

Alignment

EDS 113 - Principles and Methods of Assessment

Overview

“Truthful” assessment is not merely “counting beans and eggs” or a mindless act of giving tests and obtaining scores. Assessment, to be true, must provide a feedback about what it purportedly gauges. An assessment tool that is blind about its purpose is like an arrow shot into the air – what it hits and where it lands no one can tell.

Assessment, to be meaningful; must be driven by a purpose. In turn, meaningful assessment drives effective education. Accordingly, it is basic that assessment be aligned to learning goals and objectives and the broader purposes of education.

Objectives

After studying the resources and doing the activities for this Module, you should be able to:

- describe and determine assessment that is aligned with the learning goals and objectives*
- discuss the effects of alignment of the assessment (or lack thereof) to learning and teaching*

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Study Questions

As you study the resources for this Module, be guided by the following questions:

- *What does alignment in assessment mean?*
- *Why should assessments, learning objectives, and instructional strategies be aligned?*
- *Do assessments serve the goals and objectives of teaching-learning? (What are our learning goals and objectives, by the way?)*

Primary Resource for this Module

Assessment Primer. Field-Tested Learning Assessment Guide (FLAG). Available at <http://www.flaguide.org/start/primerfull.php>

Good assessment provides information:

- *that reflects the goals and values of particular disciplines*
- *that helps instructors refine their teaching practices and grow as educators*
- *that helps departments and programs refine their curriculum to prepare students for an evolving workplace*

Good assessment

- *is thoughtful*
- *is systematic*
- *is meaningful*

Alignment of Assessment

Among other things, sound assessment is:

- *“designed to serve the specific information needs of intended user(s)”*
- *“based on clearly articulated and appropriate achievement targets”*

(SOURCE: *Classroom Assessment: Every Student a Learner*, p.3, http://ati.pearson.com/downloads/chapters/CASL_02E_C01.pdf)

Why should assessments, learning objectives, and instructional strategies be aligned?

SOURCE: <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/alignment.html>

Assessments should reveal how well students have learned what we want them to learn while instruction ensures that they learn it. For this to occur, assessments, learning objectives, and instructional strategies need to be closely aligned so that they reinforce one another.

To ensure that these three components of your course are aligned, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Learning objectives:** What do I want students to know how to do when they leave this course?
- **Assessments:** What kinds of tasks will reveal whether students have achieved the learning objectives I have identified?
- **Instructional strategies:** What kinds of activities in and out of class will reinforce my learning objectives and prepare students for assessments?

What if the components of a course are misaligned?

If assessments are misaligned with learning objectives or instructional strategies, it can undermine both student motivation and learning.

Consider these two scenarios:

Your objective is for students to learn to apply analytical skills, but your assessment measures only factual recall. Consequently, students hone their analytical skills and are frustrated that the exam does not measure what they learned.

Your assessment measures students' ability to compare and critique the arguments of different authors, but your instructional strategies focus entirely on summarizing the arguments of different authors.

Consequently, students do not learn or practice the skills of comparison and evaluation that will be assessed.

Figure 1.1 Interaction of planning, teaching, and assessment in educational instruction

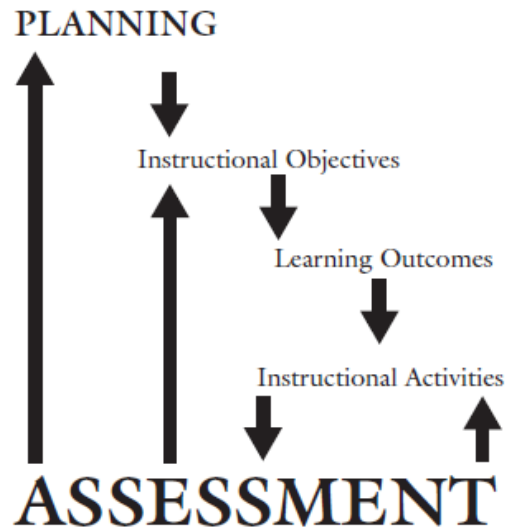
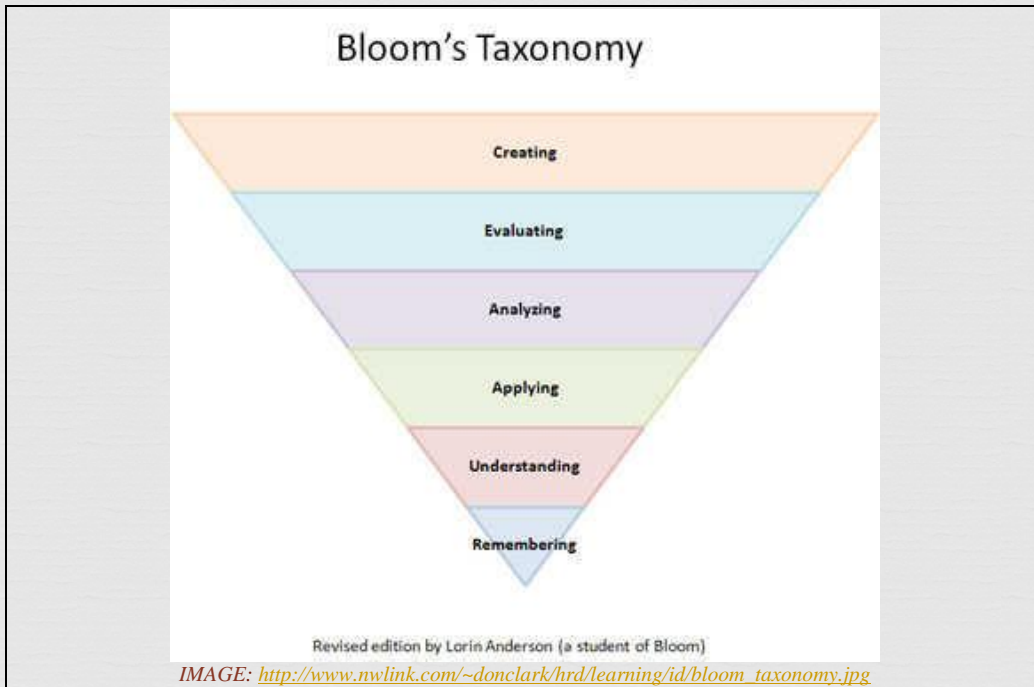


Figure 1.1 illustrates this relationship, which Brookhart (1999) describes as effective when the assessment instruments provide accurate, meaningful, and appropriate information.

Clipping from Jones and Bartlett Publishers, www.jblearning.com/samples/0763740233/40233_CH01_Final.pdf



Blooms taxonomy

Bloom's taxonomy of knowledge has often been used to guide the way teachers define their learning objectives and assessment tasks. (Click on the link to learn more.) Study how learning as action verbs are classified [here](#).

What does the classification of learning objectives in a hierarchy imply in terms of teaching and assessment? What is the relevance/ connection of Bloom's taxonomy on our discussion about alignment of assessment?

What do well-aligned assessments look like?

This table presents examples of the kinds of activities that can be used to assess different types of learning objectives (adapted from the revised [Bloom's Taxonomy](#)).

Learning objective	Examples of appropriate assessments
Recall Recognize Identify	Objective test items such as fill-in-the-blank, matching, labeling, or multiple-choice questions that require students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recall or recognize terms, facts, and concepts
Interpret Exemplify Classify Summarize Infer Compare Explain	Activities such as papers, exams, problem sets, class discussions, or concept maps that require students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> summarize readings, films, or speeches compare and contrast two or more theories, events, or processes classify or categorize cases, elements, or events using established criteria paraphrase documents or speeches find or identify examples or illustrations of a concept or principle
Apply Execute Implement	Activities such as problem sets, performances, labs, prototyping, or simulations that require students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use procedures to solve or complete familiar or unfamiliar tasks determine which procedure(s) are most appropriate for a given task
Analyze Differentiate Organize Attribute	Activities such as case studies, critiques, labs, papers, projects, debates, or concept maps that require students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discriminate or select relevant and irrelevant parts determine how elements function together determine bias, values, or underlying intent in presented material
Evaluate Check Critique Assess	Activities such as journals, diaries, critiques, problem sets, product reviews, or studies that require students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> test, monitor, judge, or critique readings, performances, or products against established criteria or standards
Create Generate Plan Produce Design	Activities such as research projects, musical compositions, performances, essays, business plans, website designs, or set designs that require students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make, build, design or generate something new

This table does not list all possible examples of appropriate assessments. You can develop and use other assessments – just make sure that they align with your learning objectives and instructional strategies! (SOURCE: <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/alignment.html>)

FORUM DISCUSSION

- ✚ Cite actual examples of assessments (specific test items or tasks) that are (a) well-aligned and (b) poorly aligned with learning goals/ objectives.
- ✚ Using your personal experience/s or observation/s, what is the effect of poor alignment on how students learn? Would poorly aligned assessment also affect the way teachers design or decide about the ways they teach?

In aid of reflective learning (Stimuli for your e-Journal)

- ✚ Whether as a teacher, a group leader, a peer, or in some other role, you surely have had the opportunity to assess or evaluate another person. Were you always prudent about the accuracy of the feedback you gave about their performance?
 - ✚ Describe an assessment that you think now did not align with the learning experiences that you were provided beforehand. Did [Do] you believe that it was a case of an unsuccessful preparation on your part on account of an erroneous anticipation about the nature of the upcoming test? What were your thoughts and feelings then? Did this affect in any way how you subsequently approached learning in the subject or with the same teacher?
 - ✚ Do you believe that you need to be assessed; do you want to be assessed? Is there a **misalignment** between your “needs” and “wants” about being assessed?
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