Aligning Assessment, Learning Objectives, and Instructional Strategies


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

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

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 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*).

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<th>Type of learning objective</th>
<th>Examples of appropriate assessments</th>
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| **Recall**                 | Objective test items such as fill-in-the-blank, matching, labeling, or multiple-choice questions that require students to:  
  - recall or recognize terms, facts, and concepts |
| **Interpret**              | Activities such as papers, exams, problem sets, class discussions, or concept maps that require students to:  
  - 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**                  | Activities such as problem sets, performances, labs, prototyping, or simulations that require students to:  
  - use procedures to solve or complete familiar or unfamiliar tasks  
  - determine which procedure(s) are most appropriate for a given task |
| **Analyze**                | Activities such as case studies, critiques, labs, papers, projects, debates, or concept maps that require students to:  
  - discriminate or select relevant and irrelevant parts  
  - determine how elements function together  
  - determine bias, values, or underlying intent in presented material |
| **Evaluate**               | Activities such as journals, diaries, critiques, problem sets, product reviews, or studies that require students to:  
  - test, monitor, judge, or critique readings, performances, or products against established criteria or standards |
| **Create**                 | Activities such as research projects, musical compositions, performances, essays, business plans, website designs, or set designs that require students to:  
  - make, build, design or generate something new |


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