

Authentic Assessment

“Assessing by Doing”

What is Authentic Assessment?

Authentic assessment is based on students’ abilities to perform meaningful tasks they may have to do in the “real world.” In other words, this form of assessment determines students’ learning in a manner that goes beyond multiple choice tests and quizzes.

Why Should I Consider Using Authentic Assessment?

Authentic assessment has several advantages over traditional assessment, summarized in the table below.

Authentic Assessment	Traditional Assessment
Requires students to contextualize and apply what they have learned.	Asks students about what they learned out of context and tends to encourage rote memorization (‘what do we need to know for the test?’)
Forces students to work within the ambiguities and grey areas present in the real world.	Encourages students to think about issues in ‘right’ versus ‘wrong.’
Challenges students with a full array of tasks, challenges, and priority-setting that is required in solving problems in the real world.	Tends to focus on single answers to problems.
Look at students’ abilities to plan, craft, and revise thorough and justifiable arguments, performances, and products.	Rarely provide students opportunities to plan, evaluate, adjust, and revise responses.
Often include ambiguous problems and roles that allow students to practice dealing with the ambiguities of the real world.	Frequently focus on discrete, static (and often arbitrary) elements of the skills necessary to work on ambiguous challenges.

Wiggins, Grant (1990). The case for authentic assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 2(2). Retrieved September 17, 2014 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=2&n=2>.

How Can I Develop Authentic Assessment?

A suggestion for developing an authentic assessment:

- Identify at least one task students need to be able to do to be successful in employment and/or continuing education
- Work with your fellow faculty/staff to determine how students might be able to demonstrate their ability to do the task(s)
- Identify criteria to evaluate the task(s)
- Evaluate students’ abilities to complete the criteria of the task(s)

What are Some Authentic Assessment Methodologies?

Methodologies tend to rely on demonstrations of student learning that involve students creating a product, performing, etc. (i.e. DOING). This is often done as a one-time assessment, typically at the end of a course, activity, or academic program.

Examples:

- Biology lab practical
- ePortfolio
- Music jury
- Mock trial
- Acting in a play

The basic premise of authentic assessment is that if you want to know how well someone golfs, the best way to assess it is to have that person play a round of golf.

What are the Critical Elements I Should Think about when I Use Authentic Assessment?

There are several critical elements to consider before deciding to use authentic assessment.

- This type of assessment requires a sense of meaningful tasks that students would need to be able to do after they leave DePaul
 - These meaningful tasks are often linked to demonstration of knowledge/skills/abilities needed in the post-college world
- Authentic assessment typically relies on using a rubric (or some other scoring guide)

What Sorts of Things Should I Consider When I Develop an Authentic Assessment?

Before deciding to implement authentic assessment, you should consider the following two questions:

- Where do students go after they complete your program?
- What do students need to be able to do to be successful in what they do after they complete your program?

Additionally, you should take the following things into consideration:

- Time: Developing the tasks for students to complete takes time, as does developing rubrics/scoring guides and assessing students' tasks.
- Authentic Assessment needs to be done at a developmentally appropriate time.
 - Students need to grasp knowledge and skills before they will be able to apply them.