# Oral Assessments: Building a Community of Statistical Thinkers and Speakers

## Abstract

Oral assessments provide educators with a wealth of information about student understanding. Rather than deciphering a static written response, oral assessments allow instructors to probe student understanding, providing a more complete picture of their overall understanding. However, the potential time and energy required to incorporate oral assessments in the classroom, combined with the fear of the unknown, may cause many educators to shy away. In this session, we will describe two perspectives on incorporating oral assessments into the statistics classroom. We will outline important considerations when designing and implementing these assessments, and we will offer reflections based on our experiences. Throughout the session participants will apply ideas being discussed to an assessment setting from their own teaching, ultimately developing an outline for implementing an oral assessment in a future class.

## Goals

In our session, we have two main goals: (1) to break down barriers for instructors interested in incorporating oral assessments in their classrooms, and (2) to help instructors design oral assessments for a specific course. Both goals will be met by first sharing our experiences designing and administering oral assessments, including important issues to consider and lessons learned, and then having participants consider how they might handle similar issues for a specific course that they teach, getting feedback on their ideas in breakout groups. By the end of our session, we hope that participants will (1) see that oral assessments carry many potential benefits for a reasonable level of costs, and (2) create an outline for how they might administer an oral assessment in one of their own courses.

## Connection to Theme

Oral assessments provide an alternative method for students to demonstrate their understanding. Outside of the confines of written responses, students can articulate their understanding in a way that is genuine to them. In addition, instructors have flexible tools for probing and drawing out students’ understanding of important concepts. We believe this flexibility promotes equity and increases student achievement. Moreover, when paired with a classroom emphasizing a growth mindset and student’s mastery of the material, these assessments increase student engagement and participation.

## Engagement

Activities will be interspersed throughout the session. These activities will walk participants through the necessary stages and considerations in designing oral assessments, using breakout rooms to allow participants to connect and engage with fellow attendees. Additionally, the session will conclude with participants assembling each component of their assessment into a cohesive set and receiving feedback from their partners.

The presentations during this session will outline two possible scenarios for incorporating oral assessments in the classroom, one as a follow-up to a homework assignment and the other as a midterm or final exam. During these presentations, we will describe components that are instrumental to creating meaningful oral assessments (e.g., design, facilitation, grading), the approach we took for each component, and recommendations we would offer.

There will be moments for reflection throughout each presentation. Attendees will be given opportunities to consider how they would apply each component to design a cohesive oral assessment for their own course. Participants will work in breakout groups to brainstorm about design components and provide feedback on each other’s assessment designs.

## Technology

No technology other than Zoom will be necessary.