Of all the tasks associated with teaching, many professors consider the most difficult to be evaluating student learning. The diversity of possible assessment strategies and the effort and time required, make creating a successful assessment a complex and demanding task. In addition, the importance that students place on evaluation means that it can significantly affect students’ learning experiences. This resource looks to provide some guidance for considering how to approach the assessment of your students’ learning.

First, let us establish some important principles when it comes to assessing your students’ learning.

- The method of evaluation should be clearly linked to your courses’ learning outcomes. This is what Biggs and Tang (2011) describe as an alignment between the intended learning outcomes, the proposed learning activities and the assessment strategies that will eventually measure the learning achieved.
- Effective assessment require clear expectations and criteria, which have been communicated to students (e.g. the instructions for an exam or detailed description of an assignment including assessment criteria).
- Certain tools, such as checklists, answer keys, and rubrics, can be used to make the assessment of learning more objective.
- Assessment of learning can take a variety of forms depending on numerous considerations; such as, the format of a course, the time available for evaluation and the type of skill or knowledge being evaluated.

Although some overlap is inevitable, we propose three broad categories of approaches to assessing student learning; assessments based on questions, assignments, or performance.

**Question-based**

Assessments that take the form of a series of questions (multiple choice, short answers, matching, etc.).

Some examples...
- Timed quiz (online or in-person)
- Timed exam (online or in-person)
- Survey mediated by technology (e.g. Zoom, Wooclap)

**Grading**

is often simple and straightforward and depending on technology used, can even be automated. Ideally, an answer key should be used to ensure objectivity.

**Recommended webinars**
- Designing effective questions – Question-based assessments in class or online
- Online quizzes and exams – Question-based assessments in Virtual Campus (Brightspace)
Assignments are assessments that require an individual or group must produce an artifact that demonstrates learning.

Some examples...
- Essays
- Research reports
- Case studies
- Critical analyses
- Posters
- Multimedia productions

Grading often requires more complex strategies to accommodate student creativity and more complicated deliverables. The use of an analytic or holistic rubric can help ensure a greater degree of objectivity.

Recommended webinars
- Designing clear instructions for evaluation of student assignments and performance activities
- Rubrics – Planning for evaluation of student assignments and performance activities
- Assessing the authenticity of student assignments – Using the Ouriginal tool

Performance assessments that require an individual or group to demonstrate competence through an observable action.

Some examples...
- Oral presentations
- Debates
- Laboratory demonstrations
- Simulations
- Musical or theatrical performances

Grading typically needs to happen in real time (i.e. during the performance) unless it is possible to keep records (e.g. video or audio recordings or notes). The use of an analytic or holistic rubric can help ensure a greater degree of objectivity.

Recommended webinars
- Designing clear instructions for evaluation of student assignments and performance activities
- Rubrics – Planning for evaluation of student assignments and performance activities

Finally, it should be noted that all of these approaches to assessing student learning can occur at any point during the learning process and can be used to meet multiple evaluation needs, such as validating learning milestones, or taking stock of learning at the end of a course.

Reference