

Direct and Indirect Measures

Choosing evidence that fits the outcome

Every assessment needs evidence. Berea's report template asks you to describe at least one measure for each outcome in **Part B**. The review rubric (Criterion 2) looks for at least one solid **direct** measure that's well aligned to the outcome. The strongest reports pair it with an indirect measure where that makes sense.

What's the difference?

	Direct measures	Indirect measures
What they show	What people can actually do or what actually happened	What people think, report, or believe about it
Typical sources	Student work scored with a rubric, exam items tied to an outcome, performance records	Surveys, focus groups, interviews, self-ratings, participation counts
Strength	Strong evidence that an outcome was (or wasn't) achieved	Explains why, adds context, and captures experiences direct measures miss
Limit	Takes planning and scoring time	Not enough on its own to show learning

Examples by area

Academic departments

- **Direct:** capstone papers, senior projects, juried performances, or portfolios scored with a rubric; embedded exam questions mapped to an SLO; licensure or certification pass rates
- **Indirect:** senior exit surveys, alumni surveys, student self-assessments, course evaluation items, focus groups

Academic and student support services

- **Direct:** pre/post tests on workshop content, rubric-scored products (résumés, research logs), observed demonstrations of a skill
- **Indirect:** post-event surveys, satisfaction ratings, usage and participation data, student reflections

Administrative offices

For administrative outcomes, "direct" usually means records of the result itself:

- **Direct:** turnaround times from a ticketing system, error or audit rates, completion dates against deadlines, cost per transaction
- **Indirect:** user satisfaction surveys, feedback forms, interviews with the people the office serves

Grades aren't usually enough

A course grade blends many things, including attendance, participation, and late penalties, across several outcomes. It rarely tells you how well students met one specific outcome. A rubric score on a single assignment that targets the outcome is far more useful.

Before you choose a measure

1. Does the measure produce evidence of **this outcome** specifically?
2. Is the evidence something you already collect? Embedded assignments save time.
3. Who will score or gather it, and when?
4. How many students, users, or records will it cover? (See the sampling handout.)
5. What target will tell you the outcome has been met?

Created in collaboration with Claude AI.