## Summary of *Direct* Assessment Techniques

DIRECT ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES (Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education by Allen 2004)		
Technique	Potential Strength	Potential Limitations
Published tests	<ul> <li>Can provide direct evidence of student mastery of learning objectives</li> <li>Generally, are carefully developed, highly reliable, professionally scored, and nationally normed</li> <li>Frequently provide a number of norm groups, such as norms for community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and comprehensive universities</li> <li>Online versions of tests are increasingly available, and some provide immediate scoring</li> <li>Some publishers allow faculty to supplement tests with their own items, so tests can be adapted to better serve local needs</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>If the test does not reflect the learning objectives that faculty value and the curricula that students experience, results are likely to be discounted and inconsequential</li> <li>Most published tests rely heavily on multiple-choice items that often focus on specific facts, but program learning objectives more often emphasize higher-level skills</li> <li>Test scores may reflect criteria that are too broad for meaningful assessment</li> <li>Students may not take the test seriously if test results have no impact on their lives</li> <li>Tests can be expensive</li> <li>The marginal gain from annual testing may be low</li> <li>Faculty may object to standardized exam scores on general principles, leading them to ignore results</li> </ul>
Locally developed tests	<ul> <li>Can provide direct evidence of student mastery of learning objectives</li> <li>Appropriate mixes of items allow faculty to address various types of learning objectives</li> <li>Can provide for authentic assessment of higher-level learning</li> <li>Students generally are motivated to display the extent of their learning</li> <li>If well constructed, they are likely to have good validity</li> <li>Because local faculty write the exam, they are likely to be interested in results and willing to use them</li> <li>Can puses with similar missions could decide to develop their own norms, and they could assess student work together or provide independent assessment of each other's student work</li> <li>Discussion of results focuses faculty on student learning and program support for it</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>These exams are likely to be less reliable than published exams</li> <li>Reliability and validity generally are unknown</li> <li>Creating effective exams requires time and skill</li> <li>Score exams takes time</li> <li>Traditional testing methods may not provide authentic measurement</li> <li>Norms generally are not available</li> </ul>
Embedded assignments and course activities	<ul> <li>Can provide direct evidence of student mastery of learning objectives</li> <li>Out-of-class assignments are not restricted to time constraints typical for exams</li> <li>Students are generally motivated to demonstrate the extent of their learning</li> <li>Can provide authentic assessment of learning objectives</li> <li>Can provide a context for assessing communication and teamwork skills, as well as other types of learning objectives</li> <li>Can be used for grading as well as assessment</li> <li>Faculty who develop the procedures are likely to be interested in results focuses faculty on student learning and program support for it</li> <li>Data collection is unobtrusive to students</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Requires time to develop and coordinate</li> <li>Requires faculty trust that the program will be assessed, not individual teachers</li> <li>Reliability and validity generally are unknown</li> <li>Norms generally are not available</li> </ul>

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Competence interviews	<ul> <li>Can provide direct evidence of student mastery of learning objectives</li> <li>The interview format allows faculty to probe for the breadth and extent of student learning</li> <li>Can be combined with other techniques that more effectively assess knowledge of facts and terms</li> <li>Can involve authentic assessment, such as simulated interactions with clients</li> <li>Can provide for direct assessment of some student skills, such as oral communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Requires time to develop, coordinate, schedule, and implement</li> <li>Interview protocols must be carefully developed</li> <li>Subjective judgments must be guided by agreed-upon criteria</li> <li>Interviewer training takes time</li> <li>Interviewing using unstructured interviews requires expertise</li> <li>Not an efficient way to assess knowledge of specific facts and terms</li> <li>Some students may be intimidated by the process, reducing their ability to demonstrate their learning</li> </ul>
Portfolios	<ul> <li>Can provide direct evidence of student mastery of learning objectives</li> <li>Students are encouraged to take responsibility for and pride in their learning</li> <li>Students may become more aware of their own academic growth</li> <li>Can be used for developmental assessment and can be integrated into the advising process to individualize student planning</li> <li>Can help faculty identify curriculum gaps</li> <li>Students can use portfolios and the portfolio process to prepare for graduate school or career applications</li> <li>Discussion of results focuses faculty on student learning and program support for it</li> <li>Webfolios or CD-ROMs can be easily viewed, duplicated, and stored</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Requires faculty time to prepare the portfolio assignment and to assist students in preparing portfolios</li> <li>Requires faculty analysis and, if graded, faculty time to assign grades</li> <li>May be difficult to motivate students to take the task seriously</li> <li>May be more difficult for transfer students to assemble the portfolio if they haven't saved relevant materials</li> <li>Students may refrain from criticizing the program if their portfolio is graded or if their names will be associate with portfolios during the review</li> <li>It may be difficult to protect student confidentiality and privacy</li> </ul>
Collective portfolios	<ul> <li>Can provide direct evidence of student mastery of learning objectives</li> <li>Students generally are motivated to display the extent of their learning</li> <li>Workload demands generally are more manageable than traditional portfolios</li> <li>Students are not required to do extra work</li> <li>Discussion of results focuses faculty on student learning and program support for it</li> <li>Data collection is unobtrusive to students</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>If assignments are not aligned with the objectives being examined, evidence may be problematic</li> <li>If sampling is not done well, results may not generalize to the entire program</li> <li>Reviewing the materials takes time and planning</li> </ul>