Embedded Assessment: An Orientation
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Why Assess?

We assess in order to improve and enhance student outcomes.
We could list dozens of more reasons for multiple stakeholders.
But they would all point back to student outcomes.

Beyond Grades

Embedded assessment (EA) moves beyond grading.

Grades are necessary but not sufficient.
Standards vary and so GPAs lose meaning.
Grades are awarded for individual classes, not programs.

What Embedded Assessment Is … and Isn't

EA uses student work produced in classes.

The assessment may even be referred to as "student products."
The assessment is often the graded work of the course.
All students are represented in the process.

EA is classroom based, managed by faculty.

Faculty create the assessment tools.
Faculty audit the process and review the results.
Faculty use the results to make changes in curriculum.

EA links assessment with content.

The assessment genuinely reflects the course of study.
The assessment is aligned with the course objectives.
The assessment is similarly aligned with program purposes.

EA is *not* faculty evaluation.

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Advantages

EA provides a framework for discussion of programs.

EA generates reliable data through

    … agreed upon processes within the program;
    … review by instructors, which is often the best way;
    … review by assessing team, when that's the best way.

EA is criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced.

    How well did student X meet objectives?
    rather than...
    How well did student X do compared to the other students?

EA reveals patterns of strengths and weaknesses

    Is there an area that is consistently weak?
    By the same token…
    Is there an area that is consistently strong?

How to Begin the Framework

Review well-written examples both within and outside your discipline.

Look for format, language, dimensions that suit your style and standards.

Draft an initial framework and put it before your colleagues.

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Overview of Processes

Identify objectives

Inventory existing assignments (most efficient method)

Identify products that reflect mastery of objectives

Develop rubric or modify a published one

Collect products and mask identity if shared beyond the instructor

Identify assessor or team (faculty, students, professionals, alumni)

Pilot rubric (be open to revisions later, not just in pilot effort)

Calibrate: reach consensus on ratings, test for inter-rater reliability

Review products (ideal = all students' work)

Analyze results

Summarize findings and conclusions; note implications for changes in:

> curriculum
>
> pedagogy
>
> student support
>
> faculty support
>
> related staff functions

Make changes as needed

Re-assess as needed

Assessment produces feedback that drives program improvement.