

Two Broad Categories Of Assessment Instruments: Direct And Indirect

Direct measures (or instruments or methods):

provide evidence of whether or not students

- have command of specific subject or content area,
- can perform a certain task.

They answer the questions:

- *What* did students learn?
- *How well* did they learn it?
- What have they *not* learned?

They do not answer the questions:

- *Why* did the students learn?
- *How* did the students learn?

Indirect measures (or instruments or methods):

provide evidence that is related to the *act* of learning, such as:

- factors that predict or mediate learning or
- perceptions about learning

Examples of Direct and Indirect Measures of Student Learning (Course, Program, and Institutional Levels)

	Direct Measures	Indirect Measures
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance on tests of writing, critical thinking, or general knowledge • Rubric (criterion-based rating scale) scores for class assignments in General Education, • interdisciplinary core courses, or other courses required of all students • Performance on achievement tests • Explicit self-reflections on what students have learned related to institutional programs such as service learning (e.g., asking students to name the three most important things they have learned in a program). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally-developed, commercial, or national surveys of student perceptions or self-report of activities (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement) • Transcript studies that examine patterns and trends of course selection and grading • Annual reports including institutional benchmarks, such as graduation and retention rates, grade point averages of graduates, etc.
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capstone projects, senior theses, exhibits, or performances • Pass rates or scores on licensure, certification, or subject area tests • Student publications or conference presentations • Employer and internship supervisor ratings of students' performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group interviews with students, faculty members, or employers • Registration or course enrollment information • Department or program review data • Job placement • Employer or alumni surveys • Student perception surveys • Proportion of upper-level courses compared to the same program at other institutions • Graduate school placement rates
Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course and homework assignments • Examinations and quizzes • Standardized tests • Term papers and reports • Observations of field work, internship performance, service learning, or clinical experiences • Research projects • Class discussion participation • Case study analysis • Rubric (a criterion-based rating scale) scores for writing, oral presentations, and performances • Artistic performances and products • Grades that are based on explicit criteria related to clear learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course evaluations • Test blueprints (outlines of the concepts and skills covered on tests) • Percent of class time spent in active learning • Number of student hours spent on service learning • Number of student hours spent on homework • Number of student hours spent at intellectual or cultural activities related to the course • Grades that are not based on explicit criteria related to clear learning goals