



AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The best types of assessments are those that not only provide an evaluation of student work, but also prompt students to deepen their understanding of course content and improve their skills and performance. Authentic assessment aims to test skills and knowledge in “real world” applications that are relevant to future disciplinary professions. An authentic task encourages student success and course completion in a number of ways. It promotes an awareness of the value of the work to student goals and/or future professions; it encourages student self-directed learning; it promotes a growing sense of competency in the student; and it fosters a sense of relatedness, not just between theory and practice, but between students and various social groups. All of these factors encourage motivation, which promotes course completion and student success.^{1,3}

A. Key Components of Authentic Assessment ^{1,3}

Since these assessments are based in real-world scenarios that are often complex and nuanced, they

- i. Require application of theory to realistic professional practice
- ii. Require judgment and innovation
- iii. Assess integration of student skills and knowledge to negotiate a complex task
- iv. Are iterative in nature, with timely feedback encouraging students to develop and improve their skill sets



B. Comparison between Typical and Authentic Assessments²

Typical Test	Authentic Tasks	Indicators of Authenticity
Require correct responses	Require a high – quality product or performance and a justification of the solutions to the problems encountered	Correctness is not the only criterion. Students must be able to justify their answers
Must be unknown to the student in advance to be valid	Should be know in advance to the student, as much as possible	The tasks and standards for judgement should be known or predictable
Are disconnected from real world contexts and constraints	Are tied to real-world contexts and constraints; require the student to "do" the subject	The context and constraints of the task are like those encountered by practitioners in the discipline
Contain items that isolate particular skills or facts	Are integrated challenges in which a range of skills and knowledge must be used in coordination	The task is multifaceted and complex, even if there is a right answer
Include easily scored items	Involve complex tasks; may not have a single correct answer; may not be easily scored	The validity of the assessment is not sacrificed in favor of reliable scoring
Student gets one chance to show their learning	Are iterative: contain recurring tasks	Students may use particular knowledge or skills in several different ways or contexts
Provide a score	Provide usable diagnostic information about students' skills and knowledge	The assessment is designed to improve future performance and students are important consumers of such information



Examples of Authentic Assessment²

The table below indicates how assessments can be tailored to approximate real-world disciplinary applications

Nursing	Provide a case study of a patient and ask students to assess and create a plan of care
Business	Develop a business/marketing/sales plan for an imaginary (or real) company in a student's area of interest
Computer Science	Troubleshoot a problematic piece of code Develop a website/app to solve a particular problem and/or meet a set of criteria.
Psychology	Examine/critique a case study from multiple theoretical positions
Public Affairs or Service Learning Courses	Consider how a community agency might be impacted by a particular challenge (budget cuts, infrastructure outage, public health crisis, etc.)
Biology/Chemistry	Draw a diagram of how a process works, indicating what happens if X occurs
History	Engage in a role play of a particular event in history Describe what might have happened if one element of a historical event had changed

C. Considerations: ^{5,6}

As you consider authentic assessment for your course, it can be helpful to think about the following:

- How will you scaffold the learning outcomes?
- How will you provide support? Remember to consider your own time and/or availability.
- When planning the flow and timeline of coursework and assessments, remember that authentic assessments take longer for the students to complete
- Students can feel anxious about how they will be graded. Allow time to discuss their concerns and share your grading criteria with them
- Online teamwork can be difficult to coordinate.
 - Use a pre-course survey to determine what constraints students may be facing; consider adjustments to the depth of the assessment and/or the time allowed for completion of the task
 - Encourage effective student collaboration (see [Facilitating Effective Collaboration in Virtual Student Teams](#))



D. Planning^{3,5,6}

The following steps can be helpful in guiding your planning:

- Identify the learning outcomes; consider whether they lend themselves to real-world scenarios
- When designing an authentic assessment, start by thinking about the activities of professionals in the discipline, and consider whether your students could approximate such tasks
 - If a professional task cannot be carried out, consider whether the students could apply themselves to a relevant and new situation that is appropriate to their discipline; it can be useful to think about the learning outcome(s) as a verb and then design the scenario. Make it clear to the students how the scenario/task is relevant to their goals and/or future profession
- Select the performance criteria that you will use for grading and design a rubric that clearly outlines expectations. Share the rubric with your students. This approach helps provide clarity to the students, and helps us to be consistent in our grading.

E. Final Thoughts

- Remember that not all assessments must be re-done. We can use more typical, low stakes assessments to scaffold learning and build toward a summative authentic assessment.
- Sometimes – for any number of reasons (future graduate entry/professional school entry exams, etc.) - we may well want to retain some of our more typical assessments (e.g. timed multiple-choice tests). Our aim is always to help our students succeed. If assessments allows students to practice skills that are necessary for their current or future success, they, too, are valid.

F. Further Resources

1. Authentic Assessment Toolbox. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohio.edu/instructional-innovation/CTL/resources/Authentic-Assessment-Toolbox.pdf>
2. Authentic Assessment. Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Indiana University Bloomington. Retrieved from <https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/assessing-student-learning/authentic-assessment/index.html>
3. Assessment in the Online Classroom Retrieved from: <https://ctl.wiley.com/authentic-assessment-in-the-online-classroom/>
4. Shank, P. (2009, May). Four typical online learning assessment mistakes. In R. Kelly (Ed.), *Assessing online learning: Strategies, challenges and opportunities* (pp. 4-6). Madison, WI: Magna Publications Inc. Available from <https://www.facultyfocus.com/free-reports/assessing-online-learning-strategies-challenges-and-opportunities/>
5. University of Florida. (2018). Authentic assessment in online learning. Retrieved from <http://citt.ufl.edu/online-teaching-resources/assessments/authentic-assessment-in-online-learning/>
6. Authentic Assessment. Retrieved from <https://www.njit.edu/ite/authentic-assessment>
7. Faculty Focus: [Facilitating Effective Collaboration in Virtual Student Teams](#)