Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment. (n.d.).   Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL). **https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/assessing-student-learning/authentic-assessment/**

When considering how to assess student learning in a course, most instructors would agree that the ideal assessment would be one that not only assesses students' learning; it also teaches students and improves their skills and understanding of course content. One fundamental aspect of such assessments is that they are *authentic*.

An authentic assignment is one that requires application of what students have learned to a new situation, and that demands judgment to determine what information and skills are relevant and how they should be used. Authentic assignments often focus on messy, complex real-world situations and their accompanying constraints; they can involve a real-world audience of stakeholders or "clients" as well. According to Grant Wiggins (1998), an assignment is authentic if it

- is realistic.

- requires judgment and innovation.

- asks the student to "do" the subject.

- replicates or simulates the contexts in which adults are "tested" in the workplace or in civic or personal life.

- assesses the student's ability to efficiently and effectively use a repertoire of knowledge and skills to negotiate a complex task.

- allows appropriate opportunities to rehearse, practice, consult resources, and get feedback on and refine performances and products.

Authentic assessments can be contrasted with conventional test questions, which are often indirect measures of a student's ability to apply the knowledge and skills gained in a course. Conventional tests have an important place in college courses, but cannot take the place of authentic assessments. The table below, drawn from Wiggins, illustrates the differences between typical tests and authentic assessments.

Typical tests	Authentic tasks	Indicators of authenticity
Require correct responses	Require a high-quality product or performance, and a justification of the solutions to problems encountered	Correctness is not the only criterion; students must be able to justify their answers.
Must be unknown to the	Should be known in advance to students as	The tasks and standards for judgment should be known or predictable.

student in advance to be valid	much as possible	
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 that for which there may be no right answer, and that may not be easily scored	The validity of the assessment is not sacrificed in favor of reliable scoring.
Are "one shot"; students get 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" o

Authentic assessments have several advantages over conventional tests. They are likely to be more valid than conventional tests, particularly for learning outcomes that require higher-order thinking skills. Because they involve real-world tasks, they are also likely to be more interesting for students, and thus more motivating. And finally, they can provide more specific and usable information about what students have succeeded in learning as well as what they have not learned.

However, authentic assessments may require more time and effort on an instructor's part to develop, and may be more difficult to grade. To address the difficulty of grading authentic assessments, it is often useful to create a grading rubric that specifies the traits that will be evaluated and the criteria by which they will be judged. (For more information, see the CITL resource on rubrics.)

Examples of Authentic Assessments

Nursing	Provide a case study of a patient and ask students to assess and crea
Business	Develop a business/marketing/sales plan for an imaginary (or real)
Computer Science	Troubleshoot a problemmatic piece of code; Develop a website/app 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 particu public health crisis, etc.)
Biology/Chemistry	Draw a diagram of how a process works, indicating what happens i
History	Engage in a role play of a particular event in history; Describe wha historical event had changed.

Who Is Doing This at IUB:

Professor Joshua Danish, in the School of Education, asks his students to apply the cognitive theories they have learned in class to help them interpret children's behaviors in the classrooms they are observing, in [this faculty spotlight](#).

Professor Alwiya Omar, Clinical Professor of Linguistics and director of IUB's Swahili Flagship Program, has her students learn Swahili by engaging in an activity with strong roots in African languages and cultures: storytelling. She describes her approach in [this faculty spotlight](#).

References

Wiggins, Grant. (1998). Ensuring authentic performance. Chapter 2 in *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 21 – 42.