

TIPS FOR GRADING AND ASSESSING STUDENT WORK

UHM TEACHING ASSISTANT TRAINING

ASSESSMENT SHOULD...

1. be more **formative** than summative
2. be **criterion-based** rather than norm-based
3. be **discipline-specific**
4. have a **positive effect** on students' motivation and self-efficacy

How hard
they work

The feeling that they can be successful if they try

1. Assessment should be more formative than summative.

Formative assessment:

- gathering information about student performance so you can constantly adjust the way you teach

AND

- giving students regular feedback on their performance so they can keep adjusting the way they learn.

Summative assessment:

Grading students' performance at the end of the course – how well did they do, according to the standards?

Formative Assessment's "Teaching-Learning Cycle"



Formative
assessment

1. **PLAN:** The week before the semester starts, and before every class
 - Create activities for the classroom that will help students achieve the course outcomes.
2. **ACT:** Every class, every week
 - Provide opportunities for students to learn and achieve the course outcomes.
3. **ANALYZE:** Every class, every week
 - Gather, analyze, and interpret evidence to see how well the students achieved the course outcomes.
4. **ADJUST:** Every class + at the semester end
 - Use the results of the "analyze" stage to make changes—to the course goals, to the materials, to the way you teach, etc. Changes can be at the classroom level or department level.

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- giving students regular feedback on their performance so they can keep adjusting the way they learn. – More on this in Point #4

2. Assessment should be criterion-based rather than norm-based.

Example of criterion-based assessment:

- A grade 11 history teacher creates a final test on 20th century history from WWI to the fall of the Soviet Union. If all students get 90% or higher, the teacher has succeeded.

Example of norm-based assessment:

- The makers of the SAT create a test that will distribute students along a bell curve, with a small number of students scoring high, a small number scoring low, and most getting a so-so score.
- If too many students score high, the test has failed to separate “good”, “average”, and “poor” students and the test-makers have failed.

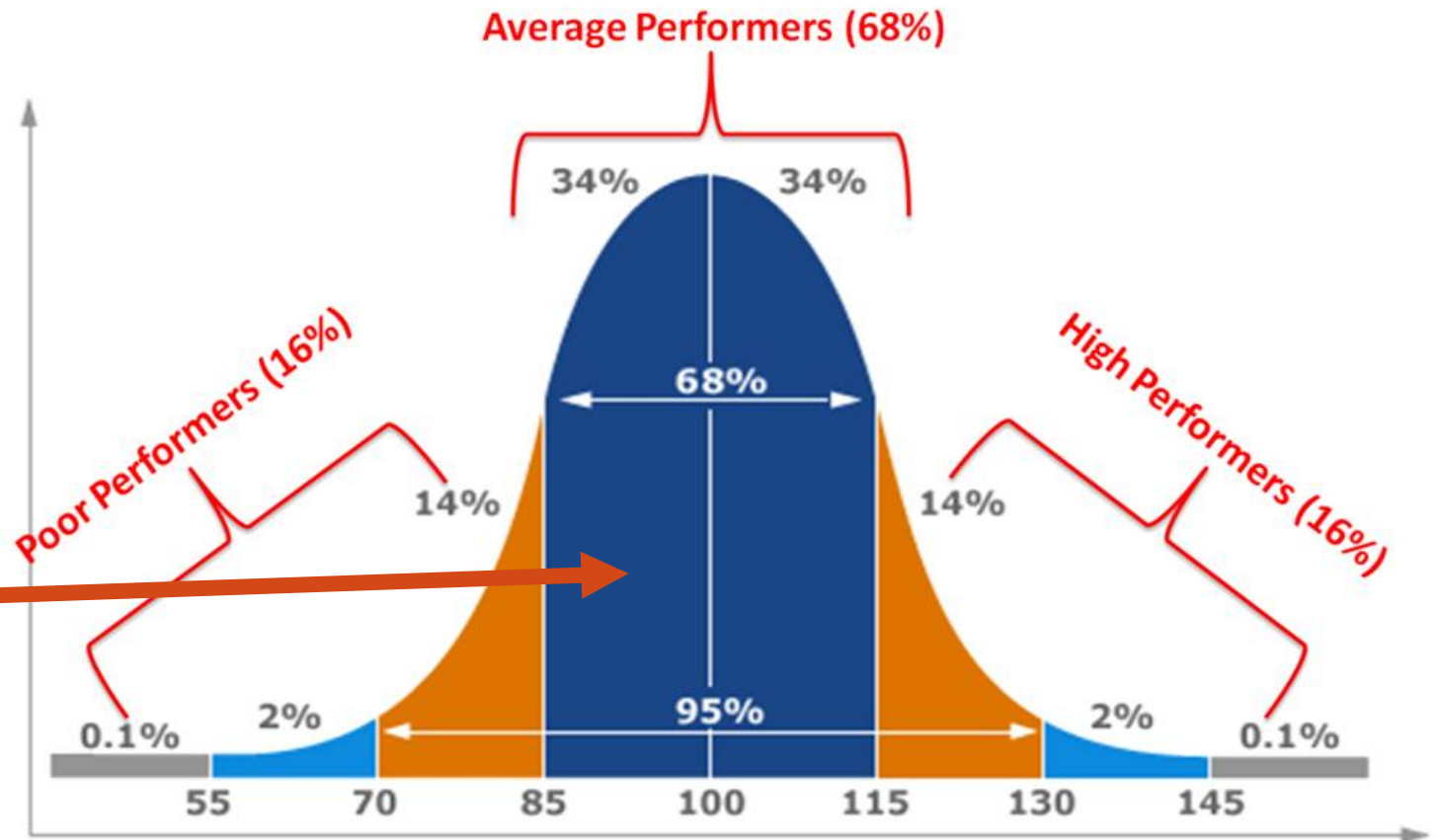
2. Assessment should be criterion-based rather than norm-based.

Criterion-based assessment:

Measures how well the student has achieved the *criteria*, or course outcomes. You want all students in your class to learn and do well.

Norm-based assessment:

A test which places the individual relative to others.



3. Assessment should be discipline-specific.

- Every discipline has forms of assessment that reflect the skills and knowledge that its people are expected to have.
- **Medical school** → exams; **Business majors** → presentations; **History majors** → papers; **Architecture majors** → portfolios
- Every discipline has some combination of tests, papers, presentations, etc., but consider what skills and knowledge are important in your discipline, and how best to assess them.
Consult with experienced instructors in your department.

4. Assessment should have a positive effect on students' motivation and self-efficacy.

- When you design the breakdown of course marks, you don't have to exactly copy how the previous instructor did it.
- **Copy what was good in their syllabus and improve it if necessary.** Consider how your grading will affect students' **motivation** (how hard they work) and **self-efficacy** (whether they feel they can succeed if they try).
 1. Will they do nothing for a long stretch and then suddenly put all their effort into one project? (Not recommended)
 2. Will they be encouraged to work together? (Should be encouraged)
 3. Will they feel that they will get good grades based on their effort each week, or on their existing skill level? (Focus on the first, not the second)

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Discuss in groups of 2-3 people

- Describe a course that you teach. What is your final? What small assignments will prepare students for it? How about day-to-day activities?
- How will all of these—final, small assignments, daily activities—reflect the assessment practices of your discipline?
- What could go wrong with these assignments? (It's hard to imagine if you're just thinking hypothetically, but try.) If that happened, how would you adjust the assignments and/or your approach to teaching?