

## What is assessment?

Assessment is a process of determining whether or not particular learning goals, such as Course Learning Objectives (CLOs), are being achieved and taking follow up action based on that information. It enables faculty to determine how cohorts of students are meeting learning goals over time and it provides faculty information to shape and inform future offerings of the course.

Assessment is manifested in information about what students have or have not learned, enabling changes or modifications to educational practices that improve students' achievement of learning. Assessment may be conducted by the instructor of the course or it may be conducted by a group of faculty who are not teaching the course.

## What is grading?

Grading provides an evaluation of an individual student's performance on an assignment holistically or performance in a course overall. Grading is manifested with letters and/or numbers that aggregate many facets of student performance and it is typically conducted by the instructor.

## What's the difference?

Assessment focuses on the degree to which cohorts of students are achieving particular course goals, such as CLOs, whereas grading focuses on an individual student's performance on a particular assignment or overall course performance. Assessment information describes specific outcomes that students have demonstrated that they have learned while grades summarize many aspects of student performance and do not always indicate if students have learned specific things.

Assessment and grading often utilize the same assignments and other artifacts from students, but differ in the way the information is used. In grading, faculty evaluate a student's overall performance on an assignment or exam holistically. And the feedback is intended for the student. In assessment, faculty evaluate cohorts of students' achievement of a particular learning goal, which may be a subsection of exam questions, or parts of an essay or paper. And the feedback is intended for the faculty member to ascertain learning across students and semesters.

## Examples

An exam may cover Chapters 3 through 6 of course material so the grade of the entire exam would reflect a student's comprehension of all of that material whereas assessment about a particular CLO might include a small handful of questions (e.g. questions 4, 12, and 39) from that exam that connect to that specific learning aim. Responses to those specific questions could then be assessed for progress toward a particular CLO.

Another example might include grading an individual writing assignment and a student's demonstration of a range of skills to complete that task. Assessment might be a look at a student's portfolio of written work over the course of a semester and to determine progress toward a CLO.