

Principles of Effective and Inclusive Assessment



GOAL: Explore principles of effective and inclusive assessment as a starting point for considering alternative assessments and how they complement your overall assessment plan.

Assessments guide what and how students learn. In most cases, students focus on learning the skills that will allow them to do well on the assessments in the course. Therefore, your selection of course assessments and the design of assessments will greatly impact students' behaviours, attitudes, and learning in your course. Ensuring that assessments are effective and inclusive will greatly impact their learning and experience in your course.

Principles of Effective Assessment

VALID	Effectively measure student attainment of the intended learning outcomes at the specified level of understanding
RELIABLE	Consistent and transparent processes for preparing students for the assessment, grading, and feedback
TRANSPARENT	Students are given explicit, clear, and accessible information about what, how, and why they are being assessed, and clear feedback about their progress and areas of strength and improvement
INCLUSIVE	Assessment tasks and procedures should not disadvantage any group or individual, and should reflect cultural and individual diversity
VARIED	A variety of assessment methods and opportunities for choice are offered to maximize student engagement and involvement in their learning
AUTHENTIC	Assessments reflect the nature and work of the discipline, while ensuring students have opportunities to develop foundational knowledge and skills
MANAGEABLE	The workload should be manageable for students and instructors/TAs
DEVELOPMENTAL	Support learning by offering opportunities for practice and feedback with low-stakes assessments prior to high-stakes, summative assessments. Students are given opportunities to self-assess and reflect on their own work.

Adapted from: [Guiding Principles for Assessment of Students' Learning](#), University of Calgary, & [Principles of Assessment](#), University of Sheffield

Possible reasons you may consider using an alternative assessment to an exam/test:

- Improve alignment between assessment and course learning outcome
- Provide more [authentic assessment](#) (see figure on p. 41 as a starting point)
- Provide varied ways for students to demonstrate their learning
- Support student motivation through offering choice or flexibility to pursue interests and strengths
- Manage academic integrity or invigilation concerns
- Support student well-being (e.g., reducing test anxiety or stress)
- Support increased accessibility, equity, and inclusivity

As you consider various assessment types, reflect on the following questions:

Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assessment types align best with my learning outcomes and the level of understanding being assessed? • Do I want to assess students' acquisition of knowledge or their ability to apply that knowledge to new situations (or both)? • Do I want to assess a product that students produce, or the process they went through to produce it, or both? • Which assessment types would provide students with an effective means to demonstrate their knowledge or skills?
Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assessment types would complement other assessments in my course, offering students variety and flexibility with demonstrating their learning?
Comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assessment types do I feel comfortable supporting and evaluating? • Which assessment types would students feel comfortable engaging with, based on their skill level, technological expertise, and content knowledge?

Checklist: Principles of Inclusive Assessment Design

Alignment with Learning Outcomes and Instruction

- The content and format of assessments is a true reflection of the key topics and skills you have taught in the class and is directly targeted at the course learning outcomes

Overall Course Assessment Design

- Variety of types of assessment within the course
- Scaffold higher-stakes assessments by breaking them into multiple components or offering earlier, low-stakes assessments that mirror high-stakes assessments (see our [Finding the Balance Between Low and High Stakes Assessments](#) handout)
- Provide explicit practice with the content and skills needed for high-stakes assessments using ungraded or low-stakes assessments, and timely feedback that can be used to improve
- Consider the [workload](#) associated with assessments

Assessment Processes

- Offer students choice with how they demonstrate their learning, where appropriate (e.g., rather than everyone submitting a final paper, students can submit a presentation, podcast, infographic, or poster)
- Communicate assessment expectations transparently and in advance (use the [Transparent Assignment Template](#) and [Checklist](#))
- Use rubrics and sample assignments to make it transparent what excellent work looks like and to identify clear criteria for grading
- Blind grade student submissions when possible

Assessment Content

- Avoid references in your assessment questions that would be unclear or unknown to students of different cultures or backgrounds, and first generation students
- Ensure representation of diverse perspectives through assessment content, scenarios, and questions, intentionally incorporating perspectives that are often marginalized.

Adapted from:

[Best Practices for Inclusive Assessment](#), Duke Learning Innovation
[Design Inclusive Assessments](#), Carnegie Mellon University
[What are Inclusive Assessment Practices?](#), Tufts University



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