# Tools for Assessing Student Progress

Seven categories of course resources that can be used to assess student mastery of course material include: chapter videos, journaling, case studies, workbook activities, group activities, quizzes, and exams. This planning material provides a guide to help you reflect and decide how to use the course resources in assessing student progress. The guide offers criteria you can use to assess assignments. Share the criteria with students when making the assignment so they clearly understand the expectations and can work to fulfill them while doing the assignment.

The assignments in the course should be explained as being valuable contributions that will help students become more employable. When students read the book, it will become clear that employers expect workers to be able to write well, verbally express their ideas, listen well, work with other people (teamwork) to accomplish tasks, and successfully complete projects. The learning assessment ideas contained in this section are designed to help students improve these skills. However, it is not always clear to students that a relationship exists between their education and future employment, so it is beneficial for an instructor to make these points when discussing assignments for the course.

## Videos

There is a video for each chapter that summarizes the key points for the chapter. It can be used for assessment by asking students to view the video before the class (at the time the chapter is introduced). If you want to assess whether students watched the video, select one point in the video that stood out in your mind. This point may often be associated with one of the visual images. At the beginning of class, ask one question about the video students should remember by giving them a visual prompt. For example, in the video for Chapter 1 at the time mark of 8:27, there is information about dependability and reliability. You can prompt the students to recall a point in the video where a clock and a to-do list were displayed, and the idea discussed was about two essential skills every employee needs to have. What are these skills?

Asking questions like the example given should be easy enough for students to answer if they watched the video. You could even give them credit for answering either *dependability* or *reliability*. Keep in mind the questions are not meant to quiz or test a student’s knowledge but rather obtain a rough assessment about whether they watched the video. The advantage of the videos are they allow you to flip the classroom and have students cover key material before coming to class. You can then focus on classroom discussions, group activities, and other interactions to reinforce learning.

## Journaling

Journaling is a good exercise to help students learn reflection and personal application. These are skills that will serve them well both in education and the workplace. It is not necessary to assess student’s journaling every week, but it reinforces their engagement in the activity if you ask them to submit their journal entries 3–4 times throughout the course. You should decide whether the students should journal electronically or using paper. Also, decide what material will be reviewed. Reviewing the journal entry for a specific chapter permits a spot check. However, reviewing the journal entries for several chapters at a time let’s you check on whether the exercise is being done on a regular basis. Another option is to have students submit a complete journal at the end of the course that includes journal entries for the entire course (all 13 chapters). The disadvantage to this option is that it doesn’t ensure they engaged in reflection but may hastily compile the entries at the end of the course. Some of the criteria that can be used when assessing that quality of written journals include:

* Fulfills the required length or limit of the assignment (typically number of words).
* Focuses on the specific ideas from the book the journal item asks to be addressed.
* Expresses reflective thinking; i.e., clear thoughts about how ideas apply personally.
* Raises personal questions about how the idea applies to situations they might face in their work.
* Discusses situations students have personally encountered and how they resolved them.

## Case Studies

The purpose of case studies is to help students develop critical thinking skills and learn how to apply principles introduced in the workbook to job situations. The best way to use this resource for assessing students is to require that a written case study assignment be submitted at the beginning of the class in which the case study is discussed by the entire class. Using case studies in this manner will hopefully result in thoughtful papers from students and a more robust discussion in class.

Case studies can also be used for individual written assignments. Rather than selecting a single case study for an assignment, you might assign 3–4 specific cases studies to which students need to respond. Another option is to allow students to select case studies with the requirement that only one per chapter can be used and then determine how many case studies they should select. Criteria that can be used to assess the quality of the assignment include:

* Fulfills the required length or limit of the assignment (number of words).
* Applies concepts from the book in the analysis of the case.
* Clearly expresses thoughts in a well written manner.
* Uses critical thinking to support the conclusions drawn.
* Mentions at least one issue for which additional information is needed.
* Provides a recommendation for solving the case study.

## Workbook Activities

The workbook is full of many activities that can provide other options for assessing students. Among them are checklists and personal assessments. The following text offers ideas about how to use these resources in assessing student learning.

There are checklists, such as those on page 55 about dress, that you can ask students to submit. Checklists would typically be assigned fewer points than other activities; e.g., 5 points and the assignment would usually include several checklists in one assignment. Checklist activities ask students to explain the rationale for their answers. This is the portion of the assignment that should receive the highest number of points and should be assessed based on the following criteria:

* Expresses the rationale in a clear and understandable manner.
* Uses good grammar and spelling.
* Applies critical thinking skills.

Another type of activity in the book that can be used for assignment to measure learning is the personal assessment, such as the one on page 105 about character strengths. Assignments you create should ask students to also answer at least two questions about the personal assessment. For example: What did you learn about yourself from this assessment? How can you apply these insights to be a more successful employee on the job? Criteria to measure the students’ work include:

* Fulfills the required length or limit of the assignment (number of words).
* Expresses reflective thinking; i.e., clear thoughts about how ideas apply personally.
* Raises personal questions about how the idea applies to situations they might face in their work.

Projects appear in the book that are typically extensive in nature. One example, the *Personal Learning Project,* can be found on page 94 in the book. These assignments are rather extensive and require more work than other workbook activities, so it is reasonable to assign 75–100 points to them. The criteria you can use to assess the assignment include:

* Fulfills the required length or limit of the assignment (number of words).
* Provides clarity, uses appropriate vocabulary, and does not have grammatical or spelling errors.
* Demonstrates clear and deep understanding of content and issues.
* Expresses original ideas supported by the book or other experts and scholars.
* Applies critical thinking skills.
* Addresses all requirements of the assignment.

## Group Activities and Discussions

Group activities help increase students social and teamwork skills. For example, the group activity to develop lists describing nonverbal communication on page 159 is a way to assess a student’s progress in developing teamwork skills. Some criteria for assessing student outcomes are:

* Contributes at a level comparable to other members of the group.
* Shares views with the class.
* Actively listens to others
* Provides meaningful feedback.
* Offers ideas, questions, insights, and challenges based on the workbook content.
* Shares experiences from their work experience.
* Expresses critical thinking and originality.
* Encourages other students to learn and engage in the activity.

## Quizzes and Exams

Every instructor has their own educational philosophy about the important of tests and that is why you can determine how much weight to give them in arriving at the number of points to assign them. The example Grading Sheet in the Instructor eResources may have a much higher number of points than you would prefer to assign to quizzes and exams. However, the Grading Sheet is also provided to you as a spreadsheet so that you can make adjustments to points and add or change criteria used for assigning students a grade for the course.

There is a Review Quiz for each chapter of the book and two exams. These resources can be used to assess students’ knowledge about the book and concepts it contains. The instructor resources include answer keys for the quizzes and exams. The exams introduce many questions from the quizzes but sometimes the wording is slightly altered. The rationale for using this approach: Questions in exams should test for knowledge that is most essential for students to acquire in the course. If you let students know what to study for the exam, it reinforces the acquisition of the most important knowledge presented in the book and course. The quizzes become a way to let students know what they should study.