

## Chapter 1 Beliefs and practices in the evaluation of learning

“For several years now, many researchers have put forth theories to explain how evaluation practices are used in the classroom. These theories tend to show that beliefs and attitudes are among the principal determinants of evaluation practices and those beliefs underlying attitudes are also behind personal evaluation practices.

When our beliefs have been the basis of our actions and attitudes for a long time, if they have provided satisfaction, answered our questions, directed and stabilized us ... it will be difficult for us to want to change them.

The more anchored the beliefs, the more a person tends to use cognitive strategies to protect them. This is the behaviour of individuals who want their beliefs to survive, even when it has been shown that they are false. Therefore, if we want to improve a teacher’s competency relative to the evaluation of learning, we must take into account their current practices and the way they do things. It is also necessary to understand the beliefs underlying their practices.”<sup>1</sup>

Two sensitization activities introduce this topic:

**Activity 1.1:** “Evaluation practices” are, to some extent, a diagnostic evaluation that allows participants to express their concepts and perceptions concerning evaluation practices, and then to validate or invalidate them by comparing them to those of other participants.

**Activity 1.2:** “My beliefs concerning the evaluation of learning” allow us to position our beliefs and practices relative to the evaluation of learning.

As a complement to activity 1.2, the text “Student perceptions and expectations” (complementary document 1) discusses the way students experience the evaluation of learning, and broaches the question of the impact the evaluation of learning is likely to have on the student’s life:

- within the academic framework (their vision of the academic institution, evaluations and study behaviours);
- within the framework of academic and professional orientation (their aspirations, studies and career path); and
- relative to their expectations of evaluations, which in turn tells us something about their conceptions.

Lastly, learning tool 1.D documents the results of research on the “Beliefs and practices in the evaluation of learning” and is instrumental in clarifying the beliefs behind our practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from Robert Howe and Louise Ménard, “Croyances et pratiques en évaluation des apprentissages”, *Pédagogie collégiale*, vol. 7, n° 3, March 1994, p. 21-27.

**Chapter synopsis:**

**Activity 1:**

**Beliefs and practices in the evaluation of learning**

Activity 1.1:

Evaluation practices

Activity 1.2:

My beliefs concerning the evaluation of learning

**Learning tools:**

Learning tool 1.A:

Evaluation practices

Learning tool 1.B:

The evaluation of learning based on the new paradigm

Learning tool 1.C:

Self-evaluation of beliefs relative the evaluation of learning

Learning tool 1.D:

“Beliefs and practices in the evaluation of learning”

**Complementary documents:**

Complementary document 1:

Student perceptions and expectations

Reference:

Results of research on “Beliefs and practices in the evaluation of learning”

## Activity 1.1

<b>Heading</b>	<b>Evaluation practices</b>
<b>Objective</b>	To identify prior knowledge concerning evaluation practices. To express concepts and identify evaluation practices used by colleagues.
<b>Description</b>	This activity is to some extent a diagnostic evaluation that allows participants to express their concepts and perceptions relative to evaluation practices and then to validate or invalidate them by comparing them to those of other participants.
<b>Unfolding</b>	A. Participants complete a questionnaire on their own (Learning tool 1.A). Approximately twenty minutes. B. The resource person compiles the answers to question IV in order to get a global picture. C. Team discussions, if appropriate number of participants; if not, group discussions for all questions. For each question, the resource person may present the table of compiled answers. D. The resource person presents an overview of general evaluation practices. E. The resource person introduces the ‘new’ characteristics in the evaluation of learning by distributing learning tool 1.B to each participant.
<b>Moderator’s role</b>	To create a climate favourable for reflection. To encourage participants to ask questions. To accept answers without judgment. To support the interaction of all participants. To frequently summarize what has been said; this allows individuals to recall and identify their concepts and practices more readily.
<b>Participants’ role</b>	To openly express their concepts. To interact with other participants. To examine past experiences to identify the concepts behind their evaluation practices. To make a personal diagnosis on their evaluation practices.
<b>Pedagogical material</b>	Learning tool 1.A: Evaluation practices Learning tool 1.B: The evaluation of learning based on the new paradigm Learning tool 1.C: Self-evaluation of beliefs relative the evaluation of learning Learning tool 1.D: “Beliefs and practices in the evaluation of learning”
<b>Complementary document</b>	Complementary document 1: Student perceptions and expectations.
<b>Approximate duration</b>	3 hours

## Activity 1.2

<b>Heading</b>	<b>My beliefs concerning the evaluation of learning</b>
<b>Objective</b>	To identify personal beliefs relative to the evaluation of learning practices.
<b>Description</b>	<p>Beliefs and attitudes are among the principal determinants of evaluation practices; in fact, beliefs determine attitudes and specific practices result from these.</p> <p>This activity is designed primarily to identify beliefs and validate them through exchanges with colleagues and within the framework of the new evaluation paradigm.</p>
<b>Unfolding</b>	<p>A. Each participant completes a questionnaire “Self-evaluation of beliefs in the evaluation of learning” (Learning tool 1.C). It is preferable to have the questionnaire completed prior to the initial activity. This makes it possible to produce a summary of answers.</p> <p>B. Summary and pooling of evaluation practices category by category.</p> <p>C. Beliefs are validated initially during peer interaction. Finally, personal results are compared to the research results provided in learning tool 1.D.</p> <p>D. At the end of the session, participants are invited to assess their perceptions and attitudes in light of their personal beliefs.</p>
<b>Moderator’s role</b>	<p>To create a climate favourable for reflection.</p> <p>To encourage participants to ask questions.</p> <p>To accept answers without judgment.</p>
<b>Participants’ role</b>	<p>To express their beliefs openly.</p> <p>To interact with other participants.</p> <p>To identify what their personal practices reveal about their beliefs.</p>
<b>Pedagogical material</b>	<p>Learning tool 1.C: Self-evaluation of beliefs relative to the evaluation of learning</p> <p>Learning tool 1.D: Results of research on “Beliefs and practices in the evaluation of learning”</p>
<b>Complementary document</b>	<p>Complementary document 1: Student perceptions and expectations.</p> <p>Although the following article is not included in the learning kit, it discusses the results of research and can be beneficial for readers: Robert Howe and Louise Ménard, “Croyances et pratiques en évaluation des apprentissages”, <i>Pédagogie collégiale</i>, vol. 7, n° 3, March 1994, p. 21-27.</p>
<b>Approximate duration</b>	3 hours

## Learning tool 1. A

### Evaluation practices<sup>2</sup>

#### A few clues on where to start

*Responses should be spontaneous. As the title suggests, the goal is to collect data that will help us position ourselves relative to questions on evaluation practices and to validate our reflections with colleagues.*

- I. Are you completely satisfied with the way in which you evaluate the learning in your courses?

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If you are dissatisfied, indicate the kind of dissatisfaction you are experiencing and its cause.

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- II. Do you believe that the evaluation of learning is done in an equivalent manner by different professors who teach the same course? \_\_\_\_\_

On what do you base this belief?

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- III. Does the evaluation of learning in a course centered on the development of competencies imply major changes in evaluation practices? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the similarities and the differences? Name some new practices.

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<sup>2</sup> Translated from Cécile D'Amour, *Les pratiques d'évaluation dans le département de chimie en fonction des compétences*, Activité de perfectionnement, Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne, May 1995.

IV. Indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements by placing a checkmark in the appropriate box. Make notes on your comments for the group discussion.

Statements	disagree	to be discussed	agree completely
1. The evaluation of learning is a process that must be transparent, precise and hold no surprises.			
2. The evaluation of learning must relate only to objectives that are explicitly defined and respected.			
3. Student evaluation results in a classroom should follow the normal curve.			
4. Within our courses, some learning can be so important that non-mastery of that subject matter leads to automatic failure.			
5. Student attendance should not have an effect on the grade given for any evaluation or for the entire course.			
6. The objectives and evaluation requirements should be identical for all class groups for a given course, and evaluation methods should be equivalent.			
7. Every course should end with a final exam to verify that essential learning has been mastered.			
8. Passing the final exam should be a prerequisite for successful completion of the course.			
9. The final grade assigned must reflect as accurately as possible the level of mastery of learning at end of course, and must mean the same thing for all students.			
10. Activities relative to formative evaluations are of key importance.			
11. There should be very few summative evaluations. These evaluations must apply to the course in its entirety or to complete course segments.			
12. When an evaluation has been administered to a group of students, teachers must take the necessary means to evaluate the performance of each individual student; they cannot attribute an identical grade to all based on the quality of a collective production.			
13. The requirements of an evaluation should be adjusted from one class to another, based on group ability.			
14. The final grade assigned to a student who has completed the course cannot simply be the sum of grades assigned for various exams throughout the course; the professor is the one who must decide the student's final grade.			

V. The purpose of this question is to establish the degree of familiarity with current terminology in the evaluation of learning.

In the following table, identify all the components of the second column that belong to each of the evaluation types shown in the first column:

1: \_\_\_\_\_

2: \_\_\_\_\_

3: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The diagnostic evaluation ...	A. Assesses the degree of achievement of learning at the end of the process.
2. The formative evaluation ...	B. Is used to identify adjustments required in the learning or teaching process.
3. The summative evaluation ...	C. Should be frequent.
	D. Belongs at the end of a course or after a pivotal or complete section.
	E. Is particularly important at the start of the course.
	F. Is used to justify advancement, equivalency and certification.
	G. Should be integrated into teaching and learning processes.
	H. Helps to adjust the course to students' level of acquisitions upon entry.

VI. In the table below, match a component in the first column to one of the components in the second column:

1: \_\_\_\_\_

2: \_\_\_\_\_

The evaluation is said to be	... established by comparing a student's level of learning at a given time with
1. criteria-based when ...	a. a prior level of learning
2. normative when...	b. other students' level of learning
	c. a pre-established threshold of success

VII. What is the best method for evaluating the level of mastery of a competency?

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## Learning tool 1.B

### The evaluation of learning based on the new paradigm<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation of learning at college level is now driven by the new paradigm. It must be carried out with professionalism and within a program perspective.

#### The evaluation of learning based on the new paradigm

We are recommending that the evaluation of learning be re-examined within the perspective of the new paradigm, because it seems to adequately resolve the problem elements we have identified:

- the “professionalization” of the teacher’s role;
- the changing nature of learning objectives;
- increased requirements relative to the quality and validity of the evaluation of learning;
- emerging postulates of the new epistemology, psychology of learning and education sciences; etc.

We will frequently see traces of these four perspectives in the new paradigm.

The evaluation we propose has the following characteristics:

**1. An evaluation adapted to a competency-based approach**, relating therefore to complex multidimensional, integrated and transferable learning that from *a methodological perspective*, implies an evaluation that is:

- global, multidimensional,
- contextualized,
- a true opportunity for students to demonstrate their competency, while ensuring standardization of the conditions for success and evaluation criteria.

**2. An evaluation that truly serves the purpose of learning**, an evaluation integrated into teaching and learning processes: to guide, support, assist students in assuming responsibility for their learning and, finally, determine what learning has been acquired;

*from a methodological perspective*, it implies an evaluation that:

- is dynamic rather than static, combines snapshots of specific moments to create a portrait of the learning taking place, focuses not only on the results but also on the process used to achieve them;
- is conducted within a didactic framework and not exclusively docimological;
- is used to create benchmarks and make judgments as well as for diagnostic purposes;
- is readily adapted to the pursuit of learning;
- takes into account not only the cognitive but also the affective dimension;
- uses a diversity of evaluation methods (teacher who guides the learning, other teachers, students, evaluators outside the academic environment);

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<sup>3</sup> Translated from Cécile D’Amour and Groupe de travail à Performa, *L’évaluation des apprentissages au collégial from the program course, Fascicule II. Cadre de référence. Première partie: Les questions préalables*, First edition [s. l.], April 1996, p. 15-18.

- does not make a final judgment on the acquired learning until the end of the learning period;

3. **An evaluation based on criteria** where judgment is based on the achievement of learning objectives rather than the classification of students in relation to others (normative evaluation).

*from a methodological perspective*, it implies an evaluation that:

- is focused on validity rather than discrimination;
- uses qualitative approaches and descriptive methods;

4. **A forward-thinking methodology** that upgrades the role of professional judgment and recognizes student responsibility, a methodology that is adapted and thorough:

adapted

- to the first three identified characteristics;
- to the purpose of the evaluation in question: supports the learning process or the learning certificate;

thorough, which implies

- that judgment can assume its rightful role;
- that the methods and learning tools (scales, calculations, etc.) are used in conformity with their conditions of use.

### **An evaluation of learning carried out in a professional manner**

Like other components of teaching, the evaluation of learning must be carried out in a professional manner, that is to say, with serious minded and in good faith. It must also be done responsibly, **relying on a specific competency** in the field (one that is acquired or will be acquired, maintained and developed), **using existing margins of flexibility** to ensure the most appropriate methods are used for each individual learning situation, ensuring a continued evolution of evaluation practices, **respecting ethical principles, agreeing to accountability** for actions taken. With regard to the evaluation of learning, assuming full responsibility means agreeing to **make an evaluation judgment**: we believe this is one of the major issues at stake in changing current practices.

### **An evaluation of learning carried out within a program perspective**

To increase the odds of students completing their study program with the desired “profile”, the evaluation of learning, like other **interventions**, must be conceived and carried out within a program perspective.

What exactly does this mean?

- The methods of evaluation for all courses should be **coherent and articulated** to motivate students to concentrate their efforts on learning and integrate this learning rather than compartmentalize it.
- Within the framework of each individual course, evaluation activities should **support learning** so that the course effectively contributes what it is supposed to contribute to the training and to ensure that the learning acquired cumulatively throughout the courses is integrated as effectively as possible.
- The results of the summative evaluation carried out in each course should **accurately reflect the level of learning mastered** by each student, so that in subsequent courses, we can count on a certain basis of acquired knowledge.

- In planning the evaluations of learning — as with the planning of learning interventions — objectives that require the contribution of several courses should be given **particular attention**: formative and summative evaluations should be designed to encompass all the courses that contribute to achieving these objectives and their final certification.
- Furthermore, evaluation methods should be based on **the students' level of development**, keeping in mind that this level will increase as students advance in the program; evaluations must maximize the development of **self-evaluation and metacognitive skills**.

In summary, overall evaluation interventions should contribute to the integration of learning throughout the program.

The comprehensive evaluation at the end of the program, could then officially attest to the degree of mastery and level of integration of essential learning for each student at the end of the learning process.

For discussion purposes, use the chart on the next page.

## Chart

Perspectives for change	Statements with which you agree; that represent a particular difficulty for you; or that cause you to question your practices
— An evaluation adapted to a competency-based approach	
— An evaluation that truly serves the purpose of learning	
— A criteria-based evaluation	
— A forward-thinking methodology that upgrades the role of professional judgment and recognizes student accountability	
— An evaluation carried out in a professional manner	
— An evaluation carried out within a program perspective	

## Learning tool 1.C

### Self-evaluation of beliefs relative to the evaluation of learning<sup>4</sup>

Beliefs, as described by Howe and Ménard (1993), have a determining influence on attitudes and behaviours. It is essential that we understand our beliefs explicitly if we wish to modify and improve our practices as regards the evaluation of learning. The exercise below<sup>5</sup> is intended to highlight some of our beliefs and allow us to measure them against the new paradigm in the evaluation of learning.

**For each statement, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement:**

- AC** Agree completely
- A** Agree
- D** Disagree
- DC** Disagree completely
- NC** No comment

Compare your answers with the results obtained by Howe and Ménard in their research among college professors. Please refer to learning tool 1.D. The classification categories correspond to the six fields of competency evaluations described by Stiggins (1991)<sup>6</sup>. The authors comment on the choices they made subsequent to their research:

“Within the framework of research in progress, Louise Ménard and I had to find a system that permitted a classification by categories of many statements regarding beliefs and practices in assessing learning in the classroom. Documentation on the subject revealed several categorizations that were adaptable to the evaluation of beliefs and practices. We chose four approaches (Fontaine, 1988; Stiggins, 1991; American Federation of Teachers, 1990 and Schafer, 1991) and studied them, our goal being to eventually adopt one of these systems.

In the end, we selected the typology of competency fields recommended by Stiggins (1991) because, with six key components, it enabled us to answer the three primary questions of our research: the “why”, “what” and “how” of assessment in the classroom. The categories identified by Stiggins within a competency-based evaluation of learning, appear not only pertinent to the goal of our research but also in the description of knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers should develop in the field of measurement and assessment in the classroom. In my opinion, these six fields of competency represent a valid structure to analyze assessment practices of teachers in the classroom and to guide the planning of professional development activities.”

The typology (on the following page) is presented because of its value and usefulness in research and in teacher education. A detailed description of these categories can be found in the above-mentioned research.

<sup>4</sup> Translated from Robert Howe and Louise Ménard, *Croyances et pratiques en évaluation des apprentissages*, PAREA research, Laval, Collège Montmorency, 404, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Translated from an activity designed by Germain Perreault, Collège de la Région de l'Amiante and Hélène Servais, Cégep Limoilou.

<sup>6</sup> R. J. Stiggins, “Relevant classroom evaluation training for teachers”, *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, vol. 10, n° 1, March 1991, p. 7-12.

### **The categories identified by Stiggins**

In “Relevant Classroom Assessment Training for Teachers”, Stiggins (1991) suggests a description of the competency domains for teachers relative to the measurement and evaluation of learning in the classroom. These domains form an excellent structure consisting of six categories that facilitate the analysis of practices and beliefs in assessment and also orient the planning of professional development activities.

#### **The use of assessment in the classroom**

Based on Stiggins’ observations, teachers use evaluation of learning to respond to three needs: a) to support decisions, b) to guide teaching and learning, c) to manage the classroom. To use the evaluation of learning competently within the framework of these separate needs, teachers must be assessment-literate and understand the role of assessment as well as its educational and pedagogical impact on teaching and learning.

##### **— Assessment objectives**

Stiggins’ second category deals with the specific areas targeted by assessments. The areas generally evaluated by teachers are: knowledge of subject matter, skills, higher cognitive skills and attitudes. Teachers must clearly understand what they seek to assess and use appropriate assessment methods.

##### **— Assessment qualities**

The characteristics of a sound assessment vary according to the context. However, some quality standards are common to all assessment situations: the connection between the field to be evaluated and the measurement tool used; control over margins of error in measurement; the reconciliation between targeted learning and assessment results; information with meaning that is clear to both students and teachers.

##### **— Assessment tools**

According to Stiggins, teachers use at least three types of assessment tools in the classroom: learning tools like “paper and pencil”, observation and verbal exchanges.

These assessment tools can be used correctly or incorrectly. Each method has distinct advantages and disadvantages and can be more or less appropriate for a particular context. Teachers must know how to make assessments while recognizing that the rules of validity may vary from one assessment to another.

##### **— The interpersonal dimension of assessments**

A classroom assessment implies highly complex interpersonal exchanges. The assessment is rarely scientific, objective and detached in this type of environment. On the contrary, it is linked to all kinds of variables (motivation, concepts of teaching and learning, emotional aspect of the assessment, etc.) that come into play before, during, and after the actual assessment.

##### **— Feedback in the classroom**

Teachers provide feedback on assessment results on a continuous basis. According to Stiggins, teachers must assign grades that are pertinent so that the feedback is without ambiguity. It is also important that all aspects of the feedback correspond specifically to the objectives, be given in a timely manner, and be meaningful for the student.

**Category 1: Classroom evaluation practices (**

		AC	A	D	DC	NC
1.	The best way to motivate students is to assign grades to their work.					
2.	Being evaluated motivates students to devote more energy to their studies.					
3.	Evaluations must be frequent to help students identify weaknesses quickly.					
4.	Evaluations are used to identify student strengths and weaknesses relative to the learning to be acquired.					
5.	Evaluations must be used to classify students relative to each other rather than identify learning they have acquired.					
6.	If I could, I would never give examinations.					
7.	A grade should not be assigned in a formative examination.					
8.	Evaluation is an integral part of instruction.					
9.	Evaluations must be frequent so that student's work is consistent.					
10.	Evaluation practices at college level often favour short-term versus long-term learning.					
11.	Evaluations are not learning activities.					
12.	I evaluate the academic output of my students to meet college administrative requirements.					
13.	All work done by the student in and outside of the classroom deserves to be evaluated and graded.					

**Comments**

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**Category 2: Evaluation targets**

		<b>AC</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DC</b>	<b>NC</b>
1.	It is practically impossible to get evaluation results that accurately reflect student learning.					
In determining the final grade, it is important to evaluate each of the following items (questions 2 to 6):						
2.	Attitudes (personal conduct)					
3.	Skills, procedures					
4.	Knowledge (learning)					
5.	Critical thinking					
6.	Skills in analysis, synthesis and problem solving					
7.	To evaluate is to prepare exams on everything seen and done in the classroom.					
8.	It is unfair to ask questions that go beyond the subject matter taught.					
9.	It is not necessary for the evaluation to cover all aspects of the subject matter.					
10.	It is impossible at college level to evaluate both the understanding students have of the subject matter and the knowledge they have acquired of it.					
11.	It is more important to evaluate the understanding students have of the subject matter than their knowledge of the facts.					
12.	At college level, higher cognitive skills (analysis, synthesis, problem solving) are the areas that should be evaluated.					

**Comments**

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**Category 3: Evaluation qualities**

		AC	A	D	DC	NC
1.	After an examination, it is useful to analyze my questions to gauge their value.					
2.	It is advisable to have examination questions checked by a second specialist in the subject matter.					
3.	All students should be evaluated using the same criteria.					
4.	It is practically impossible to achieve evaluation results that accurately reflect student learning.					
5.	It is necessary to evaluate frequently to obtain reliable results.					
6.	My examinations are effective and tell me what I want to know.					
7.	When I evaluate the achievement of course objectives, I am on solid ground.					
8.	It is sometimes necessary to modify the evaluation criteria during grading.					
9.	It is necessary to establish evaluation criteria before the start of grading.					
10.	It is impossible to establish evaluation criteria before the start of grading.					
Different criteria should be used for different groups of students:						
11.	The more gifted should work harder to earn a higher grade.					
12.	We should be less demanding of the less gifted so that they may achieve higher grades.					
13.	The students who maximize their skills and aptitudes should receive higher grades than those who do not.					

**Comments**

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**Category 4: Evaluation tools**

		<b>AC</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DC</b>	<b>NC</b>
1.	Only questions requiring development can measure essential learning.					
2.	All examinations should allow access to textbooks.					
3.	All evaluations should be self-evaluations.					
4.	Multiple-choice questions favour the evaluation of memorized knowledge.					
5.	Assessment exams at end of sessions should be obligatory in almost all disciplines.					
6.	Multiple-choice questions can measure the understanding of the subject matter.					
7.	It is almost impossible to write examination questions that measure higher cognitive skills.					
8.	Only research work or the realization of a project can truly measure the level of achievement of course objectives.					
9.	Examinations with multiple choice questions measure essential learning better than questions requiring development.					

**Comments**

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**Category 5: Interpersonal dimensions of evaluation**

		<b>AC</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DC</b>	<b>NC</b>
	It is important not to raise or lower student grades as a means of encouragement or to motivate them to work harder.					
The final report card grade could be increased as a reward for:						
1.	the student's active participation in the classroom.					
2.	the effort shown.					
3.	student progress throughout the entire session (evolution).					
4.	student creativity.					
5.	student attendance at all courses.					
6.	Knowing a respondent's identity can influence me when grading developmental questions					
The final report card grade could be lowered as a penalty for:						
7.	non-justified absences.					
8.	absence or lack of effort on student's part.					
9.	lack of discipline in class.					
10.	plagiarism.					

**Comments**

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**Category 6: Feedback and grading**

		AC	A	D	DC	NC
1.	Professors should provide written comments on work of students.					
2.	The majority of students read the comments written by their professors.					
3.	The average class grade is a direct reflection on the quality of the instruction.					
4.	In a group, the distribution of the grades should follow the normal Bell curve: Only a small percentage of students should have very high or very low grades.					
5.	At my college, the criteria for success or failure are generally: (choose one) a. much too lenient, generous b. too demanding c. adequate					
6.	Grading is a handicap to instruction.					
7.	Some professors evaluate and assign grades because they have to and, consequently, do so quickly to get it over with.					
8.	The grades I assign are not really indicative of what my students have learned.					
9.	When grading, the good or bad results obtained by the student in evaluations at the beginning of the instruction must be taken into account.					
10.	It is necessary to avoid performing evaluations that involve the teacher's personal judgment and subjectivity.					
11.	Grades should reflect the number or percentage of objectives achieved by my students.					

**Comments**

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## Learning tool 1.D

### “Beliefs and practices in the evaluation of learning”<sup>7</sup>

#### Summary table of research results<sup>8</sup>

The evaluation of learning is an integral part of what teachers do. It is of key importance in improving the quality of learning (and teaching) during the training and in validating the quality of learning at the end of the training.

Professors in colleges have always been responsible for the evaluation of learning. This responsibility is a visible and credible demonstration of the professional competency of professors, and this competency, far from being definitively acquired and static, must be the object of pertinent and regular updates.

The research of Howe and Ménard (1994) highlighted inadequate practices as well as erroneous thinking regarding the evaluation of learning. To identify these, certain methods are suggested whose implementation rests on an understanding of beliefs and practices. For this purpose, the questionnaire can be used locally as a research tool to identify the practices and beliefs of the entire body of teachers at a college or within a given department. The authors list a number of main objectives for training and/or professional development:

- to grasp concepts better, in particular the concept of formative evaluation;
- to support the greater use of formative evaluations;
- to question the use of evaluations as a means of managing a class and the validity of grade adjustments;
- to understand better the various tools than can be used to evaluate learning;
- to develop validation practices and professional development in the field of evaluation tools.

The authors conclude, “The evaluation of learning is not a panacea but many authors speak of the tremendous influence that evaluation practices and beliefs have on all aspects of teaching and learning” (Stiggins, 1992; Crooks, 1988). Any intervention that improves the ability to evaluate will lead to better quality instruction and learning.

The following table documents a summary of Howe and Ménard’s research and shows the distribution of answers given by teachers relative to their beliefs on the evaluation of learning.

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<sup>7</sup> Translated from Robert Howe and Louise Ménard, “Croyances et pratiques en évaluation des apprentissages”, *Pédagogie collégiale*, vol. 7, n° 3, March 1994, p. 21-27.x

<sup>8</sup> For a presentation of research results, please refer to: Robert Howe and Louise Ménard, *Croyances et pratiques en évaluation des apprentissages*, recherche PAREA, Laval, Collège Montmorency, 1993, 404 p.

## Summary answers given by teachers relative to their beliefs on the evaluation of learning

Table 1: Distribution of responses to statements on beliefs relative to:

### Category 1: The use of evaluations in the classroom (abridged)

		AC	A	D	DC	NC
To guide decisions						
1.	The evaluation is used to identify student strengths and weaknesses.	43 %	52 %	4 %	0 %	1 %
2.	Following the evaluation, the teachers should be willing to readjust course contents.	32 %	44 %	15 %	4 %	4 %
3.	If I had a choice, I would not evaluate.	7 %	7 %	38 %	45 %	3 %
4.	The evaluation is used mainly to satisfy administrative requirements.	2 %	7 %	53 %	35 %	3 %
To assist learning						
5.	The evaluation is used to validate what the students learn.	34 %	61 %	3 %	1 %	0 %
6.	The evaluation can help students learn.	35 %	60 %	3 %	0 %	2 %
7.	Formative evaluations are not necessary.	1 %	3 %	40 %	51 %	5 %
8.	Formative evaluations are mini evaluations that prepare students for the summative evaluation.	7 %	43 %	31 %	13 %	6 %
To manage the classroom						
9.	The best way to make students work is to assign grades to their work.	17 %	61 %	17 %	3 %	2 %
10.	Evaluations encourage students to put more effort into their studies.	33 %	61 %	5 %	0 %	1 %
11.	Students work more consistently when evaluations are frequent.	29 %	58 %	8 %	1 %	4 %

Note — Percentages are based on frequency tables after weighting. N min. = 616; N max. = 628.

Table 2: Distribution of responses to statements on beliefs relative to:

**Category 2: Objects of evaluation**

	<b>AC</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DC</b>	<b>NC</b>
Course subject matter					
1. Examination questions should not go beyond the subject matter taught.	19 %	39 %	33 %	5 %	5 %
2. It is not practical to have the evaluation cover all the subject matter taught.	7 %	50 %	28 %	10 %	4 %
3. The examination should cover everything that is taught in the classroom.	8 %	27 %	50 %	12 %	3 %
Skills					
4. It is more important to evaluate understanding than knowledge.	19 %	49 %	20 %	4 %	7 %
5. It is impossible to evaluate anything other than knowledge.	2 %	8 %	55 %	32 %	4 %
6. It is practically impossible to evaluate attitudes.	5 %	19 %	46 %	18 %	13 %
7. We should be evaluating higher cognitive skills.	9 %	41 %	40 %	4 %	7 %

Table 3: Distribution of responses to statements on beliefs relative to:

**Category 3: Evaluation qualities**

	AC	A	D	DC	NC
Validation of the components					
1. It is useful to analyze examination questions.	35 %	56 %	4 %	1 %	3 %
2. A second specialist should check examination questions.	14 %	58 %	15 %	2 %	11 %
3. Instructions for written work are clearer if a second specialist verifies them.	17%	64 %	11 %	1 %	7 %
Evaluation criteria					
4. Everyone should be evaluated using the same criteria.	47 %	45 %	5 %	1 %	2 %
5. It is necessary to establish the criteria before beginning the grading.	47 %	48 %	4 %	-	1 %
Representation					
6. It is impossible for evaluation results to accurately reflect student learning.	4 %	25 %	50 %	16 %	5 %
7. Several evaluations are required to obtain reliable results.	32 %	62 %	5 %	-	1 %
8. My evaluation methods are reliable.	13 %	79 %	4 %	-	4 %
9. Grades should reflect the level of mastery of objectives.	22 %	62 %	8 %	1 %	7 %
Consistency					
10. Many teachers lack consistency in evaluations.	11 %	30 %	20 %	2 %	38 %

Table 4: Distribution of responses to statements on beliefs relative to:

**Category 4: Evaluation tools**

	<b>AC</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DC</b>	<b>NC</b>
1. Questions requiring development can only measure higher learning.	12 %	32 %	41 %	7 %	8 %
2. Multiple-choice questions can measure higher learning.	3 %	38 %	32 %	15 %	11 %
3. Multiple-choice questions mainly measure knowledge.	6 %	35 %	42 %	8 %	9 %
4. Too often, multiple-choice questions lead to random answers.	8 %	35 %	33 %	2 %	21 %
5. Examinations should allow the use of textbooks.	4 %	14 %	55 %	12 %	15 %
6. Assessment examinations should be obligatory in all disciplines.	13 %	38 %	29 %	5 %	15 %
7. Written work and projects are the best evaluations.	6 %	31 %	44 %	5 %	13 %
Evaluations should generally be self-evaluations that are:					
8. Formative	4 %	24 %	48 %	13 %	10 %
9. Summative	0 %	5 %	53 %	35 %	6 %

Table 5: Distribution of responses to statements on beliefs relative to:

**Category 5: Interpersonal dimension of the evaluation**

	AC	A	D	DC	NC
1. The hardest working students deserve the highest grades.	16 %	36 %	39 %	4 %	5 %
2. Poor results lead to de-motivation.	9 %	61 %	23 %	1 %	5 %
3. A grade should not be increased to encourage the student to work harder.	15 %	55 %	21 %	3 %	6 %
4. In grading work, we are influenced by the identity of the respondent.	4 %	40 %	35 %	9 %	12 %
5. Teaching concepts influence the evaluation.	26 %	57 %	8 %	1 %	7 %

Table 6: Distribution of the responses to the statements of beliefs relative to:

**Category 6: Feedback and grading**

	AC	A	D	DC	NC
Feedback					
1. Professors should provide written comments on students' work.	33 %	57 %	4 %	1 %	5 %
2. The majority of students read the comments written by their professors.	25 %	60 %	6 %	1 %	9 %
Grading					
3. The class average is a reflection of the quality of teaching.	1 %	17 %	62 %	14 %	6 %
4. It is necessary to avoid evaluations that are subjective.	18 %	44 %	25 %	4 %	8 %
5. Professors sometimes assign passing grades that are not deserved.	4 %	28 %	23 %	4%	41 %
6. Grades should follow the normal curve.	2 %	38 %	39 %	12 %	10 %
7. Formative evaluations should not be taken into account on the report card.	16 %	35 %	32 %	7 %	10 %
8. Grading hinders teaching.	2 %	9 %	57 %	24 %	8 %
9. A grade is a student's salary.	9 %	46 %	26 %	9 %	10 %

