

ASSESSMENT @ BUCKNELL

In Brief On...

EMBEDDED ASSESSMENTS

The types of measures available to assess student learning are quite varied; however, the selection and adoption of appropriate measures need not be burdensome and time consuming. A guiding principle of assessment is first to evaluate existing information to avoid “reinventing the wheel”. A wealth of assessment information already exists in your classes. Embedded assessments, those that are integrated components of existing courses, are excellent measures that not only provide information about the coherence of the curricula, but also demonstrate of student learning. Though not exhaustive, the annotated list of embedded assessments provided below use student *activities* rather than standardized tests as authentic evidence of learning.

| ASSESSMENT NAME | ASSESSMENT DESCRIPTION |
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| Talent Development (“Value Added” / Pre-Post Test) | In many courses, especially those that include writing or specific skill sets, traditional “pre – post” assessments are useful indicators of progress and improvement. |
| Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) | CATs are useful tools to obtain “quick” assessment information. Examples such as the minute paper, muddiest point, and one-sentence summary provide direct feedback to the learner and give teachers the opportunity to improve their teaching skills. Discussions among colleagues about the results of CATs used in individual courses provide a department-wide assessment. |
| Capstone Course Student Teaching Internship Thesis Defense Senior Project | Culminating activities allow for assessment at several levels. Essentially, each goal and objective of the department could be assessed in this manner. A written report complemented with an oral presentation provides a measure of topic knowledge, communication skills, and writing skills. Similarly, observation of the student in a professional setting allows for a comprehensive evaluation. |
| Portfolio | A collection of a student’s work over time, a portfolio allows for evaluation of progress as well as achievement. Works such as papers, exams, audio or video tapes, and projects completed in several courses may be inserted at the student’s discretion or based on guidelines provided by the department. Portfolios may be evaluated by the faculty according to the goals and objectives of the department. |
| Juried Competition Public Performance | These culminating assessment activities, common in the arts, typically employ persons other than the course instructor as evaluators. |

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| Field Trip Evaluation Lab Work and Research Protocols | <p>Useful at any stage of the educational experience, the field trip allows students to demonstrate knowledge learned in a classroom setting. More basic assessment techniques, such as checklists, may be used in conjunction with an overall evaluation of the student's experience. Submission of lab work and research protocols are additional evidence of learning with the added evaluation of the application of knowledge.</p> |
| Interviews | <p>Interviews are useful in many forms to provide various kinds of data. Typically, an exit interview is used to assess a student's perception of the major or program. Depending on the size of the enrollment in the major, this can be prohibitive.</p> |
| Focus Group | <p>A focus group is used to gather information about a specific topic in a group environment. Focus groups can be especially advantageous because of the flexibility provided by an open discussion. Opinions that could be lost in a paper and pencil format can be expressed and clarified as needed. More information is typically obtained in a focus group session because of the ability to follow responses with additional probing questions.</p> |
| Process Data | <p>Useful indicators of learning can be provided by the activities required to complete course assignments. Such indicators include: attendance, frequency of library use, consultation with tutors, attentiveness in class, and reading and study habits provide information that may be supplemental to and explanatory of performance on other measures.</p> |
| Sequencing of Courses | <p>The sequencing of courses is a department level assessment of curricular coherence that identifies and tracks student progress through increasing levels of difficulty. Concurrently, a coherent curriculum encourages co-curricular development as students pursue the attainment of transferable department goals such as citizenship, critical thinking, writing skills, etc.</p> |

Ultimately, the choice of assessment measure is largely dependent on the objective being assessed. In some departments, large enrollments may make some assessment techniques difficult to use because of the time required for providing feedback to each student. Regardless, departments are encouraged to begin with an inventory of the assessment efforts currently in place and select appropriate measures from those available. As with all assessment efforts, the use of results and evaluation of the assessment method itself is critical. An assessment method chosen for this year for a particular objective may be found ineffective to answer the desired question. In such cases, the department may choose another assessment method in subsequent years.