



What are Authentic Assessments

Think back to your time as a student. What assessments or activities do you remember fondly? It's likely that those assessments had qualities that made them especially authentic, meaningful, or personal. If so, you have already encountered authentic assessment.

Authentic assessment is a pedagogical approach to evaluating student learning that encourages instructors to build real-world, discipline-specific assessments into their courses (Messier, 2022). In contrast with traditional learning assessments such as multiple choice exams, essays, and quizzes, authentic assessments typically involve performance tasks during which students are asked to solve complex problems. Students are usually encouraged to produce dynamic and creative solutions to these problems, with the understanding that there usually is no 'right' answer in authentic assessment (Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2023).

The advantage of authentic assessment is that it engages students in building and practicing skills that are relevant to their professional context after school. Such target skills include critical thinking, communication skills, collaborative practices, and problem solving (Open AI, 2023). When authentic assessment seeks to have students apply these skills and other theoretical knowledge to complex, authentic problems, it is ensuring that students will be able to work in more creative, flexible ways after leaving school.

Examples of Authentic Assessments by Discipline

Nursing	Provide a case study of a patient and ask students to assess and create a plan of care.
Business	Develop a business/marketing/sales plan for an imaginary (or real) company in a student's area of interest.

Computer Science	Troubleshoot a problematic piece of code; Develop a website/app to solve a particular problem and/or meet a set of criteria.
Psychology	Examine/critique a case study from multiple theoretical positions.
Public Affairs or Service Learning	Consider how a community agency might be impacted by a particular challenge (budget cuts, infrastructure outage, public health crisis, etc.)
Biological or Chemical Sciences	Draw a diagram of how a process works, indicating what happens if X occurs.
History	Engage in a role play of a particular event in history; Describe what might have happened if one element of a historical event had changed.
Languages	Converse with native speakers; Tell stories in the target language; Engage in cultural events.

(Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2023)

Benefits of Using Authentic Assessments

Many instructors choose authentic assessments because it:

- Lends itself well to formative assessment
- Tends to encourage active engagement and participation
- Prepares students directly to solve problems in their chosen discipline
- Engages students in collaborative work with peers
- Involves tasks that often cannot be achieved through Artificial Intelligence
- Offers instructors descriptive feedback on their students' achievement and lagging skills (Center for Academic Innovation, 2020)
- Requires students to apply theoretical concepts in new ways (Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2023)

Considerations

Time Investment

Creating authentic assessments can be time and labour intensive. We suggest starting off with a small, impactful change, instead of completely overhauling your whole assessment structure. For instance, incorporate one authentic assessment into your class, do one case study, or discuss the 'real world' context for your discipline.

What is the Real World?

What does the term "the real world" mean when it comes to authentic assessment? The students' real world context during their education is your classroom - so, then, what are we referring to when we say "the real world"? These are questions that arise

frequently when discussing authentic assessment. For anyone struggling with this question, it can be helpful to conceptualize “the real world” as the context in which your students will utilize their education after graduation or outside of the classroom environment. Deciding how this looks in your assessment strategy involves deeply considering what students will encounter while working in your discipline and configuring those tasks into your classroom assessments.

Appropriate Application

Authentic assessment as a pedagogy is appropriate in some contexts and less so in others, and part of using authentic assessment is deciding what kinds of assessments fit best. Typically, instructors who utilize authentic assessment strategically match their assessments to the intended learning outcome. In some cases, using a more traditional assessment style is appropriate.

Authentic Assessments and Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence technologies are changing the way students and instructors complete tasks and assignments in school. As this shift unfolds, what is becoming more clear is that students will need to be able to complete tasks that AI cannot. Because authentic assessments are based on real-world tasks, often they include tasks that AI cannot accomplish alone, such as building prototypes, working collaboratively, and solving complex problems. By using authentic assessment pedagogies, you are better preparing your students for a real world context in which they will work closely with artificial intelligence, but will also be able to do tasks that go beyond AI’s current capabilities.

For more information on Authentic Assessments and AI, please visit the [RDP CTLS SharePoint page](#) on this topic.

How-Tos

Tips for Creating Authentic Assessments

- **Explore case-studies related to your discipline.** There are multiple case study online archives, such as the [Case Consortium at Columbia University](#), [National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science](#), and [the Michigan Sustainability Cases](#) (Center for Academic Innovation, 2020).
- **Emphasize the PROCESS rather than the product.** By placing emphasis on the process of creation, students will develop their creativity and problem-solving skills, as well as an appreciation for the scope and breadth of projects. Examples include project-based learning, multiple drafts, presentations, student-

led research, and so on.

- **Have students apply their learning to local issues and landscapes.**

Encouraging students to explore local knowledge will deepen their connection to their learning and personalize their process. Work with local organizations and businesses to have students apply knowledge from their class to real-life situations.

- **Encourage students to express personal interests and passion.**

Teaching and learning approaches that include self-investigative research components help students move from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, and students are more likely to be engaged in activities which capture their intrinsic motivation (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). One way to encourage intrinsic motivation is to make tasks applicable and/or relevant to the students' own life. Consider adapting your assessments or lessons to incorporate topics, problems, or issues with which students are familiar and that affect their lives directly.

References:

- Center for Academic Innovation. (2020, July 8). *Creating authentic assessments*. Online Teaching at the University of Michigan.
<https://onlineteaching.umich.edu/creating-authentic-assessments/>
- Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning. (2023). *Authentic assessment*. Indiana University Bloomington.
<https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/assessing-student-learning/authentic-assessment/index.html>
- Messier, N. (2022). *Authentic assessments*. University of Illinois at Chicago.
<https://teaching.uic.edu/resources/teaching-guides/assessment-grading-practices/authentic-assessments/>
- OpenAI. (2023, June 6). "What is authentic assessment?" [Response to user query]. ChatGPT.
<https://chat.openai.com>
- Saeed, S., & Zyngier, D. (2012). How motivation influences student engagement: A qualitative case study. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 1(2), 252-267.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v1n2p252>