

Assessing Learning

Version 13

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Backwards design approach

Using a backwards design approach can help you plan your lessons and develop your assessments. We'll go into more detail about lesson planning later on the [Lesson Planning](#) page, but for now, it's important to understand why teachers need to keep the end in mind and first develop learning goals. Start with asking yourself the question: "what are the key concepts or skills that students need to master by the end of this course?" to identify the learning goals. Once you identify those learning goals or desired outcomes first, then the next stage of developing assessments that align with the learning goals will follow more easily. As well, planning how to assess your students' learning requires you to consider the purpose of the assessment and how it fits in with the goals of the course before implementing it in the curriculum. This will hopefully ensure that the assessments you choose are meaningful and support the course goals. The last stage in backwards design is planning how you will engage your students using different activities and technology and how you will teach the content.

Taken from: Wiggins, Grant, and McTighe, Jay. (1998). Backward Design. In *Understanding by Design* (pp. 13-34), and <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/understanding-by-design/>.

Assessment

According to Angelo and Cross (1993, pg. 3) "classroom assessment helps individual college teachers obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Faculty can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and effective".

Taken from: Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* (2nd Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

You will need to assess learning outcomes. Assessment is used to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes and also to promote learning. It is recommended that you create an assessment blueprint – a document that maps your assessments to your learning outcomes. By the end of the semester, your students should be able to meet the learning outcomes of your course at the appropriate level (Bloom's Taxonomy).

Suggestions for successful implementation of assessment techniques from Angelo and Cross (1993):

1. "Don't ask your students to use any Classroom Assessment Technique you haven't previously tried on yourself." (p. 31)
2. "Allow for more time than you think you will need to carry out and respond to the assessment." (p. 31)
3. "Make sure to 'close the loop.' Let students know what you learn from their feedback and how you and they can use that information to improve learning." (p. 31)

Adapted

from <https://valenciacollege.edu/faculty/development/documents/ClassroomAssessmentTechniquesPrimerandWebsite.pdf>.

Types of assessment

How do we determine that the students have met the learning outcomes of the course? How will we evaluate their learning and perhaps even more importantly how do we assess their learning as the course progresses?

Assessment of, for, and as learning asks us to consider how we intend to use the variety of tasks and assignments that are used in the classroom.

Assessment of learning is often called summative assessment – these are the major assessments of the course – the projects, essays, midterm, and final exams.

Assessment for learning is diagnostic and formative for the purposes of improving learning (involves both the teacher and the student in a process of continual reflection and review about achievement of the learning outcomes). To complete an assessment for learning, one identifies what the students already know, and/or what has been retained from previous lesson(s). The information gathered is used to determine how to proceed with the lesson(s). Formative assessments may or may not be graded – they are “low stakes” assessments. Assessments for learning may be used as a guide for us to adjust classroom instruction based upon how well the students are understanding the course content. Similarly, students are provided valuable feedback on their own learning. Classroom polling, pre-lesson quizzes or assessment, and in-lesson quizzing or questioning allow students to “test” their skills and/or knowledge and to identify what they understand and what they need to keep working on. (See below for tools to use).

Assessment as learning is a process of developing and supporting students’ active participation in their learning. Find great ideas in [“Dipsticks: Efficient Ways to Check for Understanding”](#) (scroll half way down the page to find a list of 53 ways to check for understanding).

Assessment tools such as games and polls have the added bonus of engaging students in a non-threatening and fun environment.

Here are some of our favourite tools for formative assessment of students’ learning:

- [Classroom assessment techniques](#) from the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning at Indiana University
- [Assessment videos](#) - Hover over “Activity Type” and click on “Learning Assessment”
- [Assessment Strategies](#) from the Centre for Research on Learning & Teaching at the University of Michigan
- [Poll Everywhere](#)
- [AnswerGarden](#)
- [Socrative](#)
- [Kahoot](#)
- [Mentimeter*](#)
- [Quizlet](#)

Here is a guide for [aligning assessments, learning outcomes and learning activities](#), taken from Angelo, Thomas A. and K. Patricia Cross. Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers. 2nd edition. Jossey-Bass; San Francisco(1993). The guide has a myriad of techniques that can be used to assess learning. Here are some of their suggestions for [Formative Assessment Techniques \(PDF\)](#).

It is also important to be aware of [Seneca’s Student Assessment Policy](#), to ensure your assessments are consistent with Seneca’s evaluation processes.

tags : [assessing-learning](#), [classroom-essentials](#), [teaching-and-learning](#), [teaching-and-learning-centre](#)

