

# Developing Quality Assessments

*Increasing Student Achievement  
Advancing Teacher Practice*



**About this document:** This document provides a pathway for selecting and designing high quality assessments for use as evidence of student learning in SLOs.

**About the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC):** CTAC is a national nonprofit organization with a demonstrated 40-year record of success in the fields of education and community development. Working at local, state, and national levels, CTAC achieves significant, long-term improvements in areas such as student achievement, teacher and principal effectiveness, school and district turnaround, and organizational capacity. CTAC introduced Student Learning Objectives through a groundbreaking partnership with the Denver Public Schools and Denver Classroom Teachers Association. SLOs are now being implemented in more than 30 states across thousands of school districts in the United States. CTAC has more than 19 years of national leadership experience providing technical assistance, informing practice and policy, and evaluating SLOs.



30 Winter Street • Boston, MA 02108

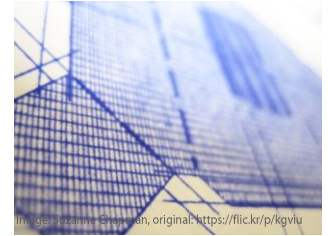
T: 617.423.1444 • E: [ctac@ctacusa.com](mailto:ctac@ctacusa.com) • [www.ctacusa.com](http://www.ctacusa.com)

# Developing Quality Assessments

The following protocol highlights key steps to take when selecting and/or designing assessments for use as evidence sources for SLOs. While sequencing of steps has a purpose, it will may be that steps may be taken iteratively or recursively to ensure the highest quality assessments.

## 1. Review existing options.

Typically assessments can be categorized into the following groups. It may be helpful to chart the options by type in the table below. It is important to note the blueprint, or outline of the general features of the assessment—particularly to ensure the scope of content matches or comes close to the content in your SLO’s learning content.



| State-Developed | District-Developed | Commercially Developed | School/Common Assessments | Classroom Assessments |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
|                 |                    |                        |                           |                       |

## 2. Analyze the alignment, rigor, stretch and structure.

These are four critical features of assessments. Key aspects related to these important features are highlighted below.

### Notes

#### Alignment

- Assessment items measure part or all of a learning content standard(s)
- Baseline and summative assessments align to each other



#### Rigor

- Level of cognition (e.g., Webb’s DOK approach)
- Use of multiple measures



#### Stretch

- Guides instruction and enrichment
- Is attainable but beyond the expected learning
- Covers prerequisite knowledge and skills from prior years and appropriate, content-relevant items that provide challenge



#### Structure

- Accessibility/Fairness of items
- Overall length of assessment



# Developing Quality Assessments

### 3. Ensure a variety of item types, developing additional items as needed.

A variety of item types helps give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning of the content and can help more accurately measure the various aspects of student learning embedded in the standards found in the learning content. Reflect on how many of the following item types are present, and how many of each type may need to be developed.

| <i>Included</i> | <b>Selected Response</b> | <i>Needed</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|
|                 | Matching                 |               |
|                 | Multiple Choice          |               |
|                 | Multiple Select          |               |
|                 | True or False            |               |



| <i>Included</i> | <b>Constructed Response</b> | <i>Needed</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
|                 | Oral                        |               |
|                 | Physical                    |               |
|                 | Visual                      |               |
|                 | Written                     |               |

### 4. Develop administration and scoring protocols.

Administration and scoring protocols promote consistency of expectations as well as a more common meaning of results. Consider the following when developing these protocols:

- Security of assessment materials
- Administration directions that are clear and concise
- Answer keys, rubrics, and scoring guides that are clear, accurate, and thorough
- Training scorers and devoting the needed time to training and scoring



### 5. Facilitate peer/collegial review protocols.

Collaboration helps stimulate thinking in new ways and can help efforts evolve into higher and higher levels of quality. Allow other colleagues to review the assessments in the role of a “critical friend” to obtain important feedback regarding possible ways to improve the quality of the assessment. Consider such collegial groups as



- Grade or department level colleagues
- Colleagues from other schools
- District content and assessment colleagues
- Specialists with English learners
- Specialists with special education students
- Regional or state colleagues
- Professional organization colleagues

## 6. Administer the assessments.

The best way to see how well the baseline and summative assessments will work is to implement them. The more the assessment is implemented and later reflected upon, the richer the information source will be on the effectiveness of the assessment. Be sure to

- Hold tightly to the established administration and scoring directions.
- Capture any contextual factors you may want to know about later, such as
  - Time it takes for students to complete the assessment
  - Any irregularities or accommodations made during administration
  - Student affect and perceptions
  - Resources that may be helpful in the future (e.g., scratch paper, graph paper)
- Be comfortable with a good but less-than-perfect measurement: no measure is perfect, but we can continually refine to improve quality over time.



## 7. Reflect on implementation and results; refine as needed.

Reflect on both the administration of the assessments as well as the results produced by them. Reflection can prompt new and better ways to measure student learning. As you and your colleagues reflect and look for areas to refine, consider the following:



- How did the administration go compared to expectations?
- Are there important modifications needed in the administration?
- What do the score distributions look like?
- Did the “highest” and “lowest” performing students score at different ends of the score distribution?
- Are there discrepancies in performance across student groups?
- Did the assessment measure the intended learning content?
- Is there a need for more or fewer items to reflect the desired balance of emphasis across the selected standards?
- Is there an appropriate balance of item types of level of cognition?
- Did the scoring materials work for the full range of student responses?
- What else might be needed to improve the quality of these assessments?