

Direct vs. Indirect Assessment Measures

Examples of Appropriate Measures for Student Learning Outcomes (Academic)

Direct measures of student learning include student products or performances that demonstrate that specific learning has taken place. Indirect measures, on the other hand, may imply that learning has taken place (e.g., student perceptions of learning) but do not specifically demonstrate that learning or skill.

Direct measures

- standardized exams
- locally developed exams
- embedded questions
- external examiners/judges
- oral exams
- minute papers
- portfolios (with rubrics)
- behavioral observations
 - videotape
- simulations
- project evaluations
- performance appraisals

Indirect measures

- written surveys and questionnaires:
 - student perception
 - alumni perception
 - employer perception of program
- exit and other interviews
- focus groups
- student records

Examples of Appropriate Measures for Operational Outcomes (Administrative)

Direct measures of operational outcomes include products or evidence that demonstrates program efficiencies. Indirect measures, on the other hand, may imply that program efficiencies are in place (e.g., customer perception of efficiencies) but do not specifically demonstrate the efficiency.

Direct measures

- staff time
- cost
- materials
- equipment
- other resources
- cost per unit output
- reliability
- accuracy
- courtesy
- competence
- reduction in errors
- audit, external evaluator

Indirect measures

- written surveys and questionnaires:
 - stakeholder perception
 - students
 - administration and staff
 - faculty
- interviews
- focus groups