

Module 1B: Assessment Categories and Types

by Dr. Tim Brophy

Hello, and welcome to the module 1b, the second half of our first module. And in this module, we're going to discuss assessment categories and types. So what are the essential components of the assessment process? Well, the most important component is a good curriculum that you teach sequentially. Now. The curriculum is, of course, your program curriculum, but within your own course you've planned a sequence of events over the weeks and learning experiences for your students.

So you have to, of course, have appropriate instructional delivery that accomplishes the goals of your course and the program curriculum. So you as the teacher are responsible for delivering instruction that helps you achieve that good sequential curriculum. And then you do have rigorous assessments that allow students to demonstrate what they've learned relevant to your expectations. So the assessments you designed should be appropriately aligned with what they're learning so that you can get an idea of just what it is they know and are able to do at a particular point in your course.

There's also well-designed tests with items that function well, and this is different than an assignment that is graded by a rubric. That's a different type of assessment and we'll talk about these in later modules in more detail. Also, well-designed assignments with aligned rubrics that clearly describe the measurement criteria and the measurement scales to be used. This clarifies for you as the instructor and also for the student exactly what it is that you're looking for and the degree to which you expect students to demonstrate what it is they've learned in your course.

So these are all essential components of the assessment process for any course in any program. Analysis of student data is the final step in this process because this improves your teaching and learning. We call this process closing the loop. Notice I use a loop on the left side of this screen. And when you close the loop you take the assessment data that you have gathered from your students, you examine that, you use the information that you analyze from that to modify and improve your teaching, which all of us do instinctively, but now you know it's called closing the loop.

What are the assessment categories and types that we're going to be talking about in this particular experience? Well let's think first of our students as learners. So we do place them in three primary roles as I describe them. The first role is the responding role. Now, we're placing our students in this case in the role of being a writer, a discussant, a reviewer, a critical thinker, someone who has an opinion that's based on something other than emotion, an opinion that is actually based in knowledge that they have learned. So in this role we call this the responding role. Students are behaving in that way.

In the performance role we place our students in the role of someone who is presenting a work or interpreting an existing work. For example, we have a student present to us a PowerPoint presentation on something that they have developed or an assignment they have created. Or we have a musician who interprets and performs a new piece of music, or an artist, a sculptor who creates a new work, the process of performing that work and explaining that work is the performance aspect of what they do. Then there's the creating piece. This places our students in the role of originator of something new. All right? This newly created work usually expresses their knowledge, their ideas and their skills, but some kind of novel way or some original way that's unique to them.

So what are the student roles in the assessment process? Well they happen to be corollary to the learner roles we just discussed. In the responding role we can actually place them in that role and get direct content assessment. We can find out what they know by asking questions, or by giving them some kind of an examination where they respond, or an essay question, or a paper to write. They can provide evidence of critical thinking and analysis and evaluation and what they're able to do. So we can do a lot through the responding mode. Then in the performance they can provide evidence of what they're able to do, particularly acquired skills demonstrated in real time. This is particularly valuable in those situations where we want to assess communication or their ability to act a role, or to perform on an instrument or in a dramatic situation.

Creating. This is the most comprehensive of all the student roles that we place our students in an assessment, and what they know, what they're able to do, and the creation of new works is part of that process. So these particular roles and assessment are corollary to the roles we place our students in as learners. Now, in these assessment roles, students are engaged for the purpose of providing evidence of what they know and are able to do. So they're going to show us and demonstrate their specific knowledge and skills, demonstrated through the well-designed assessments that you have created.

So there are basically two categories of assessment. You've probably heard of these, formative and summative. So let's review them now. Formative assessments really are those whose primary purpose is to gather evidence of progress toward a larger goal such as a standard or a course or program expectation. I would say it could be your course objective or it could be a program student learning outcome, and all programs at the University of Florida have student learning outcomes.

Then these assessments occur during the time that students are actually forming their knowledge and skills and their understandings, the ones that are requisite to the larger goal. So what you use with the results of these formative assessments is to identify areas of weakness and strength in order to guide your instruction. So by conducting these formative assessments throughout the course and throughout the time period you have students if it's more than one course, then you're able then to use that information to help you know where they need extra work. And I think most of you do this automatically anyway, but now we know that's part of the formative assessment process.

And the summative assessment process, these are assessments whose primary purpose is to gather culminating evidence of a student's knowledge or skills or understanding as expected at a particular stage in the course or the program. So again, we're thinking, OK, there's an anchor spot somewhere, either midterm, final, beginning. It can be anywhere in the course or in the program that you deem to be appropriate. All right. So when this occurs, you can include an evaluation of progress toward the degree program if it's happening in your course. So this is an important role that the student learning outcomes play, and the assessments and measurements associated with those for every program on campus play.

All right. So data from both categories of assessments though are used for grading purposes. So the formative assessments provide you a lot of information that can be evaluated later for a final grade or a mid-term grade, and the summative assessments can also heavily influence that depending on how you choose to weight that. And we'll talk more about weighting a little bit later in this experience together.

So what are the assessment types that I think are probably most common in higher education? Well, there is the structured experience assessment. These are the ones that occur in real time activities or performances. So if you're teaching a design class and students are in the process of creating their designs and you want to assess the process by which they are making their design and the processes if they're working in teams and you want to assess the degree to which they're participating in the teams equitably and the way that you feel they should, this would be something that would happen in real time. And that would become a structured experience assessment. The Structured Product Assessment is the one that is most common for all of us because these are the ones that result in something you can save or look at after the assessment has completed. These are papers, projects, PowerPoints, recordings of artwork, pieces of artwork, these kinds of things that you can actually measure after the event has occurred.

Then there's the Student Assisted Assessment. This is becoming more and more popular and more common on campuses across the United States and across the world. These are portfolios primarily or self assessments where students actually engage in the process of determining the degree to which they themselves feel they have achieved the goals that you have set forth with them or the goals you have allowed them to set for themselves. So portfolios, of course, are collections of student work that usually show growth and change over time. And again, we'll spend more time on portfolio development later on in our experience.

Finally, there is the Shared Model Assessment. Very often in one to one teaching situations if you're working with graduate students or if you're working in studio situations where you're working one on one with a student, the student and teacher together collaborate to develop an individual and assessment criteria and a measurement process that they both agree on and then they both buy into and they work together to achieve and to demonstrate.

Now let's pause to think. I've just given you a lot to think about. So I want you to think now about the assessment of student learning in your teaching situation. So would you say that the assessments in your courses are more formative, more summative, or a combination of both. and why would that be the case?

And I'd like you also to review the assessments that you currently administer. How would you classify them? Would they be structured experience, structured products? Would they be Shared Model Assessments? What are they? All right. So again, you get a chance to, I should, say place your answers in the document that's been associated with this module, and I look forward to seeing you next time.

