

Classroom Based Assessment Basic Terms

Classroom based assessment is often best thought of in terms of both *formative* and *summative* assessment, and in terms of *formal* or *informal* assessment.

Formative Versus Summative Assessment:

Formative assessment is assessment designed to give feedback on, and to improve, the process of learning. It captures student's progress toward the desired outcome and provides feedback to the instructor as to whether or not progress toward the desired outcomes is being achieved. Formative assessment may take the form of drafts of papers, practice performances, response papers and other learning activities that contribute to the final desired outcome. They may also be very informal activities such as classroom discussions or other activities where checking for student comprehension can be achieved.

Summative assessment is assessment done for the purpose of providing an evaluative summary and capturing student achievement. Summative assessment typically occurs at the completion of a major classroom task or project or at the completion of the course. A final research paper, an exam, a formal presentation or other such assessment activities are typical examples of summative assessments. These are typically graded and constitute a portion of the course grade.

Formal versus Informal Assessment:

Informal assessment includes the daily interactions and observations made by the instructor that inform student progress and course effectiveness. They may or may not involve writing or other tangible outcomes.

Examples: comments made during class discussions, the amount and depth of questions posed by students during a given lecture or class, in-class tasks and projects, polling, one minute essays or one sentence summaries (or a variety of other techniques designed to give immediate feedback) etc. Informal assessments are most typically formative.

Formal assessments are clearly defined and articulated with established standards and expectations for performance. They should align with course objectives and are typically included as part of the student grade for the course. Formal assessments may be formative (ie. a draft of a paper) or summative (the final paper).