

Content Analysis Strategies for Building a Validity Argument

There are five suggested strategies that involve the analysis of documentation. This work can be completed by a lead faculty member or staff member and includes:

- **Domain Coverage:** Documenting the involvement of content specialists in the development of the student learning outcomes or standards. Also, examining to what extent the outcomes/standards are addressed and assessed through the degree program assessment plan.
 - Involving or showing evidence that a “broad representation of content specialists” (Linn et al., 1991, p. 20) were involved in developing learning outcomes/standards can provide evidence of domain coverage. Additionally, Linn et al. (1991) define domain coverage in terms of how comprehensive the performance assessments are that make up a degree program assessment plan.
- **Content Quality:** Content analysis of faculty meeting minutes or other documentation demonstrating the involvement of content experts in the design of the performance assessments. This process could include information related to the expertise of the instructor(s) designing the performance assessment.
 - Content quality is defined as being aligned to the “current understanding of the field” while also reflecting aspects of the discipline that are intended to “stand the test of time” (Linn et al., 1991, p. 19).
- **Content Quality:** Documenting the balance between complex, extensive performance tasks and shorter structured assignments.
 - Messick (1994) recommends a mix of measures including both “extended performance tasks and briefer structured exercises” (p. 15) and the importance of assessing both content knowledge and the application of knowledge and skills.
- **Generalizability:** Analysis of performance assessments that make up the degree program assessment plan in terms of the richness of the problems, projects, or scenarios including if they address multiple and varied topics or problems and include an exemplar modeling a potential solution.
 - Generalizability is concisely defined as how the response to the content and context of the performance assessment transfers to other related discipline situations or issues (Linn et al., 1991; Messick, 1994).
- **Cost and Efficiency:** Documenting the costs involved in the development of the performance assessments that make up the program level assessment plan and efforts related to developing an efficient process for data collection and reporting.
 - Performance assessments can provide valuable insight related to learning. So those benefits need to be considered in relation to the practicality of implementing the assessment. Costs need to be kept “at acceptable levels” and significant attention needs to be “given to the development of efficient data collection designs and scoring procedures” (Linn et al., 1991, p. 20).

References

- Linn, R. L., Baker, E. L., & Dunbar, S. B. (1991). Complex, performance-based assessment: Expectations and validation criteria. *Educational Researcher*, 20(8), 15-21.
- Messick, S. (1994). The interplay of evidence and consequences in the validation of performance assessments. *Educational Researcher*, 23(2), 13-23.