

# Choosing Assessment Technology

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## A Process for Choosing Assessment Technology Tools

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*Some assessment tools support learner analytics and student success data (indirect evidence). Other tools are designed to help institutions collect and use data on student learning outcomes (direct evidence). The sketch below begins to lay out a process for thinking through tools that collect direct evidence.*

1. **Clarify Common Ground:** Create connections from course-level learning outcomes to your institution's mission, so you have a clear view of how learning results contribute to the mission.
  - Consider how you will link learning to institutional and program learning outcomes.
  - Create alignments from assignment to course, course to program, program to institution, so you can aggregate data at each level.
2. **Use Backward Design:** Begin at the end—visualize the data you will need to demonstrate student learning at your school—take at least two steps back from course data to consider how to aggregate evidence at the program and institutional levels.
  - What data do you need for continuous improvement of student learning outcomes?
  - What reports does your institution need to submit to external reviewers? (i.e., SLOAR, Middle States, ABET)
  - What reports does your institutional assessment process require from colleges/programs/courses?
  - How will you present learning data to other audiences through your website and other communications?
  - How will you track follow-up measures to find out if closing-the-loop interactions have improved student learning?
3. **Take Inventory:** What processes and technology tools are already in place at your institution?
  - What does your institution's assessment plan look like? Is it top-down, bottom-up, or in between? If your plan has a diagram, reflect on the flow of information and how technology might streamline and make data easier to use. If you invest in an Assessment Management System, you'll want it to help you to collect and aggregate data in a way that emulates your assessment plan.
  - Look at your Learning Management System and related building blocks. Your LMS may have tools you can adapt to your needs. For example, at UMBC, we use [Blackboard rubrics](#) and tests and a building block called [EAC Visual Data](#) to

aggregate results across courses. Sometimes faculty use [Scantron](#) for tests, so it's helpful to know how the data can be extracted and applied.

- Review the processes already in place where learning data is being collected (i.e., General Education, Academic Program Review). How is it being collected? For example, [St. Olaf](#) uses [Qualtrics](#) to collect General Education learning data.
- Consider the tools your institution uses to collect learner analytics and student success data. Will the assessment technology tool you are considering integrate well with it? At UMBC, each assessment tool converts data into CSV files, so we can use Excel for additional analysis.

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## Assessing Assessment Technology Tools

*The rubric below begins to capture criteria for choosing assessment technology tools.*

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Questions to Consider</b>
1	<b>Usability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⑥ Does the software attempt to encode current best practices in assessment?</li><li>⑥ Can it manage multiple levels of assessment?</li><li>⑥ Is the software intuitive and easy to use? (Will users need extensive training?)</li><li>⑥ Does it work well with software you already have (and are using)?</li><li>⑥ Does it require additional steps/staff to enter and extract data?</li><li>⑥ Does it make assessment feel like an add-on? Or does it make assessment work part of the teaching and learning process?</li><li>⑥ Is the software flexible enough to grow to meet your needs?</li><li>⑥ Does data export in a useable format?</li></ul>
2	<b>Cost</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⑥ How much is the annual software license?</li><li>⑥ Are updates included?</li><li>⑥ How much will it cost for Instructional Technology support and training?</li><li>⑥ What hardware/cloud costs are needed to support it?</li><li>⑥ What hidden costs might emerge?</li></ul>
3	<b>Audiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⑥ Can the software serve the multiple levels of audiences that authentic assessment requires?</li><li>⑥ Who will need to use this software?</li><li>⑥ How will they learn to use it?</li><li>⑥ Can users interpret the results easily?</li><li>⑥ Can the software provide custom and ready-made reporting tools so you can ask a range of action research questions?</li></ul>

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