

Mapping Assessment Paths in the AI Landscape

Three waypoints for assessment design

These waypoints offer a starting point for assessment design that works regardless of your position on AI — whether you are integrating it, restricting it, or building students' critical literacy around it. Work through them before making AI-related decisions about any assessment, course, or program.

Waypoint 1 — Purpose (of assessment)

What is this assessment actually for? Rather than focussing on format or deliverable, consider the knowledge, process, judgment, or skill the assessment seeks to develop or measure.

Question: *What is the intellectual work required of the student? What is this assessment meant to reveal about the learning that has taken place?*

Waypoint 2 — Authenticity (of engagement)

What does genuine student engagement look like here? This waypoint asks you to consider the authenticity of the learning process undertaken by the student as they are en route to the final “hand-in” version of the assessment.

Question: *What does authentic engagement with this assessment look like? What would superficial or substituted engagement look like by contrast?*

Waypoint 3 — Trust (in assessment)

What does this assessment need to be trustworthy? Here we consider what is needed (or assumed) when we trust in our assessments.

Question: *What does this assessment need in order to be trustworthy? How can you make its trust-bearing elements stronger and more transparent?*

Once you have worked through these three waypoints, the AI question becomes more specific and more answerable: *Does AI undermine what this assessment is actually for? Does it allow students to bypass genuine intellectual engagement? Does it threaten the design features this assessment depends on?*

Field notes: six questions for your practice

A portable version of the three waypoints for independent reflection or collaborative use. Apply to any assessment, course, or program.

Purpose (of assessment)

- What is this assessment/course/program actually *for*, in one sentence?
- What would still be worth assessing here if AI could handle everything else?

Authenticity (of engagement)

- What would it look like if a student genuinely grappled with this, and how is that different from producing a polished response?
- What in the current design makes genuine engagement more likely than surface engagement?

Trust (in assessment)

- What is this assessment/course/program quietly assuming about how students engage?
- Is that assumption earned by the design, or is it a hope?

Scaling up

The same three waypoints apply at course and program level. The questions below adapt them for each scale.

	Course level	Program level
Purpose	What does the full set of assessments across this course collectively evidence? Do they build toward something coherent, or are they a set of discrete tasks that don't add up?	What capacity, disposition, or understanding does the program's assessment architecture actually develop in graduates? Is that visible in the design, or only assumed?
Authenticity	Does this course create genuine conditions for intellectual grappling? Or does the assessment sequence allow students to move through without being meaningfully challenged?	Have graduating students had enough opportunities for authentic intellectual engagement — progressively demanding, across different contexts — to achieve program goals?
Trust	What does the course's assessment design assume about how students are engaging with the material, with each other, with their own thinking? Are those assumptions supported by anything in the design, or are they just hopes?	What does the program assume students can do by graduation? Is there a coherent design basis for that trust, built progressively across the curriculum, or is it an assumption that has never been made explicit or tested?