



Dive Deeper into Assessment Development

Top 9 Tips to Remember When Creating Test Plans and Blueprints

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A solid test plan and detailed blueprint are the foundation that can lead to a quality assessment. Review the ten tips below to help you with the test plan and blueprint creation process.

A **test plan** outlines the subjects that will be assessed, as well as the accreditation standards, learning outcomes, and other documents that will be utilized during test creation.

A **blueprint** contains the specifics for each individual test; it includes information like which standards or outcomes will be tested and how many items will be included to assess each standard or outcome, among other pieces of information.

A strong assessment development process should include the tips in this article so you can be successful during test planning and blueprint creation. As you begin this process, it's important to identify the human resources your program, department, or institution has and evaluate their level of expertise to determine whether or not training, additional support, or both will be needed.

3 Test Plan Tips

1. Create a solid test plan.

Know what subjects will be assessed. Determine the set of accreditation standards, learning outcomes, course syllabi, and other documents that will be used to create your test. These standards and outcomes are what students will be assessed on and they need to be clearly documented.

2. Establish the rules of the test administration.

How much time will be allowed for students to complete the test? When will the test be administered? Will the test be administered using paper/pencil forms, online, or both? Is the test take-home?

3. Determine the item types.

Identify the item types (multiple choice/single response, multiple choice/multiple response, short response, extended response, etc.) that will be included on the test.

6 Blueprint Tips

1. **Identify the accreditation standards, course objectives, or learning outcomes to assess.**

List the standards, objectives, and outcomes that will be assessed down the left margin of the blueprint chart.

2. **Clarify the part of the standard/objective/outcome to be assessed.**

Identify the *specific* part of the standard/objective/outcome you plan to assess. For example, an accreditation standard may read “Students must demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively with a range of audiences.” Obviously, trying to create an item to test all of that at once would not be appropriate. So you would unpack the standard into a testable segment: “MC: When writing for a technology consumer (end user), which of the following should you AVOID? A. Short sentences. B. Illustrations. **C. Jargon.** D. Headings.”

3. **Assign the number of items per standard/objective/outcome.**

Determine how many items will assess each standard/objective/outcome. Remember, you need to consider the total number of items on your test. Also, consider the weighting or importance of certain standards over others. You may not be able to create items for every standard if you need to stay within a preset length for the test.

4. **Assign an item type.**

Indicate the item type that will be used to assess each standard/objective/outcome. If two or more item types will be used to assess a topic, be sure to indicate this on the blueprint.

5. **Review the blueprint against the test plan.**

Compare the blueprint, total items, standards/objectives/outcomes to be included, etc. to the test plan in order to make sure that it is in line.

6. **Maintain the blueprint.**

After administration and prior to the next term, review the blueprint against accreditation standards, course syllabi, or identified learning outcomes materials to make sure no revisions need to be made to the blueprint.

At the completion of these steps, you should be ready to begin creating or selecting content. Prior to doing so, you might consider creating or selecting model items. These items will dictate the style and format you want all items to follow. Doing so will help maintain a consistent look and feel across the test(s).

Sample Blueprint

The following illustrates a sample blueprint. The callouts on the blueprint correspond to the tips discussed above (not all tips are illustrated):

1 Standard/ Objective/ Outcome Reference	Standard Text	2 Item Focus	3 No. of Items	4 Item Type
ABET Section IV	Students must demonstrate an ability to function effectively on teams to accomplish a common goal	Given a team scenario, address how you would respond in that scenario	2	ER
ABET Section V	Students must demonstrate an understanding of professional, ethical, legal, security and social issues and responsibilities	Answer a question about a specific ethical dilemma	1	SR
ABET Section VI	Students must demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively with a range of audiences	Given a specified audience, identify tactics for effective communication	3	MC/MR
ENG 180W Syllabus Section A	Students must identify human cognition concepts such as input modes, attentive vs pre-attentive, schemas, interference, experience.	Identify the correct input mode	2	MC/MR
ENG 180W Syllabus Section B	Students must understand the construction of product requirements.	Complete provided sentence with correct verb construction	1	SR

How can Scantron help?

Scantron has an extensive track record of providing assessment services to help thousands of customers succeed in their assessment programs. We've helped institutions with workshops and consulting on a variety of assessment topics and content development processes, as well as working with customers to provide high-quality content. We've validated educator assessment efforts and demonstrated positive impact to student learning with research studies.

One critical challenge is to develop an assessment plan that fulfills all of the needs of your program, department, or institution. This process might include developing a plan for custom assessments that includes creating an assessment blueprint and effective test items to accurately measure student achievement. It might also include aligning existing items to a particular set of learning outcomes or accreditation standards. Scantron can develop these deliverables using a proven assessment development process. If you want to play a more active role in assessment creation, Scantron can assist with a variety of professional development activities that will instruct your staff in how to



create test blueprints and develop assessment items. Scantron's psychometric and research team can help provide objective research demonstrating that your assessments are supporting accreditation and institutional goals.

Whatever the assessment assistance you need, Scantron has the products, tools, and expertise to help you ensure that you have the right program for your students. Our comprehensive suite of assessment services helps you make the most out of your assessment development process. Whether you want to do it yourself with in-house experts and just need a little support or whether you want a partner to guide you through the process, Scantron can meet you where you are and help get you to where you want to be.

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