Developmental Assessment
“Assessing by Progress”

What is Developmental Assessment?
Authentic assessment looks at students’ progress in developing skills, abilities, values, etc., rather than evaluating students’ final products.

Why Should I Consider Using Developmental Assessment?
Not every type of learning is best assessed by looking at the quality of a final product. In fact, sometimes there is no expectation that students should, or even could, fully develop in the assessed area by the end of a course or program. An example of this is Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Theoretically, very few people ever fully develop to the final “self-actualized” stage. A few advantages of authentic assessment are:

• Developmental assessment is useful for outcomes based on students’ development rather than their abilities to create a final product.
• This assessment is based on relevant principles of development in your discipline.
• This type of assessment emphasizes emerging knowledge and skills, rather than recognizing only students’ final products.
• Developmental assessment gives you the ability to focus on strengths and unique aspects of your program.
• Developmental assessment is ongoing and may occur in many contexts, giving you a richer view of students’ learning.

How Can I Create Developmental Assessments?
Developmental assessments require some sort of pre- post- design. If you would like to know how much a student has developed their knowledge, skills, abilities, and/or values, you need to measure that information at the beginning of a learning experience, then again at the end.

Example: one could administer a test at the beginning of a class, then ask the same students to take the same test at the end of a class. By comparing students’ performances on the pre- and post-tests, an instructor could determine students’ levels of development.
What are Some Developmental Assessment Methodologies?
Methodologies tend to rely on observational and work sampling techniques that continually focus on performance, processes, and products over selected periods of time and in a variety of contexts.

Example: an instructor may compare two work samples using a developmental rubric to determine students’ levels of development.

What are the Critical Elements I Should Think about when I Use Developmental Assessment?
Developmental assessment requires a theory of how students develop the knowledge, skills, abilities, and/or values you intend to measure. The person or people conducting the assessment need to have good knowledge of the stages through which students progress as they develop. Developmental assessment necessarily requires some sort of a pre-post-assessment design.

What Should I Consider When I am Thinking About Using a Developmental Assessment?

• The purpose of assessment is to collect information necessary to make important decisions about students’ development and educational needs.
• Assessment must serve in ways that enhance opportunities for optimal growth, development, and learning.
• The process of determining individual developmental and educational needs informs instructional practices and provides a template for setting individual and program goals.