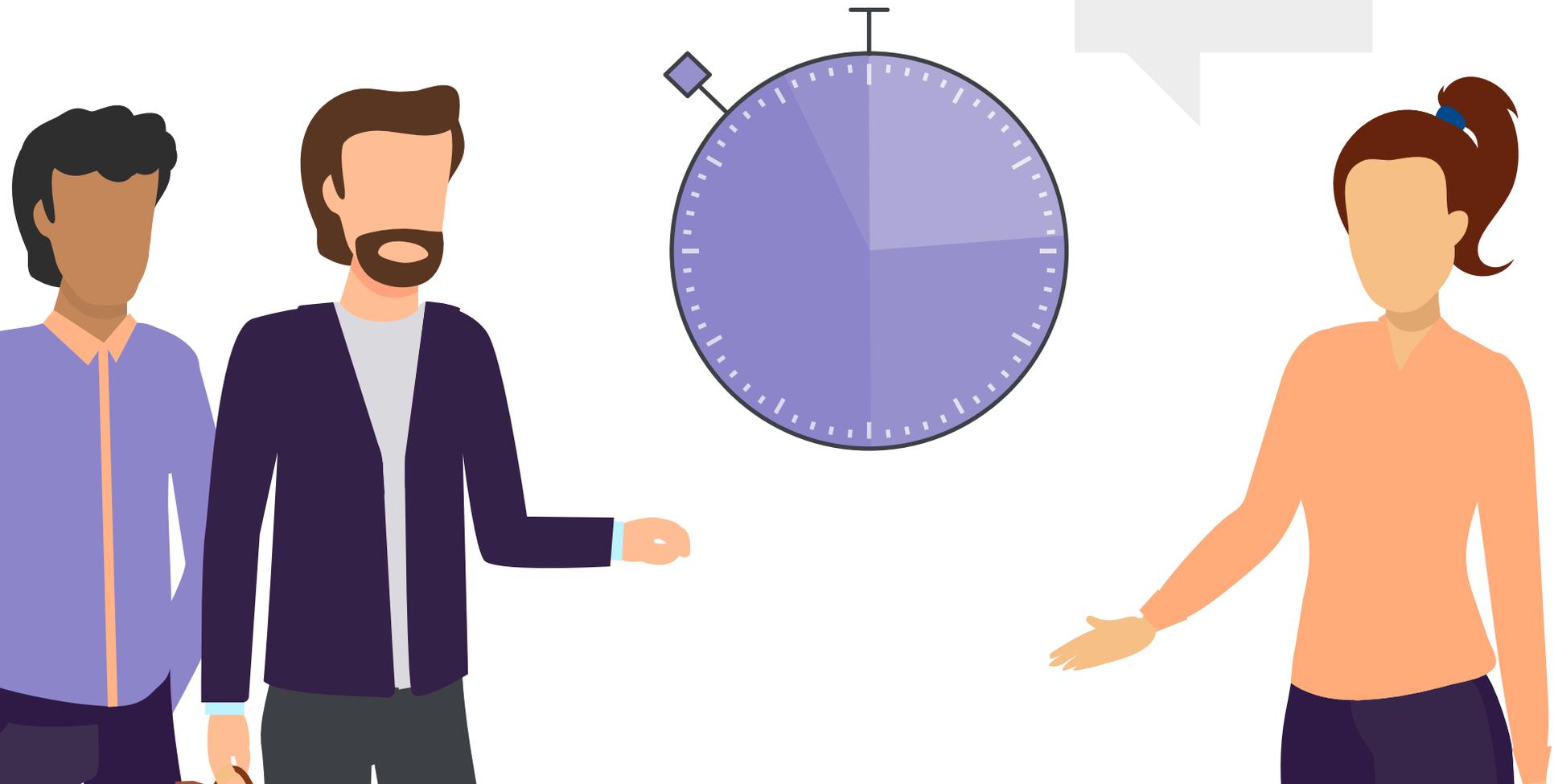


# 3-Minute Assessment Talk

The Differences Between Course & Program-Level Assessment

BY MATTHEW GULLIFORD

**3MAT**



# Introducing the 3-Minute Assessment Talk (3MAT) Series

Are you able to explain an assessment topic and engage an audience with limited knowledge or experience in under 3 minutes? *Pardon, me?!*

Yes, 3 minutes is kind of a big deal in Australia. Originating at the University of Queensland, the **Three Minute Thesis (3MT)** is an annual competition (now held in over 350 institutions worldwide) for Ph.D. students from any discipline. The rules: Participants must explain their research in under 3 minutes to an audience presumed to have no background or expertise in their field of research. Being able to explain a complex topic both succinctly and persuasively to an audience with limited

time, knowledge, or even interest, is a tremendous skill to have at your disposal.

So I decided to create a series of 3-Minute Assessment Talks (3MATs) as a resource for quickly summarizing key assessment topics that can be challenging to present expeditiously. You only need 3 minutes, I promise!

# The Differences Between Course & Program Assessment

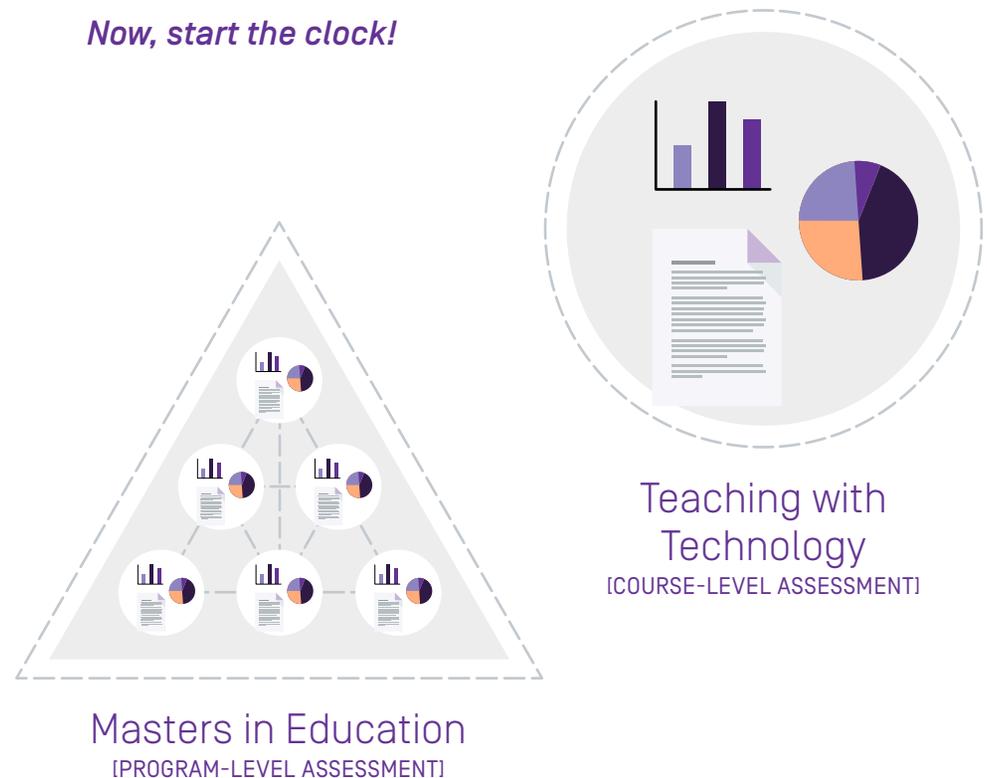
After **introducing my new 3MAT series** earlier this year, the first and second eBooks of the series were released shortly thereafter to explain **The Differences Between Course Grades and Learning Outcomes Assessment** and **The Differences Between Formative & Summative Assessment**.

This third eBook will focus on the differences between *course-* and *program-level* assessment—which from experience, seems to be an area often misinterpreted and commonly inquired about.

A reminder of the 3MAT rules: You should be able to explain an area or topic of assessment effectively and coherently in less than 3 minutes to an audience presumed to have no background or expertise in the field. Each of the 8 items discussed in this eBook should take about 20 seconds to present. Entirely doable (from personal practice!), but you can also pick and choose which ones to focus on to make it shorter.

Again, you do not need to learn everything verbatim, but picking up some of the general points in conversation will be helpful and time-saving! You can also share this resource directly with your community or use it as part of a presentation for an assessment workshop.

***Now, start the clock!***



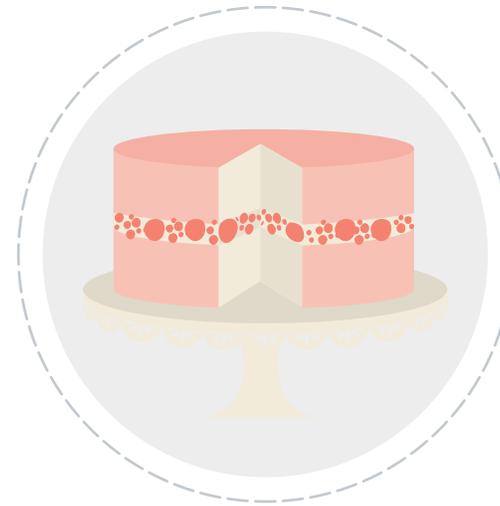
# Purpose

- 1 Course-level assessment** generally seeks to answer questions such as: “Are students collectively achieving the intended course learning outcomes?” or “Do multiple-course sections achieve similar outcomes?” and “How prepared are students for progression onto subsequent courses within the program?”
- 2 Program-level assessment** generally seeks to answer questions such as: “Do the program’s courses enable students to cumulatively achieve the program’s intended learning outcomes?” or “How well does the program prepare students for graduation/employment?” and “Is the program fulfilling its mission, meeting discipline-specific accreditation standards, and advancing institutional-wide goals?”



# Scope

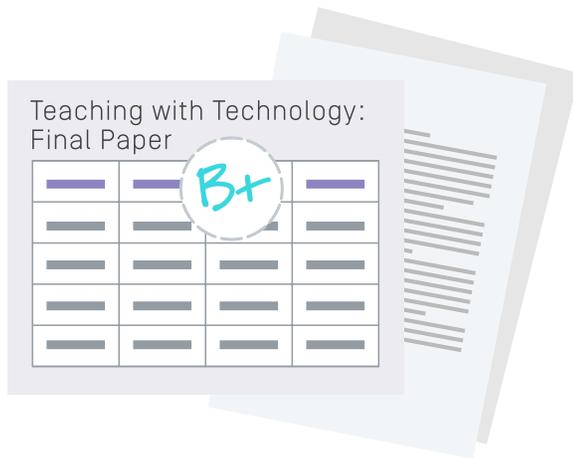
**3 Course-level assessment** focuses more *narrowly* on course-specific learning outcomes. For example, upon successful completion of the Great British Bake Off course, students will be able to “prepare a traditional layered Victoria sponge cake with strawberry jam and fresh cream.” Luvvly-jubbly! [That’s “lovely” to you.]



**4 Program-level assessment** focuses more *broadly* on program learning outcomes. For example, upon successful completion of the Baking and Pastry Arts degree, students will be able to “produce a variety of international and classical desserts and demonstrate how they are utilized in the contemporary food service industry.” Smashing! [That’s “terrific” to you.]



# Timing



- 5 Course-level assessment** usually measures student learning near the *end of a course* [e.g., using a final paper, exam, or presentation].

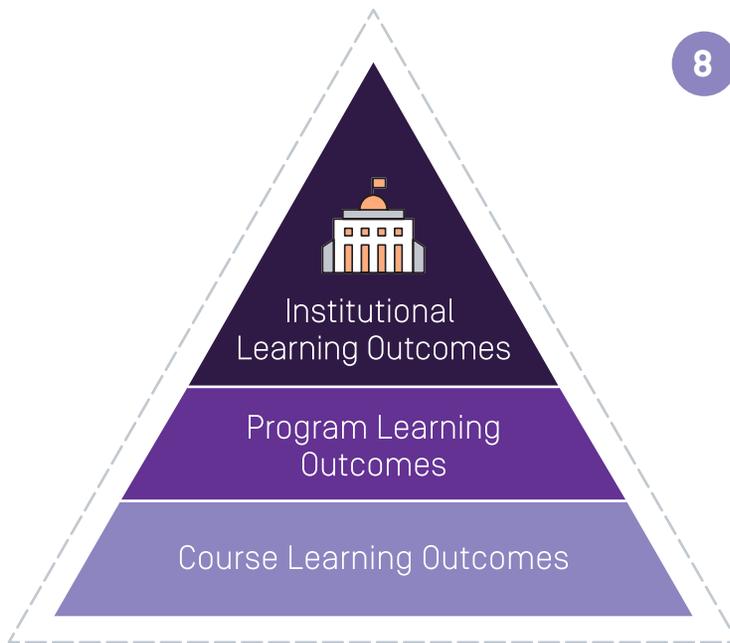
- 6 Program-level assessment** often measures the cumulative effect of student learning near the *end of a program* after the majority of the program's core courses have been completed [e.g., capstone project, thesis, or portfolio].



# Structure



- 7 Course-level learning outcomes are usually aligned to program-level learning outcomes, which are then aligned to institutional learning outcomes or goals.



- 8 In order for both course- and program-level assessment to be meaningful and effective, expected learning outcomes, scoring rubrics, and common embedded assignments [that will gather enough evidence to meet the assessment criteria] need to be defined and agreed upon by faculty teaching the courses.

*Despite some core differences, keep in mind the main goal for both course- and program-level assessment is to determine what pedagogical and curricular changes can be implemented in order to improve student learning.*



*Now Breathe!*



Ahhh

*Feels good, right?*

If you liked this 3MAT eBook, be sure to **sign up** for my next one which will focus on the fundamentals of institution-level assessment. You can also **email me** with any specific areas of assessment you would like future 3MATs to focus on!

# Meet Matt

Hello there!

Explaining different assessment-related topics to colleagues who may have limited time, knowledge, or even interest, is not a simple task. I decided to create this series of 3 Minute Assessment Talks (3MATs) to support you with key areas of assessment that can sometimes be challenging to present, particularly if you only have a short amount of time to capture your audience.

I would love to hear about your experiences with the 3MATs and any requests for topics you would like future editions to focus on.

You can email at [mgulliford@watermarkinsights.com](mailto:mgulliford@watermarkinsights.com).

Best,



Matthew Gulliford is on the Account Management team at Watermark. He works closely with institutions to understand their assessment needs and goals in order to determine how Watermark can help advance meaningful assessment practices on their campuses. Before joining Watermark in 2015, Matthew worked at Baruch College, City University of New York (CUNY), where he managed the assessment of student learning for the Marxe School of Public and International Affairs and was a member of the CUNY Assessment Council. Matthew is currently pursuing his Doctorate in Education Research, with a specific focus on learning outcomes assessment and supporting technology.

## About Watermark™

Watermark's mission is to put better data into the hands of administrators, educators, and learners everywhere in order to empower them to connect information and gain insights into learning that will drive meaningful improvements. Through its innovative educational intelligence platform, Watermark supports institutions in developing an intentional approach to learning and development based on data they can trust.

For more information, visit [www.watermarkinsights.com](http://www.watermarkinsights.com).



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