

## Some Assessment Techniques

No technique is perfect, and good assessment requires the use of multiple, complementary measures. Criteria for choosing a particular assessment technique include how well it measures the particular outcome under study, and how much effort it entails for the result that will be obtained. Wherever possible, departments should make use of data that they are already generating and use assessment measures that contribute to student learning.

|  | <b>Measures</b>   | <b>Advantages</b>  | <b>Disadvantages</b>  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Direct Measures of Learning</b>                         |   |  |   |
| <b>Examinations</b>  | Content knowledge, some skills                                |  |   |
| Commercial standardized exams                              |   | Low time investment<br>National norms  | Expense<br>May not match specific program goals                                   |
| Locally developed exams                                    |   | Matches local goals<br>Development and grading processes are informative                                   | Difficult to develop valid instruments<br>Time-consuming                          |
| Oral examinations  |   | As for locally developed exams, but allows in-depth probing  | Too time-consuming for use except for high priority objectives and small programs |
| <b>“Real-world” approaches</b>                             | Skills, application and generalization of learning            |  |   |
| Performance appraisals                                     |   | Better than paper and pencil in measuring skill acquisition  | Time-consuming, may be subjective, observation may affect results                 |
| Simulations  |   | May be a more practical way of measuring skills than performance appraisal                                 | More expensive than traditional testing   |
| Experiential and capstone or keystone courses and projects | Knowledge, skills, application and generalization of learning | Synergism between learning and assessment<br>Excellent tool for assessing more complex learning objectives | Curricular logistics  |
| <b>Student portfolios</b>                                  | Student growth over time                                      | Power<br>Inclusion of students in assessment process   | Time and logistics  |
| <b>Indirect Measures of Learning</b>                       |   |  |   |
| <b>Self-reports</b>  | Perceptions and attitudes                                     |  |   |
| Surveys  |   | Inexpensive<br>Acknowledges importance of student (or alumni) opinions                                     | Not a direct measure of learning<br>Difficult to develop valid instruments        |
| Interviews   |   | Allows individualization and follow-up probes<br>May develop positive interactions with students           | May be intimidating, biasing results<br>Time-consuming                            |
| Small group interviews                                     |   | As for interviews, but allows more students to be “interviewed” in less time                               | A few students can skew the results if not carefully performed                    |
| <b>Third-party reports</b>                                 | Employer or parent satisfaction                               | Provides an external measure   | May be difficult to obtain useful data  |
| <b>Archival records</b>                                    | Biographical, academic and other data                         | Readily available<br>Useful for interpreting other data  | Not a direct measure of learning<br>Privacy considerations                        |