performances that merit each possible rating (nice because they explicitly document standards for student performance)

Assignments (pp. 155 – 161) – every assignment should help students achieve important learning goals; includes traditional (essay, research paper, etc.) and non-traditional (executive summary, debate, case study, journal, model, display, etc.) assignments; ask several questions before creating the assignment including the following:

- Why am I giving students this assignment? What is its purpose? What do I expect students to learn by completing it?
- What should the completed assignment look like? What skills and knowledge should be demonstrated? How should it be formatted?
- How are students to complete this assignment? How much time should they spend on it? How much will it count toward their grade? Can they collaborate with others?
- How will I grade this assignment? If I plan on using a rubric, students should be given a copy of the rubric with the assignment so they know exactly what they will be scored on.

Tests (pp. 165 – 181) – effective tests are planned by developing a test blueprint – an outline of the test that lists the measurable performance objectives (MPOs) that students are to demonstrate on the test. Test blueprints ensure that the test focuses on the most important MPOs, help determine what should be covered on a test, and document the extent to which students have achieved each MPO. Tests can include multiple-choice items, matching items, true-false items, and/or completion or fill-in-the-blank items – avoid trick questions!

Various instruments that measure attitudes, values, dispositions, etc. (pp. 183 – 200) – see handout on Classroom Assessment Techniques for ideas; e.g. minute papers, journals, focus groups, surveys, etc.

Portfolios (pp. 202 – 213) – portfolios, whether paper or electronic, provide compelling evidence of what a student has learned; they can be used to illustrate growth, as they are continually updated, and are often assessed with a rubric; students should be involved in the selection of work that is included in the portfolio; portfolios often contain the following elements:

- Table of contents
- Examples of student work – papers, attitude surveys, tests, observation notes, etc.
- Evidence of growth & improvement – outlines, drafts, and final versions of assignments
- Student's reflection page – answers to such questions as "Which item is your best work? Why?" or "List three things you learned by completing this portfolio."
- Faculty's evaluative summary – this often uses a rubric

Published Tests or Surveys (pp. 214 – 228) – these tests or surveys are often validated for reliability and quality, provide a good breadth of coverage, may allow for benchmarking.

- Assessment at a college should occur at many levels – institutional (OIR), program (academic departments & SAAC), general education (subcommittee of the Middle States Task Force on Standards 7 & 14), co-curricular and student life (?), and course (SLOAT ☺) (p. 6)

- What is the Difference between Assessment and Grading? (pp. 10 – 11)

  - Grades do not give specifics on exactly what students have and have not learned.
  - Grading can count attendance, penalties for late submission of assignments, etc.
  - Grading standards can be inconsistent and are often subjective.
  - Grades (if they are based on direct evidence of student learning such as blueprinting tests) can be used in assessing SLOs.

- Why Assess? (p. 58 – 61)
  Assessment helps student learn more effectively.
  Assessment fosters collegial collaboration.
  Assessment indicates how the curriculum is coherent.
  Assessment results provide feedback and can help initiate positive change (pedagogical methods, limits on class size, curricular revision, etc.).
  Assessment *may* improve student learning.

- Look at Enough Evidence (p. 46) – use a *representative* random sample – consider sections taught by full-time vs part-time faculty, daytime vs evening classes, classes offered at all campuses, etc.; to avoid bias, require all students to participate but then choose a representative random sample to analyze (NOTE: In order to have a 5% error margin in your analysis, sample 278 out of 1000 students, 217 out of 500 students, 184 out of 350 students, 132 out of 200 students, 80 out of 100 students, or 44 out of 50 students. p. 48)

- Use the results of assessment to improve student learning. Discuss the findings with colleagues so that assessment becomes a collaborative effort.