Assessing for Learning

Reflection on Practice

Welcome to the workbook for reflecting and note taking on assessment strategies and tools. You will notice that it follows along with the module to help you capture personal thoughts and new knowledge. It can be printed and used throughout to track best practices.

During this module, you are invited to reflect on the kinds of the evidence of student learning you gather. As you work through the module, consider these points –

Do the assessments in your courses:

- **Provide clear measures of the achievement of key learning targets/outcomes?**
- **Provide valid and reliable evidence of student learning?**
- **Distinguish between final student demonstrations of learning and the learning process?**
- **Allow students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways that are meaningful to the discipline of study?**
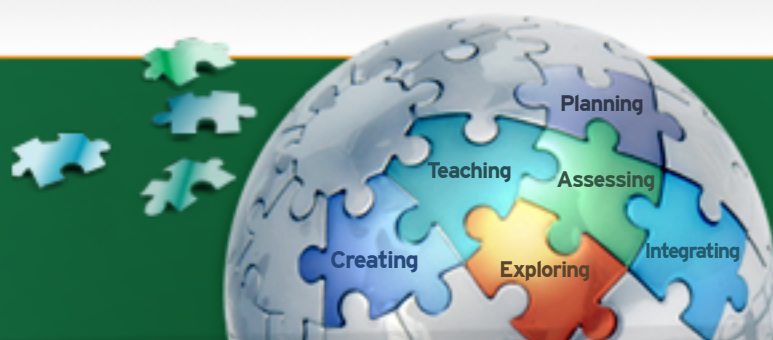
Consider the assessments you administer in one of the courses you teach. Which of the above purposes of assessment are you satisfying? As you work through this module, bear the others in mind. At the end of this module, you will be asked to reflect how you might adjust the assessment process in your courses to maximize the use of all these purposes of assessment.

Assessment is the process of gathering information from a variety of sources that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the learning objectives and targets of a course.

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve and maximize student learning and to facilitate student mastery of the content and skills expected in the course. Assessment is ongoing and serves different purposes at different times during a course.
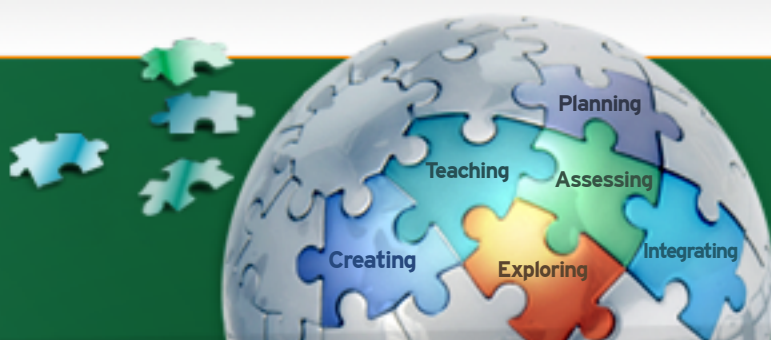
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Begin by listing the kinds of assessments that you regularly use with students in your courses.

Course	Assessment	Assessment	Assessment	Assessment

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Target your new learning

If, as an instructor, your primary interest is in maximizing student achievement or mastery learning for all students, what are the opportunities and challenges presented by both criterion- and norm- referenced assessments.

Which assessment approach would best support your program's objectives?

Respond to these questions by completing the chart for both criterion- and norm-referenced assessment. When you have finished, explain which approach you prefer.

Assessment Type	Opportunities	Challenges	Implications
Norm-referenced assessments			
Criterion-referenced assessments			

Reflections on which type of assessment I prefer...

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A learning target, also referred to as a learning outcome, can be any of the following:

- The specification of what a student should learn as the result of a period of specified and supported study

- A written statement of what the successful student/learner is expected to be able to do at the end of the module/course unit, or qualification

- Statements of what at learner can be expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience

- Concerned with the achievements of the learner rather than the intentions of the teacher

Consider the following question:

Which learning target would best support the development of intelligence for the 21st century?

- ☐ Critical thinking
- ☐ Factual recall
- ☐ Creative thinking
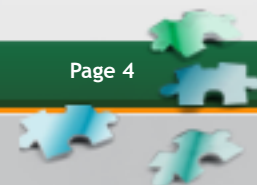- ☐ Effective communication
- ☐ Working with others

Take a few moments to write two or three sentences to explain your choice.

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The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.
~Mark Van Doren

Don't forget to review your teaching terms included in the module. Understanding the specific assessment related terms will help to increase your assessment literacy.

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Balance your assessment methods

Review your required readings to help you with the exercise. Then, consider a balanced approach attained by the use of three major assessment methods:

- Personal/oral communication (say)
- Paper and pencil (write)
- Performance (do)

Complete the chart below.

Learning targets focus on the knowledge and skills required for success in a discipline. In some programs, knowledge and skills are expanded to include habits of mind such as initiative, perseverance and open-mindedness, or skills such as organization or timeliness.

| Guiding questions for effective curriculum planning:	Evidence of effective planning (How have I answered each of these questions?)
What evidence of learning do I need to gather from my students to measure their achievement of the learning targets for the course?	
How will my students demonstrate their achievement of these targets - will they complete oral, written or performance-based assessments?	
What purpose would these assessments serve (diagnostic, formative or summative)? To what degree have I addressed each of these purposes?	
What assessment strategies and tools will I use to gather evidence of learning that is valid (aligned to learning targets), reliable (consistent results from multiple demonstrations of learning) and fair?	

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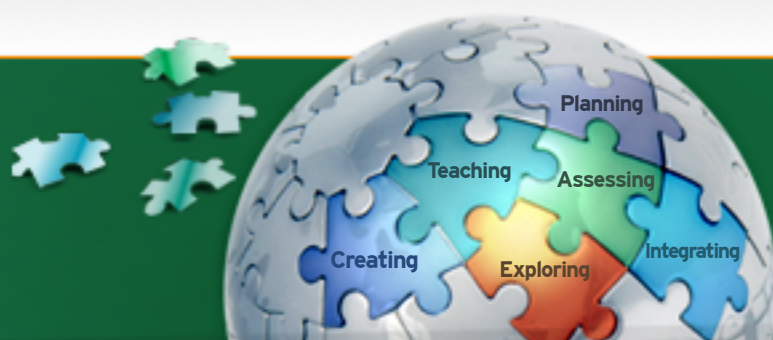
Challenging and supporting students.

Consider which of these high yield assessment strategies best fits your program.
Indicate on the chart how you might use some of the following strategies as part of your approach to teaching in your courses.

#	High yield assessment strategy	Where I might use this strategy in my courses
1.	Using exemplars (distribute models of student work completed at various levels of quality that have been retained from previous terms so that students can see and define what excellent or mediocre work looks like)	
2.	Providing written feedback on drafts of student work (before final products are submitted, teacher assistants or instructors give input on direction, concepts, argument, and so on)	
3.	Meeting with students to discuss their progress (face-to-face or on-line meetings nudge students in the preferred direction)	
4.	Nurturing effective self-assessment (providing rubrics, assessment keys, and other strategies that provide criteria for success to allow students to self-assess their work as they progress)	
5.	Encouraging peer assessment (using rubrics and assessment keys, have students work in pairs, or small groups, to provide feedback and generate new ideas for each other based on the criteria for success provided)	
6.	Making assessment criteria clear and understandable (give students the rubric or assessment key when the assignment is announced so that students understand and are encouraged to use the criteria they have to meet as they work on the assignment)	

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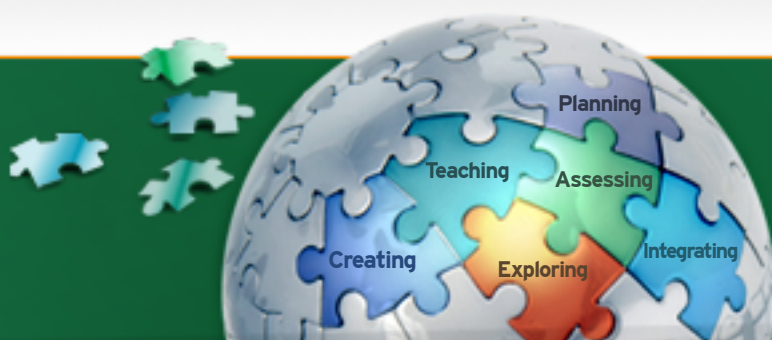
Reflect on the advantages of self-assessment

Considering what you've read on the topic of student self assessment, what advantages do you foresee from the perspective of the student and the instructor?

Take a few moments to reflect on and respond to these questions:

What are the advantages of self-assessment for the students?

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What are the advantages of encouraging student self-assessment practices for instructors?

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Examples: What's in it for students?
- Students become responsible for their own learning.
- Students are able to recognize the next steps in learning.
- Students feel secure about not always being right.
- Students' self-esteem is raised and they become more interested and engaged with the subject
- Students are actively involved in the learning process.
- Students become more independent, motivated and engaged.

Examples: What's in it for the instructors?
- Responsibility for learning is shifted from the instructor to students.
- Motivated and independent students mean deeper discussions, better classes.
- When instructors take the time to give productive feedback, students' progress is enhanced.
- Student self-assessment helps to identify next steps for a group/individual.
- Self-assessment leads to matching students' perceptions of understanding with the instructor's.
- With students self-monitoring their understanding, instructors can provide more efficient lessons that allow opportunities for greater challenge.
- Students ask more questions as they inquire more deeply into the course content.

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How do the advantages of peer assessment compare to those we have identified for self-assessment?

Are there others that would apply here as well?

Make lists of the advantages of peer-assessment and self-assessment and then compare them to the lists provided.
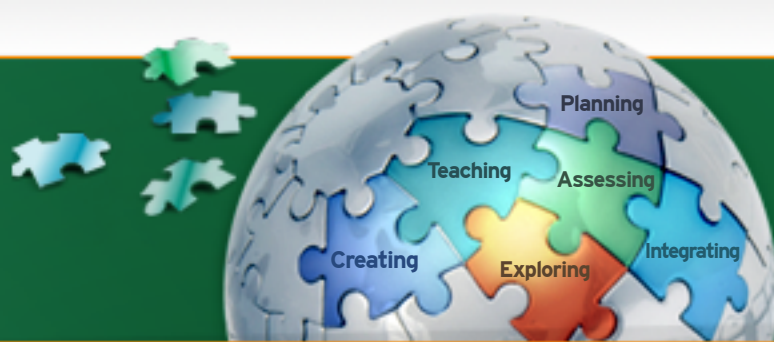
Research shows that the most effective assessment process is a shared process that involves students and their peers as well as the instructor

Assessment Process	Advantages	Comparison
Peer Assessment		
Self-Assessment		
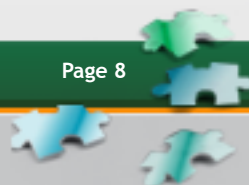
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Assessment Strategies

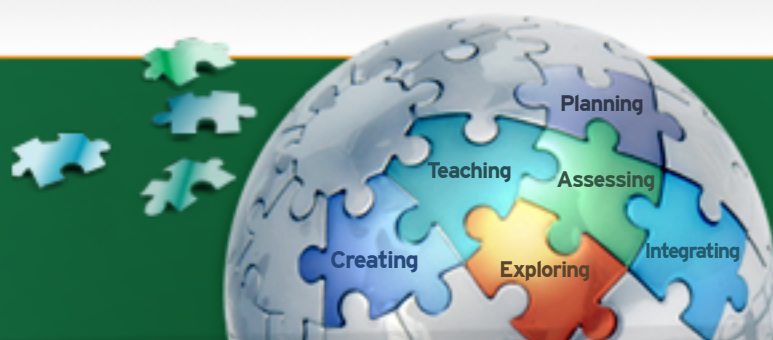The chart contains seven high yield assessment strategies.

Rank-order each of the seven strategies from 1 most effective, easy to implement, most equitable, and requires minimal change to current practice to 7, least effective, most difficult to implement, creates inequities, and require significant change in current practice.

Rank order	Assessment strategy	Effective on Achievement (High – Low)	Ease of Implementation (Easy to Difficult)	Equity (Most to least equitable)	Requires Change in Practice (significant to minimal)
	Use **exemplars** on a regular basis (from marginally successful to excellent) so that students can see how to present and improve their work.				
	Share assessment criteria with classes when the assignments are given.				
	Provide students with **written feedback on drafts** of their work – formative assessment to guide students' revisions.				
	Meet with students individually to discuss their progress.				
	Model self-assessment strategies using established criteria and encourage students to self-assess their work.				
	Teach peer assessment strategies using established criteria, and provide time in-class or recommend out-of-class meetings for students to peer assess work.				
	Co-construct assessment criteria with students when assignments are given.				

After you have rank-ordered the seven strategies, and bearing in mind the above criteria, consider who may have the primary locus of responsibility for the implementation of each particular strategy (instructor, teaching assistant, student or peer), or if they best be shared by some or all.

Following your assessment of these seven practices, reflect on your own practice and decide if what you are currently doing aligns to these practices. What two changes might you make to more fully implement them and why?

# Assessing for Learning

Meaningful demonstrations of learning

Reflecting on practice

List a variety of ways that students can demonstrate their learning in your courses without resorting to tests, or you may modify your tests to produce more valid, reliable and transparent sources of evidence.

When your list is complete, reflect on changes to the course delivery that would be needed to accommodate the new assessment practices.

Course	Ways to Demonstrate Learning (no tests)	Changes to be Made

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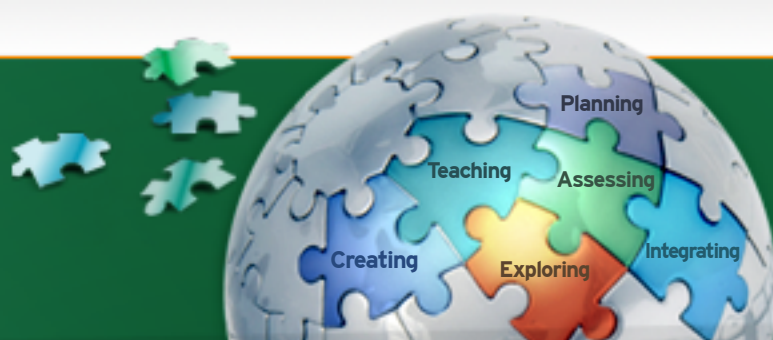
Explore assessment strategies

Label each strategy with one of the three general methods of assessment by:

- placing an '**O**' next to the strategies that best represent oral assessments
- a '**W**' next to the strategies that best represent written assessments
- a '**P**' next to the strategies that best represent performance assessments

Visual representation ☐	True-false question ☐	Open-book test ☐	Audio tape ☐
Dialogue ☐	Interview ☐	Multiple-choice test ☐	Magazine presentation ☐
Written article ☐	Design project ☐	Conference ☐	Oral presentation ☐
Editorial ☐	Play/skit ☐	Debate ☐	Essay ☐
Journal entry ☐	Reflective log ☐	Model construction ☐	Fill-in-the-blank test ☐
Investigation report ☐	Reciprocal teaching ☐	Thinking-out-loud process assessment ☐	Case study ☐
Spreadsheet ☐	Research paper ☐	Narrative ☐	Videotape ☐
Cooperative game ☐	Process log ☐	Portfolio ☐	Poem ☐
PowerPoint presentation ☐	Demonstration ☐	Pamphlet ☐	Web page construction ☐

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Answer the following questions:

Have you used some assessments strategies that are not on this list and that you could add to this list?

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Did you find it difficult at times to match each assessment strategy to only one assessment method? If so, what may be the underlying source of this difficulty?

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How may this difficultly relate to the learning targets you may have set or the context in which the assessment has been set?

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Module Notes

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Apply your professional judgment to assign the final grade.

Based on knowledge of the program and the criteria for the learning targets, use an understanding of the classroom context and the assessment evidence to assign a grade that best describes the overall performance of the student.