Which Assessment Instrument do I choose?
Choosing the appropriate assessment instrument to measure student learning outcomes can be challenging.

Given there are so many instruments to choose from, selecting the right instrument requires careful thought, analysis, and application.
Why Grades Are Not Enough

• The most commonly used assessment instrument is the grade.
• It is straightforward, simple, and time-saving.
• But, many faculty have different concepts of what constitutes a particular grade.
• As a result, the grading system becomes uneven, creates validity issues, and frustrates students.
Other Types of Assessment Instruments

• There are two categories of instruments: direct and indirect
• Direct instruments ask students to show what they have learned
• Types of direct instruments include:
  – Exams
  – Quizzes
  – Essays/Research Papers
- Oral Presentations
- Classroom discussions
- One minute paper

- Indirect instruments ask students to reflect upon their performance in the class
- Types of indirect instruments include:
  - Surveys
  - Interviews
  - Self-reflection assignments
While all of these are effective instruments, there are others faculty can use to better measure student learning outcomes.
Rubrics

- Rubrics can effectively assess student learning, and in fact, facilitate dialogues between professors and students
- Students will be able to understand professor expectations
- Rubrics also facilitate discussions across schools and departments
- There are multiple types and styles of rubrics
  - Critical Thinking
  - Communication
  - Literacy
  - Reasoning
Another effective tool professors can use to assess student learning is the culminating experience or capstone project. The capstone enables professors to monitor students’ progress throughout the course (and program for majors). It can be a lengthy research paper or project with an oral presentation component.
A third, and perhaps most effective (and underused) assessment tool is the embedded question. This enables a professor to measure students’ depth of knowledge of a particular course topic, and simultaneously gauge other student skills (for example, critical thinking or writing). Like a rubric, it can foster dialogue across schools or departments.
Selecting the appropriate instrument really comes down to what it is you are trying to measure, and thus, professors must carefully select which ones they use and when.

Ideally, assessment experts recommend using two or more instruments to assess student learning outcomes.
Scenario

- You have been given this brief reflection paper by a student
- What type of rubric will you create?
- What will be the components?
For more information, see the UNLV Office of Assessment Website (click on links)

- The University of Hawaii at Manoa
- Philadelphia Community College
- Indiana University, Purdue University Indianapolis