

# Pathways Assessment

## Tips for Collecting High Quality Pathways Assessment Data

In order for Pathways instructors and the university to be able to utilize Pathways assessment data to enhance student learning and make improvements to the Pathways to General Education program, Pathways instructors are asked to meet the following guidelines when conducting Pathways assessment.

1. Measure the same student learning outcomes that were approved in the official Pathways course proposal.
2. Measure individual student performance on each Pathways student learning outcome independently from other Pathways student learning outcomes addressed in the course.
3. Explain how student competency was determined.
4. Use all three rating categories (i.e., Below Competent, Competent, and Above Competent) when determining student competency on Pathways student learning outcomes.
5. Report data for an appropriate number of students when submitting data for multiple course sections.

**Guideline #1: Measure the same student learning outcomes that were approved in the official Pathways course proposal.**

Instructors are responsible for assessing **ALL** of the Pathways concepts and student learning outcomes specified in the official course proposal. To obtain the official course proposal for a Pathways course, instructors may reach out to their department chair or course coordinator, or contact Jenni Gallagher in the Office of General Education at [jennigal@vt.edu](mailto:jennigal@vt.edu).

The Pathways concepts and student learning outcomes that have been approved for specific courses are included in the Office of General Education's searchable [Pathways table](#) (instructors will need to scroll to the right to see information on each concept). More information about each Pathways concept and its associated student learning outcomes is available in the [Pathways Concepts Flyer](#).

**Guideline #2: Measure individual student performance on each Pathways student learning outcome independently from other Pathways student learning outcomes addressed in the course.**

Each Pathways student learning outcome needs to be assessed individually. This means that if the same piece of student work (e.g., a project, paper, or exam) is used to measure multiple student learning outcomes, different components of the project/paper or a unique set of exam items will need to be used to assess each individual student learning outcome. Using an overall assignment grade or exam score as a measure of student performance for multiple student learning outcomes does not meet requirements for Pathways assessment.

Utilizing the [Pathways Rubrics](#) can help instructors assess each Pathways student learning outcome independently by outlining separate criteria for each student learning outcome in a concept area. For each student learning outcome that is measured, it is important that the student work selected is in strong alignment with the student learning outcome.

- For example, for an exam or quiz, one set of items (e.g., items 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10) that aligns closely with Reasoning in the Social Sciences student learning outcome #1 could be used to assess student performance related to Reasoning in the Social Sciences student learning outcome #1; a different set of items (e.g., items 2, 4, 9, 11, and 12) that aligns closely with Reasoning in the Social Sciences student learning outcome #3 could be used to assess student performance related to Reasoning in the Social Sciences student learning outcome #3; etc.

### Guideline #3: Explain how student competency was determined.

In the Assessment Criteria column of the Pathways Assessment Reporting Form, instructors should provide information on how they determined whether student performance was Below Competent, Competent, or Above Competent.

- For example, if an instructor utilized the [Pathways Rubric](#) for Ethical Reasoning to measure Ethical Reasoning student learning outcome #1, they could type “Used the Pathways Rubric for Ethical Reasoning, SLO #1” into the Assessment Criteria box.
- For exam or quiz questions, an instructor could enter in how many items students needed to answer correctly (or how many points they needed to earn) in order to be considered Below Competent, Competent, or Above Competent. (A specific example is included below in Guideline #4.)

You can download a sample [Pathways Assessment Reporting Form](#) which includes a few different examples of how an instructor might determine Below Competent, Competent, and Above Competent performance.

### Guideline #4: Use all three rating categories (i.e., Below Competent, Competent, and Above Competent) when determining student competency on Pathways student learning outcomes.

For Pathways assessment, instructors are asked to rate student performance using three different categories: Below Competent, Competent, and Above Competent. This means that for exam or quiz items that are marked either “correct” or “incorrect,” instructors will need to utilize **a set of items** (not just one) to measure a specific student learning outcome.

- For example, if 5 exam or quiz items were used to measure a particular student learning outcome, then answering 3 or fewer items correctly could be considered Below Competent; answering 4 items correctly could be considered Competent; and answering all 5 items correctly could be considered Above Competent.
- For an assignment assessed with a [Pathways Rubric](#), all three rating categories should be considered by the instructor when assessing student competence.

You can download a sample [Pathways Assessment Reporting Form](#) in which an instructor has considered all three rating categories for each student learning outcome.

**Guideline #5: Report data for an appropriate number of students when submitting data for multiple course sections.**

While instructors may choose to report results from a sample of students from their Pathways courses, the minimum sample is 20 randomly selected students **per course section**. Thus, if an instructor submits data for two different course sections in one reporting form, the minimum number of students we would expect to receive data from is 40 students.

Please note that there is an alternative data collection and reporting option for large, multi-section courses that use the **exact same Pathways assessment measures** across sections. For these courses, departments may choose to collect Pathways assessment data from a larger random sample of students pulled from the entire population of students enrolled in the course (i.e., across the multiple course sections) rather than 20 students per course section.

More detailed information about sampling for Pathways assessment, including suggested sample sizes for large courses, is available in the [Pathways Assessment Sampling FAQs](#) flyer.