

Types of University Assessments – A Developmental Approach

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Learning at home, in the [village](#) or suburb, [community](#), at school or at any level of society, requires ‘teachers or trainers’ to know how much learning their ‘students’ acquired in terms of knowledge, skills, and growth. There are several ways of achieving this, one of them is to give them a task to do, then assess the performance. This blog post focuses on types of assessments for university students, with an emphasis on those that create opportunities for [decolonisation](#) and relevance.

WHY ARE ASSESSMENTS GIVEN TO STUDENTS?

- To demonstrate student learning
- To demonstrate achievement of set learning course or subject outcomes
- To assess if students are using [decolonial](#) textbook and other literature in their learning of [social work](#)
- To assess skills
- To assess if students are ready to go on [fieldwork](#)
- To assess the application of knowledge in real life context
- To assess ability to evaluate evidence
- Evaluate communication and reporting skills
- Assess student’s ability to receive and use feedback
- They can be used for assessing students without need for examinations, that is, they can be examinations in themselves

BASIC RULES

- Assessments must reflect the social and developmental challenges, issues or problems of the communities or [country](#).
- Assessments must align with what students will do when they qualify.
- Assessments offer an opportunity to solve real social and developmental challenges, issues and problems. They are not done for passing to get a certificate, diploma or degree.
- There must be an opportunity for feedback.
- Feedback must be timely.
- There must be an opportunity to discuss feedback.
- Must be suitable for the level and time.
- Expectations must be made clear e.g. through a written assessment rubric or discussion before assessment is done.
- Assessments should have due dates for submission and return of feedback
- Assessment can be under exam and non-exam conditions.
- The work must be done by the student.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS

- Classroom-based assessments – happen in the classroom or exam room.
- [Community-based](#) assessments – happen in the [community](#) including at home or school.
- Agency-based assessments – happen at an organisation providing [social work](#) and [development](#) services. They are different from placement-based assessments.

- Field-based assessments – happen in the field, outside homes and offices. For example, at an irrigation site, dam construction site, cultural event, cultural site etc.
- Laboratory-based assessments – happen in a lab, e.g. a simulation lab, a simulation work room etc.
- Placement-based assessments – happen during student placement under the supervision of a qualified social worker or [development](#) practitioner.

EXAMPLES OF ASSESSMENTS

Development-focused assessments

- Create a [community development](#) plan
- Create a decolonisation plan
- Create an [indigenisation](#) plan
- Evaluate a community intervention
- Create a development committee or task-force
- Review a [policy](#), strategy or law
- Design a project to generate [income](#) or food
- Create a resource mobilisation campaign
- Create a prevention strategy
- Doing comprehensive needs analysis or assessment for a [family](#) or community
- Creating a social work group or club

Community-based assessments

- Visit a community and assess their needs
- Attend a community meeting and address or participate
- Field-trip and writing a report afterwards
- Attend a [village](#) development meeting or court
- Observe the [environment](#)
- Attend a [spiritual](#) event or activity
- Door to door awareness, consultation or education
- Doing a needs assessment for a group project
- Plan or organise a seminar, *indaba*, [dare](#) or webinar

Creative assessments

- Design a community centre
- Create a visual artefact
- Curate an exhibition
- Create a group project or program
- Write a book chapter or book
- Creating a training program
- Conceptualising, planning or facilitating a conference
- Create and execute a social action project or program

Simulation-based assessments

- Dramatise [child](#) care practices in Africa with your classmates as community members

- Address a community meeting with your classmates as community members
- Dramatise a [family](#) meeting with classmates as family members
- Dramatise a court session
- Poster presentation
- Simulation of a case conference in a hospital
- Teamwork (process)
- Demonstrate how to enter the Chief or King's compound
- Simulate a home with dolls and utensils

Placement-based assessments

- Visiting an agency for observation and guidance.
- Short-time shadowing of a social or development worker (one hour to one week). This involves observing the social worker while they work
- Volunteering at an agency for short (one hour to one month), medium (two month to five months) or long term (six months to one year). Usually there is less or no supervision.
- Supervised placement (attachment) for short, medium or long term.

Research-based assessments

- Writing a proposal or protocol for research or project
- Doing a research project and writing a short report
- Writing an ethics application
- Research and write a thesis or dissertation (long report)
- Publish a journal article
- Reviewing [orature](#) and literature and writing a report
- Filling a workbook
- Evaluating [orature](#) or literature
- Analyse a policy gap
- Do an experiment and report or show results
- Research orature ([proverbs](#), maxims, idioms etc) and applicable to social work and development

Written or text-based assessments

- Creating a bibliography
- Creating a case study
- Writing an essay – the most popular assessment but it doesn't offer students many skills
- Filling a workbook
- Creating a portfolio
- Creating a plan of action
- Completing a multiple choice quiz (a few questions or many questions) – another popular assessment but it doesn't offer students many skills
- Completing a test with short answers (sentences or paragraphs) – doesn't offer much
- Watch a video then write deep thoughts or reflections about lessons learnt
- Create a poster, brochure, flier, travel guide and cultural guide
- Write a [policy](#), policy paper or brief
- Write or review a [decolonisation](#) document

- Create a timeline
- Create a budget
- Write a letter, briefing note, notice or memoranda
- Write a social assessment report or any other report
- Translate content to local language
- Creating a diary of events, views, observations or reflections
- Note-taking
- Write a biography
- Write a poem or song

Oral assessments

- Debate with one or more people
- Interview a community member or a teacher or another student in class
- Individual presentation of a topic or poster
- Group presentation
- Oral examination – ask questions orally for oral responses
- Telling a story or sharing an experience
- Singing a song
- Reciting a poem

Digital assessments

- Create a website
- Create a blog-post
- Create a digital portfolio
- Record a podcast
- Make a social media post (text, video or audio)
- Computer based presentation e.g. PowerPoint presentation
- Create a film

PARTING WORDS

There are many other examples of assessments as shown above. In choosing an assessment type, the key considerations are (1) is it [decolonial](#) or it replicates [colonial](#) learning strategies from the West – for example an assessment that teachers students to replicate [Western](#) ethics is not a good one, neither is an assessment that prioritizes teaching students about Western [philosophy](#). (2) Does it promote development or [developmental social work](#) or [social development](#) – if it does then it is good. Assessments that promote welfarism, asking students to outline history of social [welfare](#) in the UK, contribute very little to the training of social workers in Africa. (3) Does it address a local social problem (4) Is it cultural relevant (5) Pedagogically, is it suitable for the level and doable – it does not help to ask students to create a blog post, when there is no or limited access to the internet.

I hope this information will be useful for academics and students alike, and if you would like an HTML copy, please visit www.africasocialwork.net/blog