

Degree Level Assessment

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Overview and Outcomes

Assessment and evaluation of student work provides students with ongoing and meaningful feedback about their progress in meeting Course Learning Outcomes. This feedback is a critical component of the learning process.

The third module focuses on designing and evaluating degree level assessments. It is recommended that participants complete the Exploring the Degree Level Standard and Degree Level Learning Outcomes modules prior to beginning this unit.

By the end of this module participants will be able to:

- Select an appropriate assessment for a learning outcome at the degree level
- Create a rubric for the assessment to measure learning at the degree level
- Justify the criteria for designating student work as minimally acceptable, average and exemplary with respect to the assessment



Designing Degree Level Assessments

Creating assessments at the degree level follows the same guidelines as for diplomas and other credential levels, as outlined in Seneca's [Student Assessment Policy](#). Assessments must align with and measure achievement of the Course Learning Outcomes. Each outcome must be evaluated by at least one assessment and students should have multiple opportunities to demonstrate achievement of an outcome. Effective assessment incorporates a variety of authentic tasks and assignments and involves assessment *of, for* and *as* learning.

Therefore the difference between degree and diploma level assessments originates with the Course Learning Outcomes.

As degree level Course Learning Outcomes generally employ higher levels within Bloom's taxonomy, the types of questions asked and the tasks students are required to demonstrate must reflect the complexity level of the Course Learning Outcome being assessed.

Degree level assessments will measure a greater depth of knowledge and may require learning to be applied to different contexts. The Teaching & Learning Centre's [guide for aligning assessments, learning outcomes and teaching activities](#) provides helpful question stems for each of Bloom's six cognitive domain levels. Assessments should also align with the Degree Level Standard elements that have been mapped to the relevant Course Learning Outcome. In practice, higher level assessments not only evaluate mastery of content at the appropriate breadth, depth and complexity, but also carry expectations with respect to how that content is synthesized and presented. This might be reflected in higher standards for written and oral communication skills, referencing of sources, and the design of reports.



Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessments “involve students in the actual challenges, standards, and habits needed for success in the academic disciplines or in the workplace” (Wiggins, 1989, p. 706). By requiring students to carry out tasks in situations as similar as possible to real-world contexts, authentic assessments reflect the practical knowledge and skills required of graduates in a field. They are particularly effective at the degree level as they promote critical thinking and inquiry, assess deep learning and require judgement and innovation in order to solve complex contextual problems. Authentic assessments allow students to play a direct role in structuring their learning by applying a variety of skills towards accomplishing a relevant, real-world task.

The following table lists examples of various types of authentic assessments appropriate for degree level learning.

Examples of Authentic Assessments

Category	Assessment Examples	Category	Assessment Examples
Written	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business correspondence ▪ Executive summary ▪ Legal brief ▪ Newspaper article or editorial ▪ Policy memo ▪ Scientific abstract ▪ Standard operating procedure ▪ White paper 	Reflective Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blog ▪ Interview ▪ Journal ▪ Portfolio Resume
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Client Presentation ▪ Conference poster ▪ Debate ▪ Practical exam ▪ Speaking engagement 	Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Debate ▪ Peer teaching ▪ Social media campaign ▪ Team project
Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advertisement ▪ Brochure ▪ Infographic ▪ Podcast ▪ Poem or play ▪ Poster ▪ Product development ▪ Spreadsheet ▪ Video ▪ Web page ▪ Work of art or music 	Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annotated bibliography ▪ Annual report ▪ Budget proposal ▪ Business case for support ▪ Capstone project ▪ Case study ▪ Inventory list ▪ Literature review ▪ Research proposal to a granting agency ▪ Survey and data analysis ▪ Technical report

Adapted from: (Walvoord & Anderson, 1998)



Rubrics

Evaluation of student progress involves a determination of the quality of work based upon defined criteria as set out in a rubric or a grading scheme. Rubrics are helpful tools to communicate performance expectations and assessment criteria. While rubric design will be similar between degree and diploma level assessments, the degree level rubric will have stricter criteria and more refined categories. Keep in mind appropriate levels of depth, breadth and complexity of knowledge, along with expectations surrounding academic

scholarship when creating rubrics for degree level assignments. Links to [and](#) [are](#) available on the Teaching and Learning website.

Example of a degree-level assessment rubric

Assessment:

An in-depth research project, under the supervision of a faculty member, on a subject-related topic, culminating in a written project summary.

Rubric:

Criteria	Missing/Unacceptable 0	Below Expectations 1	Meets Expectations 2	Exceeds Expectations 3	Score
Research question	Research question is not defined.	Research question is poorly defined and ambiguous.	Research question is defined.	Research question is clearly defined and is unique.	
	Hypothesis/objectives are not stated.	Hypothesis/objectives are stated but their intent is not clear.	Hypothesis /objectives are stated.	Hypothesis /objectives are explicitly stated and their relevance explained.	
Methodology	Methodologies are not used.	Methodologies are not ideally suited to the subject area.	Methodologies appropriate to the subject area are used.	Appropriate methodologies are used and their use is justified.	
	Evidence is not collected.	Collected evidence is insufficient to address the research question.	Evidence is sufficient to address the research question.	Evidence is sufficient to addresses the research question and is well utilized.	
	Analysis of information is not conducted.	Analysis of information is lacking or missing key points.	Information is analyzed and key points extracted.	Information is analyzed, synthesized and evaluated for accuracy and relevance.	
Conclusions	Conclusions are not presented.	Conclusions are presented.	Conclusions are presented and supported.	Conclusions are presented, supported and examined for their value.	
Writing	Language is poor and ideas are unorganized.	Language is confusing and contains a number of spelling /grammatical errors.	Language adequately conveys the message and contains some minor spelling/ grammatical errors.	Language is clear, free of spelling /grammatical errors and ideas are presented in an effective, organized manner.	
	Sources are not cited.	Citations do not adhere to proper guidelines.	Sources are properly cited.	Sources are relevant, reliable and properly cited.	
	Total (out of 24)				

Adapted from: (Haggerty et al., 2011)

As can be seen in this example, the degree level rubric evaluates performance at a high level of cognitive complexity. Assessment criteria align not only with the Course Learning Outcomes, but also with relevant Degree Level Standard elements such as Communication and Methodological Awareness.

Rubric for Assessment

The Office of Teaching & Learning at the University of Calgary has assembled this collection of rubric examples.

[Rubric Examples](#)



Examples of Student Work

As part of the quality assurance process, colleges must provide program assessors with samples of student work from the terminal stage (3rd and/or 4th years) of the program. According to PEQAB guidelines, student work is reviewed as “evidence that the expected learning outcomes related to the Degree Level Standard have been achieved”. (PEQAB, 2018, p.47)

Samples of student work may include assignments, essays, capstone projects, exams, case analyses, reports and presentations. Each sample must include details of the assignment (i.e., a copy of what the student receives), the student’s original, ungraded work and, where applicable, the rubrics against which the assignment was graded.

These samples are categorized into what the instructor considers minimally acceptable, average and exemplary work:

Minimally Acceptable



Work meets the minimum criteria for achieving a passing grade on the assignment. Although the work demonstrates learning at a degree level, there is considerable room for improvement in all areas.

Average



Work reflects achievement of the assessment criteria. The work fulfills the expectations of the assignment, but may contain minor errors or deficiencies.

Exemplary



Work meets all expectations with few, if any, errors and exceeds the assignment goals in some areas.



Activity – Evaluating Degree Level Assessments

This activity is designed to help you develop guidelines for the evaluation of student work, by creating an assessment rubric and defining minimal, average and exemplary classification criteria. A template and example are provided to assist you with the development of your guidelines.

Step 1: Select a Course Learning Outcome from one of your degree courses.

Step 2: Describe a degree level assessment that will measure achievement of this learning outcome. Use the following questions as guides:

- a. Is the assessment authentic?
- b. What level(s) of Bloom's taxonomy must students demonstrate in this assessment?

Step 3: Create a degree level rubric for scoring the assessment. Consider:

- a. The required level of academic rigor;
- b. Demonstration of the mapped Degree Level Standard element(s);
- c. Achievement of the Course Learning Outcome(s).

Step 4: Develop a set of criteria for determining whether student work submitted for this assignment is minimally acceptable, average or exemplary.

Activity template and example

[Evaluating Degree Level Assessments template \(PDF\)](#)

[Evaluating Degree Level Assessments example \(PDF\)](#)



Complete this Module and Apply for Your Badge

To receive micro-credential recognition for completion of this module, apply for the Degree Level Assessment digital badge.

To demonstrate completion of the module, you will be asked to:

- Review all learning materials,
- Create a rubric for a degree level assessment,
- Beginning with the rubric, develop a set of criteria for evaluating minimally acceptable, average and exemplary student work.

Apply for a Badge

Badge Application Form

References

- Haggerty, M., Coladarci, T., Killinger, M., & Slavin, C. (2011) "Honors Thesis Rubrics: A Step toward More Consistent and Valid Assessment in Honors". *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*. 12(2), 145-166.
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- The Post-secondary Quality Assessment Board. (2018). *Manual for Ontario Colleges*.
- Walvoord, B. & Anderson, V. (1998). Appendix B: Types of assignments and tests. *In Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment*. (pp. 193 – 195). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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