How to do Assessment

Assessment to improve learning focuses on how well students are learning what we intend them to learn. By establishing learning objectives, assessment methods are used to measure selected learning outcomes to see whether or not the objectives have been met for the course or program.

Ways of gathering evidence

- **Formative** – those undertaken while student learning is taking place; the purpose or which is to improve teaching and learning; designed to capture students' progress toward institution- or program-level outcomes based on criteria and standards of judgment
- **Summative** – those obtained at the end of a course or program; the purpose of which is to document student learning for transcripts and for employers, donors, legislators, and other external audiences; designed to capture students' achievement at the end of their program of study and their undergraduate or graduate education based on criteria and standards of judgment
- **Direct** – evidence of student learning which is tangible, visible, self-explanatory; prompt students to represent or demonstrate their learning or produce work so that observers can assess how well students' texts or responses fit institution- or program-level expectations
  - Example: performances, creations, results of research or exploration, interactions within group problem solving, or responses to questions or prompts
- **Indirect** – evidence which provides signs that students are probably learning, but the evidence of exactly what they are learning is less clear and less convincing; capture students' perceptions of their learning and the educational environment that supports that learning, such as access to and the quality of services, programs, or educational offerings that support their learning
  - Example: student satisfaction, alumni, and employer surveys
- **Objective** – one that needs no professional judgment to score correctly (although interpretation of the scores requires professional judgment); examples: multiple-choice, true-false exams
- **Subjective** – yield many possible answers of varying quality and require professional judgment to score
- **Traditional** – the kinds of tests that have been around for decades; e.g., objective tests, ‘blue book’ essay questions, and oral examinations
- **Performance** – ask students to demonstrate their skills rather than relate what they have learned through traditional tests; e.g., field experiences, laboratory and studio assignments, projects. Also called authentic assessments when asking students to do a real-life task. Have two components: (i) the assignment or prompt that tells students what is expected of them and (ii) a scoring guide or rubric used to evaluate completed work.
- **Embedded** – program assessments which are embedded into course work
- **Add-on** – assessments which are in addition to course requirements; e.g., assemble a portfolio, take a standardized test, participate in a survey
- **Local** – created by faculty and/or staff
- **Published** – those published by an organization external to the institution and used by several institutions

- **Quantitative** – use structured, predetermined response options that can be summarized into meaningful numbers and analyzed statistically; place interpretative value on numbers; e.g., the number of right versus wrong answers
- **Qualitative** – use flexible, naturalistic methods and are usually analyzed by looking for recurring patterns and themes; e.g., reflective writing, notes from interviews and focus groups; place interpretative value on the observer; e.g., observations of group interaction or an individual's performance in a simulation