

**ATRIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

**BENGALURU- 560 024**



*Examination Reform  
Policy*

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## INTRODUCTION

Globalization of the world economy and higher education are driving profound changes in engineering education system. There is a continuing need to dynamically adapt to these changes, to ensure that we remain competitive and can respond effectively to the challenges of globalization. Future engineering graduates not only need to be knowledgeable in his/her discipline but also needs a new set of soft, professional skills and competencies [1].

In recent years, there have been essential changes in engineering education in terms of what to teach (content) and how to teach (knowledge delivery) and how to assess (student learning).

AICTE has already taken initiation to come out with model curriculum for engineering programs. The digital initiatives of MHRD and AICTE have made available very large number of MOOC courses through SWAYAM that can help the colleges and teachers to adopt innovative methodologies in the delivery of course.

The present report focusses on the recommendations for reforms in examinations (assessment of student) in the context of emerging landscape of engineering education.

Examinations/student assessments play a very important role in deciding the quality of education. They must not only assess student's achievements (and grades) but also measure whether the desired learning outcomes have been achieved. The achievement of objectives and program outcomes are crucial and needs to be proven through accurate and reliable assessments.

The academic quality of examinations (question papers) in Indian engineering education system has been a matter of concern from a long time. It is widely acknowledged that “assessment drives learning”, what and how students learn depend to a major extent on how they think they will be assessed [2]. The question papers that require simple memory recall will not ensure deep, meaningful learning. High expectations for learning motivate the students to rise to the occasion. The assessment (examination) must embed those high expectations to ensure that the learner is motivated to attain them.

Considering the above imperatives, it is clear that reforms in Examinations are critical for improvement of the quality of Indian engineering education. The most important drivers for reforms in examination system of Indian engineering education are:

## ***1. Adaptation of Outcome-Based Education Framework***

Outcome-based education (OBE)- a performance-based approach has emerged as a major reform model in the global engineering education scenario [3]. The country that wants to be a signatory member of a multinational agreement for the mutual recognition of engineering degrees, i.e. the Washington Accord (WA) must implement OBE. This will be an endorsement that the engineering education system has demonstrated a strong, long-term commitment to quality assurance in producing engineers ready for industry practice in the international scene. Being signatory to the Washington Accord, Indian accreditation agency 'National Board of Accreditation (NBA)' has made it mandatory for engineering institutions to adapt OBE framework for their curriculum design, delivery and assessment. In OBE framework, the educational outcomes of a program are clearly and unambiguously specified. These determine the curriculum content and its organization, the teaching methods and strategies and the assessment process.

Though Indian Universities and Colleges have started adapting OBE framework for their engineering programs, the focus is limited to the curriculum design part, i.e. connecting curriculum components to the program outcomes. Very little attention is being given for connecting examination questions/assessment tools to the program outcomes. The absence of proper mapping between program outcomes and assessment tools lead to the inaccurate and unreliable measurement of attainment of outcomes by the students. This missing connect creates a big gap in the effective adaptation of OBE framework, making the whole exercise futile.

## ***2. Importance of Higher-order Abilities and Professional Skills***

In the present examination system, memorization occupies a dominant place. The recall of factual knowledge, though essential to any examination, is only one of several major abilities to be demonstrated by the graduates. The assessment process must also test higher level skills viz. ability to apply knowledge, solve complex problems, analyse, synthesise and design. Further, professional skills like the ability to communicate, work in teams, lifelong learning have become important elements for employability of the graduates [4]. It is important that the examinations also give appropriate weightage to the assessment of these higher-level skills and professional competencies.

Keeping in view of the above challenges and looking at some of the worldwide best practices in assessment, the present report comes up with several recommendations that can be used by Universities/ Colleges to design their assessment strategies.

# **ASSESSMENT STRATEGY** **FOR OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION**

## ***1. Mapping Program Outcomes to Assessment (Examinations)***

Graduate attributes (GAs) articulate the generic abilities to be looked for in a graduate of any undergraduate degree program. They form the Program Outcomes (POs) that reflect the skills, knowledge and abilities of graduates regardless of the field of study. This does not mean that POs are necessarily independent of disciplinary knowledge –rather, these qualities may be developed in various disciplinary contexts.

In outcome-based education, a “design down” process is employed which moves from POs to Course Outcomes (COs) and outcomes for individual learning experiences. Outcomes at each successive level need to be aligned with, and contribute to, the program outcomes.

Courses are the building blocks of a program. Teaching strategies, learning activities, assessments and resources should all be designed and organized to help students achieve the learning outcomes at the course level. In the assessment activities, students demonstrate their level of achievement of the course learning outcomes. In a constructively aligned program, the courses are carefully coordinated to ensure steady development or scaffolding from the introduction to mastery of the learning outcomes, leading to achievement of the intended POs. For the effectiveness of the program, the achievement of POs is crucial which needs to be proven through accurate and reliable assessments.

## ***2. Two-step Process for Bringing Clarity to POs***

POs give useful guidance at the program level for the curriculum design, delivery and assessment of student learning. However, they represent fairly high-level generic goals that are not directly measurable. Real observability and measurability of the POs at course level is very difficult. To connect high-level learning outcomes (POs) with course content, course outcomes and assessment, there is a necessity to bring further clarity and specificity to the program outcomes [5]. This can be achieved through the following two-step process of identifying Competencies and Performance Indicators (PI).

- 1) Identify Competencies to be attained: For each PO define competencies –different abilities implied by program outcome statement that would generally require different assessment measures. This helps us to create a shared understanding of the competencies we want students to achieve. They serve as an intermediate step to the creation of measurable indicators.

***Example:***

Program Outcome (Attribute 3)

***Design:***

PO3: Design/Development of Solutions: Design solutions for complex engineering problems and design system components or processes that meet the specified needs with appropriate consideration for public health and safety, and cultural, societal, and environmental considerations.

***Competencies***

- Demonstrate an ability to define a complex, open-ended problem in engineering terms.
- Demonstrate an ability to generate a diverse set of alternative design solutions.
- Demonstrate an ability to select the optimal design scheme for further development.
- Demonstrate an ability to advance an engineering design to the defined end state.

- 2) Define Performance Indicators: For each of the competencies identified, define performance Indicators (PIs) that are explicit statements of expectations of the student learning. They can act as measuring tools in assessment to understand the extent of attainment of outcomes. They can also be designed to determine the appropriate achievement level or competency of each indicator so that instructors can target and students can achieve the acceptable level of proficiency.

***Example:***

For the Competency -2

Demonstrate an ability to generate a diverse set of alternative design solutions

***Performance Indicators:***

- ✓ Apply formal idea generation tools to develop multiple engineering design solutions
- ✓ Build models, prototypes, algorithms to develop a diverse set of design solutions
- ✓ Identify the functional and non-functional criteria for evaluation of alternate design solutions.

It should be noted that, when we consider the program outcome, it looks like, it can be achieved only in the Capstone project. But if we consider the competencies and performance indicators, we start seeing the opportunities of addressing them (and hence PO) in various courses of the program.

Once the above process is completed for the program, the assessment of COs for all the courses is designed by connecting assessment questions (used in various assessment tools) to the PIs. By following this process, where examination questions map with PIs, we get clarity and better resolution for the assessment of COs and POs. The pictorial representation of the process is given in Fig. 1

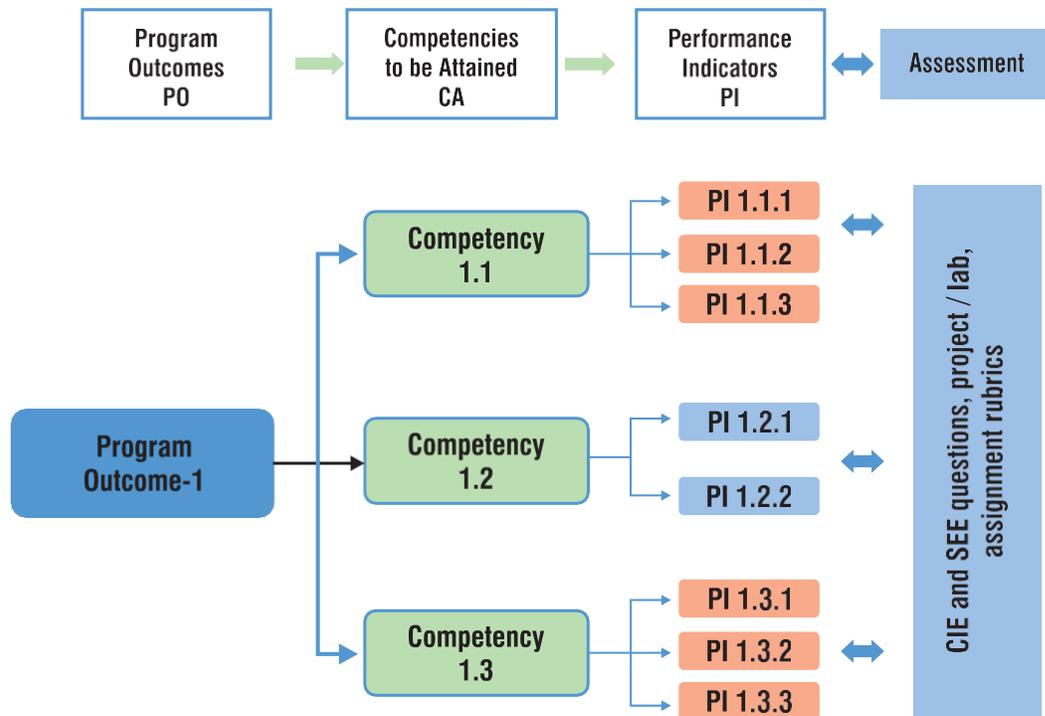


Fig. 1: Connecting POs to Assessment

### 3. Program Outcomes – Competencies – Performance Indicators

Following table gives the suggestive list of competencies and associated performance indicators for each of the PO in Mechanical Engineering Program.

PO 1: Engineering knowledge: Apply the knowledge of mathematics, science, engineering fundamentals, and an engineering specialisation for the solution of complex engineering problems.	
Competency	Indicators
1.1 Demonstrate competence in mathematical modeling	1.1.1 Apply mathematical techniques such as calculus, linear algebra, and statistics to solve problems 1.1.2 Apply advanced mathematical techniques to model and solve mechanical engineering problems
1.2 Demonstrate competence in basic sciences	1.2.1 Apply laws of natural science to an engineering problem
1.3 Demonstrate competence in engineering fundamentals	1.3.1 Apply fundamental engineering concepts to solve engineering problems
1.4 Demonstrate competence in specialized engineering knowledge to the program	1.4.1 Apply Mechanical engineering concepts to solve engineering problems.

**PO 2: Problem analysis: Identify, formulate, research literature, and analyse complex engineering problems reaching substantiated conclusions using first principles of mathematics, natural sciences, and engineering sciences.**

Competency	Indicators
2.1 Demonstrate an ability to identify and formulate complex engineering problem	2.1 Articulate problem statements and identify objectives 2.2 Identify engineering systems, variables, and parameters to solve the problems 2.3 Identify the mathematical, engineering and other relevant knowledge that applies to a given problem
2.2 Demonstrate an ability to formulate a solution plan and methodology for an engineering problem	2.2.1 Reframe complex problems into interconnected sub-problems 2.2.2 Identify, assemble and evaluate information and resources. 2.2.3 Identify existing processes/solution methods for solving the problem, including forming justified approximations and assumptions 2.2.4 Compare and contrast alternative solution processes to select the best process.
2.3 Demonstrate an ability to formulate and interpret a model	2.3.1 Combine scientific principles and engineering concepts to formulate model/s (mathematical or otherwise) of a system or process that is appropriate in terms of applicability and required accuracy. 2.3.2 Identify assumptions (mathematical and physical) necessary to allow modeling of a system at the level of accuracy required.
2.4 Demonstrate an ability to execute a solution process and analyze results	2.4.1 Apply engineering mathematics and computations to solve mathematical models 2.4.2 Produce and validate results through skilful use of contemporary engineering tools and models 2.4.3 Identify sources of error in the solution process, and limitations of the solution. 2.4.4 Extract desired understanding and conclusions consistent with objectives and limitations of the analysis

**PO 3: Design/Development of Solutions: Design solutions for complex engineering problems and design system components or processes that meet the specified needs with appropriate consideration for public health and safety, and cultural, societal, and environmental considerations.**

Competency	Indicators
3.1 Demonstrate an ability to define a complex/open-ended problem in engineering terms	3.1.1 Recognize that need analysis is key to good problem definition 3.1.2 Elicit and document, engineering requirements from stakeholders 3.1.3 Synthesize engineering requirements from a review of the state-of-the-art 3.1.4 Extract engineering requirements from relevant engineering Codes and Standards such as ASME, ASTM, BIS, ISO and ASHRAE. 3.1.5 Explore and synthesize engineering requirements considering health, safety risks, environmental, cultural and societal issues 3.1.6 Determine design objectives, functional requirements and arrive at specifications
3.2 Demonstrate an ability to generate a diverse set of alternative design solutions	3.2.1 Apply formal idea generation tools to develop multiple engineering design solutions 3.2.2 Build models/prototypes to develop a diverse set of design solutions 3.2.3 Identify suitable criteria for the evaluation of alternate design solutions
3.3 Demonstrate an ability to select an optimal design scheme for further development	3.3.1 Apply formal decision-making tools to select optimal engineering design solutions for further development 3.3.2 Consult with domain experts and stakeholders to select candidate engineering design solution for further development

3.4 Demonstrate an ability to advance an engineering design to defined end state	3.4.1 Refine a conceptual design into a detailed design within the existing constraints (of the resources) 3.4.2 Generate information through appropriate tests to improve or revise the design
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<b>PO 4: Conduct investigations of complex problems:</b> Use research-based knowledge and research methods including design of experiments, analysis and interpretation of data, and synthesis of the information to provide valid conclusions.	
<b>Competency</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
4.1 Demonstrate an ability to conduct investigations of technical issues consistent with their level of knowledge and understanding	4.1.1 Define a problem, its scope and importance for purposes of investigation 4.1.2 Examine the relevant methods, tools and techniques of experiment design, system calibration, data acquisition, analysis and presentation 4.1.3 Apply appropriate instrumentation and/or software tools to make measurements of physical quantities 4.1.4 Establish a relationship between measured data and underlying physical principles.
4.2 Demonstrate an ability to design experiments to solve open-ended problems	4.2.1 Design and develop an experimental approach, specify appropriate equipment and procedures 4.2.2 Understand the importance of the statistical design of experiments and choose an appropriate experimental design plan based on the study objectives
4.3 Demonstrate an ability to analyze data and reach a valid conclusion	4.3.1 Use appropriate procedures, tools and techniques to conduct experiments and collect data 4.3.2 Analyze data for trends and correlations, stating possible errors and limitations 4.3.3 Represent data (in tabular and/or graphical forms) so as to facilitate analysis and explanation of the data, and drawing of conclusions 4.3.4 Synthesize information and knowledge about the problem from the raw data to reach appropriate conclusions

<b>PO 5: Modern tool usage:</b> Create, select, and apply appropriate techniques, resources, and modern engineering and IT tools including prediction and modelling to complex engineering activities with an understanding of the limitations.	
<b>Competency</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
5.1 Demonstrate an ability to identify/ create modern engineering tools, techniques and resources	5.1.1 Identify modern engineering tools such as computer-aided drafting, modeling and analysis; techniques and resources for engineering activities 5.1.2 Create/adapt/modify/extend tools and techniques to solve engineering problems
5.2 Demonstrate an ability to select and apply discipline-specific tools, techniques and resources	5.2.1 Identify the strengths and limitations of tools for (i) acquiring information, (ii) modeling and simulating, (iii) monitoring system performance, and (iv) creating engineering designs. 5.2.2 Demonstrate proficiency in using discipline-specific tools
5.3 Demonstrate an ability to evaluate the suitability and limitations of tools used to solve an engineering problem	5.3.1 Discuss limitations and validate tools, techniques and resources 5.3.2 Verify the credibility of results from tool use with reference to the accuracy and limitations, and the assumptions inherent in their use.

**PO 6: The engineer and society:** Apply reasoning informed by the contextual knowledge to assess societal, health, safety, legal, and cultural issues and the consequent responsibilities relevant to the professional engineering practice.

Competency	Indicators
6.1 Demonstrate an ability to describe engineering roles in a broader context, e.g. pertaining to the environment, health, safety, legal and public welfare	6.1.1 Identify and describe various engineering roles; particularly as pertains to protection of the public and public interest at the global, regional and local level
6.2 Demonstrate an understanding of professional engineering regulations, legislation and standards	6.2.1 Interpret legislation, regulations, codes, and standards relevant to your discipline and explain its contribution to the protection of the public

**PO 7: Environment and sustainability:** Understand the impact of the professional engineering solutions in societal and environmental contexts, and demonstrate the knowledge of, and the need for sustainable development.

Competency	Indicators
7.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of engineering and industrial practices on social, environmental and in economic contexts	7.1.1 Identify risks/impacts in the life-cycle of an engineering product or activity 7.1.2 Understand the relationship between the technical, socio-economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability
7.2 Demonstrate an ability to apply principles of sustainable design and development	7.2.1 Describe management techniques for sustainable development 7.2.2 Apply principles of preventive engineering and sustainable development to an engineering activity or product relevant to the discipline

**PO 8: Ethics:** Apply ethical principles and commit to professional ethics and responsibilities and norms of the engineering practice.

Competency	Indicators
8.1 Demonstrate an ability to recognize ethical dilemmas	8.1.1 Identify situations of unethical professional conduct and propose ethical alternatives
8.2 Demonstrate an ability to apply the Code of Ethics	8.2.1 Identify tenets of the ASME professional code of ethics 8.2.2 Examine and apply moral & ethical principles to known case studies

**PO 9: Individual and team work:** Function effectively as an individual, and as a member or leader in diverse teams, and in multidisciplinary settings.

Competency	Indicators
9.1 Demonstrate an ability to form a team and define a role for each member	9.1.1 Recognize a variety of working and learning preferences; appreciate the value of diversity on a team 9.1.2 Implement the norms of practice (e.g. rules, roles, charters, agendas, etc.) of effective team work, to accomplish a goal.
9.2 Demonstrate effective individual and team operations-- communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution and leadership skills	9.2.1 Demonstrate effective communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution and leadership skills 9.2.2 Treat other team members respectfully 9.2.3 Listen to other members 9.2.4 Maintain composure in difficult situations
9.3 Demonstrate success in a team-based project	9.3.1 Present results as a team, with smooth integration of contributions from all individual efforts

**PO 10: Communication:** Communicate effectively on complex engineering activities with the engineering community and with the society at large, such as being able to comprehend and write effective reports and design documentation, make effective presentations, and give and receive clear instructions

Competency	Indicators
10.1 Demonstrate an ability to comprehend technical literature and document project work	10.1.1 Read, understand and interpret technical and non-technical information 10.1.2 Produce clear, well-constructed, and well-supported written engineering documents 10.1.3 Create flow in a document or presentation - a logical progression of ideas so that the main point is clear
10.2 Demonstrate competence in listening, speaking, and presentation	10.2.1 Listen to and comprehend information, instructions, and viewpoints of others 10.2.2 Deliver effective oral presentations to technical and non-technical audiences
10.3 Demonstrate the ability to integrate different modes of communication	10.3.1 Create engineering-standard figures, reports and drawings to complement writing and presentations 10.3.2 Use a variety of media effectively to convey a message in a document or a presentation

**PO 11: Project management and finance:** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the engineering and management principles and apply these to one's work, as a member and leader in a team, to manage projects and in multidisciplinary environments.

Competency	Indicators
11.1 Demonstrate an ability to evaluate the economic and financial performance of an engineering activity	11.1.1 Describe various economic and financial costs/benefits of an engineering activity 11.1.2 Analyze different forms of financial statements to evaluate the financial status of an engineering project

11.2 Demonstrate an ability to compare and contrast the costs/benefits of alternate proposals for an engineering activity	11.2.1 Analyze and select the most appropriate proposal based on economic and financial Considerations.
11.3 Demonstrate an ability to plan/manage an engineering activity within time and budget constraints	11.3.1 Identify the tasks required to complete an engineering activity, and the resources required to complete the tasks. 11.3.2 Use project management tools to schedule an engineering project, so it is completed on time and on budget.

**PO 12: Life-long learning:** Recognise the need for, and have the preparation and ability to engage in independent and life-long learning in the broadest context of technological change.

Competency	Indicators
12.1 Demonstrate an ability to identify gaps in knowledge and a strategy to close these gaps	12.1.1 Describe the rationale for the requirement for continuing professional development 12.1.2 Identify deficiencies or gaps in knowledge and demonstrate an ability to source information to close this gap
12.2 Demonstrate an ability to identify changing trends in engineering knowledge and practice	12.2.1 Identify historic points of technological advance in engineering that required practitioners to seek education in order to stay current 12.2.2 Recognize the need and be able to clearly explain why it is vitally important to keep current regarding new developments in your field
12.3 Demonstrate an ability to identify and access sources for new information	12.3.1 Source and comprehend technical literature and other credible sources of information 12.3.2 Analyze sourced technical and popular information for feasibility, viability, sustainability, etc.

The above table can be used for most of the engineering programs. However, for Computer Science & Engineering/ Information Technology programs it requires some modifications.

## **IMPROVING STRUCTURE AND QUALITY OF ASSESSMENTS**

For improving the structure and quality of assessment in various engineering programs following points need to be remembered:

1. In Indian engineering education system, written examinations play a major role in assessing the learning and awarding of grades to the student. Universities and colleges give highest weightage to the outcomes of the written examinations in overall grading. Questions raised in the examination/test papers play an important role in defining the level of learning the student is expected to achieve in the courses and hence in the program. Since assessment drives learning, the design of question papers needs to go beyond the mere test of memory recall. They also need to test higher-order abilities and skills.
2. Written examinations assess a very limited range of outcomes and cognitive levels. Particularly in the courses, where course outcomes (COs) cover a broad range of expectations, written examinations alone will not be sufficient to make valid judgements about student learning. A wide range of assessment methods (e.g., term papers, open-ended problem-solving assignments, course/lab project rubrics, portfolios etc.) need to be employed to ensure that assessment methods match with learning outcomes.
3. It is advisable to formulate assessment plans for each of the course in the program that brings clarity to the following:
  - a) Alignment of assessment with learning outcome of the course
  - b) Level of learning (cognitive) student is expected to achieve
  - c) Assessment method to be adapted

The method to align examination questions/assessment to COs and hence POs was discussed in the section-1. The following sections discuss the application of Bloom's taxonomy framework to create the optimal structure of examination papers to test the different cognitive skills.

### ***1. Bloom's Taxonomy for Assessment Design***

Bloom's Taxonomy provides an important framework to not only design curriculum and teaching methodologies but also to design appropriate examination questions belonging to various cognitive levels. Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives developed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom [6] was widely accepted by educators for curriculum design and assessment. In 2001, Anderson and Krathwohl modified Bloom's taxonomy [7] to make it relevant to the present-day requirements. It attempts to divide learning into three types of domains (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) and then defines the level of performance for each domain. Conscious efforts to map the curriculum and assessment to these levels can help the programs to aim for higher-level abilities which go beyond remembering or understanding, and require application, analysis, evaluation or creation.

Revised Bloom's taxonomy in the cognitive domain includes thinking, knowledge, and application of knowledge. It is a popular framework in engineering education to structure the

assessment as it characterizes complexity and higher-order abilities. It identifies six levels of competencies within the cognitive domain (Fig. 2) which are appropriate for the purposes of engineering educators.

According to revised Bloom’s taxonomy, the levels in the cognitive domain are as follows:

Level	Descriptor	Level of attainment
1	Remembering	Recalling from the memory of the previously learned material
2	Understanding	Explaining ideas or concepts
3	Applying	Using the information in another familiar situation
4	Analysing	Breaking information into the part to explore understandings and relationships
5	Evaluating	Justifying a decision or course of action
6	Creating	Generating new ideas, products or new ways of viewing things



Bloom’s taxonomy is hierarchical, meaning that learning at the higher level requires that skills at a lower level are attained.

## 2. Action Verbs for Assessment

Choice of action verbs in constructing assessment questions is important to consider. Quite often, the action verbs are indicators of the complexity (level) of the question. Over time, educators have come up with a taxonomy of measurable verbs corresponding to each of the Bloom’s cognitive levels [8]. These verbs help us not only to describe and classify observable knowledge, skills and abilities but also to frame the examination or assignment questions that are appropriate to the level we are trying to assess.

Suggestive list of skills/ competencies to be demonstrated at each of the Bloom's level and corresponding cues/ verbs for the examination/ test questions is given below:

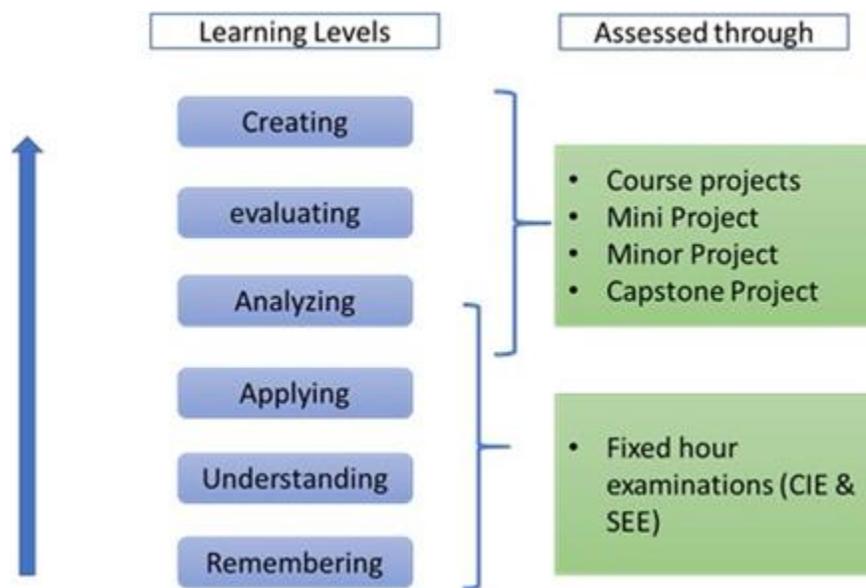
Level	Skill Demonstrated	Question cues / Verbs for tests
1. Remember	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to recall of information like facts, conventions, definitions, jargon, technical terms, classifications, categories, and criteria</li> <li>ability to recall methodology and procedures, abstractions, principles, and theories in the field</li> <li>knowledge of dates, events, places</li> <li>mastery of subject matter</li> </ul>	list, define, tell, describe, recite, recall, identify, show, label, tabulate, quote, name, who, when, where
2. Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understanding information</li> <li>grasp meaning</li> <li>translate knowledge into new context</li> <li>interpret facts, compare, contrast</li> <li>order, group, infer causes</li> <li>predict consequences</li> </ul>	describe, explain, paraphrase, restate, associate, contrast, summarize, differentiate interpret, discuss
3. Apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use information</li> <li>use methods, concepts, laws, theories in new situations</li> <li>solve problems using required skills or knowledge</li> <li>Demonstrating correct usage of a method or procedure</li> </ul>	calculate, predict, apply, solve, illustrate, use, demonstrate, determine, model, experiment, show, examine, modify
4. Analyse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>break down a complex problem into parts</li> <li>Identify the relationships and interaction between the different parts of a complex problem</li> <li>identify the missing information, sometimes the redundant information and the contradictory information, if any</li> </ul>	classify, outline, break down, categorize, analyze, diagram, illustrate, infer, select
5. Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>compare and discriminate between ideas</li> <li>assess value of theories, presentations</li> <li>make choices based on reasoned argument</li> <li>verify value of evidence</li> <li>recognize subjectivity</li> <li>use of definite criteria for judgments</li> </ul>	assess, decide, choose, rank, grade, test, measure, defend, recommend, convince, select, judge, support, conclude, argue, justify, compare, summarize, evaluate
6. Create	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use old ideas to create new ones</li> <li>Combine parts to make (new) whole,</li> <li>generalize from given facts</li> <li>relate knowledge from several areas</li> <li>predict, draw conclusions</li> </ul>	design, formulate, build, invent, create, compose, generate, derive, modify, develop, integrate

It may be noted that some of the verbs in the above table are associated with multiple Bloom's Taxonomy levels. These verbs are actions that could apply to different activities. We need to keep in mind that it's the skill, action or activity we need students to demonstrate that will determine the contextual meaning of the verb used in the assessment question.

### 3. Assessment Planning

While using Bloom's taxonomy framework in planning and designing of assessment of student learning, following points need to be considered:

1. Normally the first three learning levels; remembering, understanding and applying and to some extent fourth level analysing are assessed in the Continuous Internal Evaluation (CIE) and Semester End Examinations (SEE), where students are given a limited amount of time. And abilities; analysis, evaluation and creation can be assessed in extended course works or in a variety of student works like course projects, mini/ minor projects, internship experience and final year projects.



*Fig. 3: Assessment methods for different Bloom's cognitive levels*

2. Before adopting this framework for reforms in examination system of a University/Institution, it is worthwhile to study the present pattern of assessment in each of the course in the program to gain insight about:
  - a. Alignment of assessment questions with course learning outcomes
  - b. Whether all the learning outcomes are tested; sometimes some learning outcomes are over tested at the expense of others which may be not tested at all.
  - c. Overall weightage in the assessment, to each of Bloom's learning levels
  - d. Assessment methods used to adequately assess the content and desired learning outcomes
  - e. Based on the study, improvement priorities for each of the above factors need to be arrived at. The reform process needs to be well planned and

implemented through institutional strategy and communicated to all stakeholders particularly to the students.

3. A good and reasonable examination paper must consist of various difficulty levels to accommodate the different capabilities of students. Bloom's taxonomy framework helps the faculty to set examination papers that are well balanced, testing the different cognitive skills without a tilt towards a tough or easy paper perception. If the present examination questions are more focused towards lower cognitive skills, conscious efforts need to be made to bring in application skills or higher cognitive skills in the assessment. It is recommended that at institution/ University level, upper limit need to be arrived for lower order skills (for example, no more than 40% weightage for knowledge-oriented questions). It is important to note that, as nature of every course is different, the weightage for different cognitive levels in the question papers can also vary from course to course.

## ASSESSING HIGHER - ORDER ABILITIES & PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

In the 21st century, professional skills (also known as soft skills, generic skills or transferable skills) have emerged as important attributes of a graduate engineer. Studies show that Industry/ employers around the world value these abilities more than the disciplinary knowledge. This is also reflected in the NBA graduate attributes wherein six out of twelve attributes belong to this category, viz. (1) communication, (2) teamwork, (3) understanding ethics and professionalism, (4) understanding global and societal contexts, (5) lifelong learning, and (6) knowledge of contemporary issues. Further, higher-order cognitive abilities like critical thinking, problem-solving and making informed decisions are also crucial for a graduate to succeed in the emerging world. Though the employers consider these professional skills and higher abilities as important, students are weak in them. The main challenge surrounding them is that they are difficult to assess through existing conventional examination system.

### *1. Innovative Educational Experiences to Teach and Assess*

One of the main obstacles in addressing these outcomes is the limitation of educational experience we create within our engineering programs. Most of the coursework in our programs are oriented towards teaching technical knowledge and skills; hence, the assessment is limited to those abilities. However, acquiring the professional outcomes may not result simply from participation in a particular class or set of classes. Rather, these outcomes are more often acquired or influenced through sources both in and outside the classroom [4].

To address these challenges, comprehensive reforms are needed in the way we design our curriculum, student learning experiences and assessment of the outcomes. Worldwide several attempts are being made to address these challenges. Following are the few educational experiences that are recommended to teach and assess professional outcomes and higher-order cognitive abilities:

- ❖ Course projects
- ❖ Open-ended experiments in laboratories
- ❖ Project-based learning modules
- ❖ MOOCs
- ❖ Co-Curricular experiences
- ❖ Mini / Minor projects
- ❖ Final year projects
- ❖ Internship experiences
- ❖ E-portfolios of student works

## 2. Using Scoring Rubrics as Assessment Tool

To evaluate the above, student works for attainment of course outcomes and hence POs, it is of utmost importance to have reliable methods / proper assessment tools. Rubrics provide a powerful tool for assessment and grading of student work. They can also serve as a transparent and inspiring guide to learning. Rubrics are scoring, or grading tool used to measure a students' performance and learning across a set of criteria and objectives. Rubrics communicate to students (and to other markers) your expectations in the assessment, and what you consider important.

There are three components within rubrics namely (i) criteria / performance Indicator: the aspects of performance that will be assessed, (ii) descriptors: characteristics that are associated with each dimension, and (iii) scale/level of performance: a rating scale that defines students' level of mastery within each criterion.

	Unsatisfactory 1	Developing 2	Satisfactory 3	Exemplary 4
Performance criteria				

Fig. 4: Examples of Rubrics (Accessed from Rogers 2010)

## 3. Open-Book Examinations

In the earlier sections it was noted that the traditional written examinations have a significant weakness that they tend to encourage rote learning and more superficial application of knowledge. This deficiency can be overcome by “open-book examination”. Open-book examination is similar to time constrained written examinations but designed in a way that allows students to refer to either class notes, textbooks, or other approved material while answering questions. They are particularly useful if you want to test skills in application, analysis and evaluation, i.e. higher levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. However, in a program, the courses or the curriculum areas that are best suited to an open-book exam are to be carefully chosen.

### *Advantages of open-book examinations*

1. Less demanding on memory and hence less stressful
2. Questions can emphasize more on problem-solving, application of knowledge and higher-order thinking rather than simple recall of facts.
3. Assessment questions can reflect real-life situations that require comprehension, information retrieval and synthesizing skills of the students to solve.

### *Designing a good open-book examination*

- Set questions that require students to do things with the information available to them, rather than to merely locate the correct information and then summarize or rewrite it.
- The questions in open-book exam must take advantage of the format, and give more weightage to the application of knowledge, critical thinking and use of resources for solving real complex engineering problems.
- As the nature of questions is complex, it is to be ensured that the students get enough time. Open book test questions typically take longer time compared to traditional examinations. It is advisable either to set less number of questions that encompass 2 or 3 concepts taught or allocate longer duration of time for the examinations.