

Types of Assessment Methods

Type of assessment	Value	Limitations
Regular practical work Computer simulations & exercises, laboratory work, problems to solve, reflective learning statements, self test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps students 'on task' Encourages students early rather than later Formative in nature as there are opportunities for students and teachers to make adjustments Can encourage application, translation and interpretation of concepts learnt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be time consuming for teachers. 'Hoop jumping' exercise if not used formatively.
Final Exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance that students have attained the appropriate knowledge, skills and dispositions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merely summative A measure of "poise" i.e. a capacity to recall information under stress Often reproduction rather than transformation of information
Essays and assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to develop an extended argument Can achieve depth rather than breadth of learning Opportunity to develop capacity to interpret, translate, apply, critique and evaluate. Opportunity to problem pose and conduct inquiry Opportunity to explore the boundaries of what is known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming to assess Highly subjective Often occurs at the end and leaves no opportunity for students to make use of the feedback Often one-off and fails to require students to make note of, and utilise, feedback (value added)
Field reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic form of assessment Develops observation and recording skills Requires organisation skill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costly to supervise Difficult to timetable Need to consider ethical and safety issues
Article review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires interpretation and evaluation Opportunity to understand how experts proceed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students need to be taught how to review Difficult to find appropriate articles
Group Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of ideas Encourages independence Collaboration and co-operation Opportunity for authentic skill development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to assess individual input Time consuming for students to organise Students don't know how to work successfully in groups
Portfolios a collection of student work with inclusions carefully selected and justified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be used to demonstrate progress towards, and achievement of, topic or course objectives understanding of complexity of professional roles synthesis of what students have learnt in a number of topics capacity to use new understandings in novel ways in unpredictable work contexts Valid and authentic assessment as they can include real world tasks Focus on higher order thinking Students have to accept a high degree of responsibility so it encourages engagement with learning intentions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low stakes Consistency between students is low Time consuming for students and teachers
Performances & Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides alternate modes of assessment Authentic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to 'capture' and reflect on in order to assess

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develops skills	
Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Authentic, real world tasks• Capture students' interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time consuming to set up
Independent study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourages engagement with material• Captures students' interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistency is low
Learning Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focuses on individual learning needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistency is low

Choosing the most appropriate assessment type

To help you choose the most appropriate methods, here are some questions to stimulate your thinking. These are adapted from a section in 500 Tips on Assessment (Sally Brown, Phil Race and Brenda Smith) 1996.

1. If you want a written assessment instrument, which of the following would you choose ? Consider the best uses of essays, reports, reviews, summaries, dissertations, theses, annotated bibliographies, case studies, journal articles, presentations and exams.
2. Should the method be time-constrained?
Exams and "in-class" activities might well be the most appropriate for the occasion. Time constrained tests put students under pressure, but are usually fairly good at preventing cheating.
3. Is it important that the method you choose includes cooperative activity?
If it is important, you might choose to assess students in groups, perhaps on group projects, poster displays or presentations.
4. Is a visual component important?
When it is, you might choose portfolios, poster displays, 'critique' sessions or exhibitions.
5. Is it important that students use information technology?
When this is the case, computer-based assessments may be best, either getting students to answer multiple-choice questions, or write their own programmes, or prepare databases, or write information stacks for hypertext, or material for use in CD-ROM systems or on the Internet.
6. Do you wish to try to assess innovation or creativity?
Some assessment methods that allow students to demonstrate these include: performances, exhibitions, poster displays, presentations, projects, student-led assessed seminars, simulations and games.
7. Do you want to encourage students to develop oral skills?
If so, you might choose to assess vivas, presentations, recorded elements of audio and video tapes made by students, assessed discussions or seminars, interviews or simulations.
8. Do you want to assess the ways in which students interact together?
You might then assess negotiations, debates, role plays, interviews, selection panels, and case studies.
9. Is the assessment of learning done away from the institution important? For example, you may wish to assess learning done in the work place, in professional contexts or on field courses. You may choose to assess logs, reflective journals, field studies, case studies or portfolios.
10. Is your aim to establish what students are able to do already?
Then you could try diagnostic tests (paper-based or technology-based), profiles, records of achievement, portfolios and vivas early in the programme