Assessment is a catchall term that refers to any method used to gauge student progress toward the achievement of the stated course goals and learning objectives.

### Aligning Assessments with Goals & Objectives

It is essential that all goals and objectives map to an assessment and vice versa. When mapping assessments to goals and objectives, you may find that your chosen assessments don’t quite align with your stated goals and objectives. In cases like that, you may choose to revise either the assessment or the goal/objective.

### Selecting Assessments

When selecting assessments for your online course, focus on authentic assessments and community-building interactive assessments. Authentic assessment is "a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills." (Jon Mueller, The Authentic Assessment Toolbox) Interactive assessments allow the students to communicate and/or work collaboratively with one another, which helps students feel less isolated and allows you to get to know the individual students. The combination of these types of assessment helps reduce instances of cheating because they are often unique to the student and you are familiar with the student’s voice and ability.

### Types of Assessments

#### Interactive Assessment Tools

- **Discussion Board:** These are ubiquitous among online courses due to their functionality and ease of use. Students can post and reply to each other asynchronously. This blog post provides guidance on writing effective discussion prompts: [http://www.iddblog.org/?p=1927](http://www.iddblog.org/?p=1927).

- **Blog:** These allow students to write extended posts reflecting on experiences or a specific subject. Blogs can be public to the class, allowing comments by other students, or private between the instructor and student, providing a space for private reflection.

- **Wiki:** These are workspaces that allow multiple contributors to create and edit content. They are ideal for collaborative classwork and projects.

- **VoiceThread:** This allows students to have an asynchronous discussion around a piece of media. It allows students to post their comments as audio or text.
Authentic Assessments

- **Multimedia Project:** This provides a way to build a significant project and allows students to practice using multimedia tools (an authentic assessment in itself).

- **Peer Lesson Presentation:** Students prepare and present peer lessons, where students teach actual lessons in the course or prepare lessons for a specified audience.

- **Case Study:** Students deal with actual organizations or companies, with real problems, and study how organizations succeeded and failed.

- **Local History Project:** Connecting distance education students to their own communities, participants use primary sources to make connections between their local area and broader trends either in historical or contemporary time periods.

- **Policy Brief:** Non-profits, non-governmental organizations, diplomats, lobbyists, and governmental aides are all required to research and write policy briefs on specific issues of timely concern for their organizations. These briefs are a good way to combine research and writing in an authentic assignment.

- **Student Debates** (group or individual): The art of persuasion is one that is in great demand. If the debate is a group performance, then collaboration is another aspect that may be authentically assessed through the course of the debate.

- **Journal Entries** (reflective writing): Constructivist learning theory holds that in order for students to really "learn" anything they must internalize it. That is, they must think about it deeply, compare it to what they already know, validate this new knowledge, and accept it. That process occurs naturally in the course of writing a journal where students are required to reflect upon their personal learning journey in an assignment or throughout the course.

- **Conduct & Report on Research** (individual or group): Professionals conduct research. Learning how to conduct research, defining parameters, and coping with variables are all tasks students will find invaluable as they enter the workforce.