

ASSESSMENT METHODS

What are assessment methods?

Assessment methods are the procedures, techniques, tools, and instruments for collecting information to determine the extent to which the desired outcomes are achieved. Several methods should be used to assess both Student Learning Outcomes and Program Outcomes. Relying on only one method to provide information about the student or program will reflect only a part of the achievement. Additionally, Outcomes may be difficult to assess using only one method.

What are the types of assessment methods?

There are two types of assessment methods: Direct and Indirect.

Direct Methods of assessment examine actual results. This measure is powerful because it provides data that correlates exactly with the objective. A direct measure explains what *specific* activity will be undertaken to show the extent to which an objective has been accomplished, and provides information that may be used to make decisions for improvements in the future.

- **Direct methods for Student Learning Outcomes** ask the student to demonstrate their learning. Direct assessment is based on a sample of work that the student produced.
 - Examples: exams/tests/quizzes, essays/papers, presentations, projects, portfolios, performances
- **Direct methods for Program Outcomes** ask the program to measure the efficacy of services, programs, and initiatives. Direct assessment examines actual results.
 - Examples: pre/post tests, quantitative reports on accuracy, response time, processes, tracking logs, annual reports

Indirect Methods of assessment are based on individuals' thoughts and perceptions of their experiences. This type of assessment is weaker in terms of evidence because it asks for opinions or perceptions.

- **Indirect methods for Student Learning Outcomes** ask the student to reflect on their learning.
 - Examples: surveys, exit interviews, focus groups, course evaluations
- **Indirect methods for Program Outcomes** examinees perceptions relative to the outcome.
 - Examples: surveys, focus groups, discussions, evaluations, interviews

University of Houston Clear Lake

Academic Planning and Assessment

Can grades be used for assessment?

Even though course grades are a source of information about student achievement, they are generally **insufficient** in measuring the Student Learning Outcomes of the program. Grades may not identify whether the Student Learning Outcome was achieved, may include factors not related to the SLO, and faculty members may differ in the grading policies and practices.

Which assessment methods should be used?

Each program/department should select the assessment methods that will provide the most useful and relevant information for the purposes that the program/department and its members have identified. Consider what questions need to be answered, the availability of resources, and the usefulness of the results. It may be helpful to identify what information currently exists in the program/department that can be used as well as what assessment methods were used in the past.