

Understanding Assessment for Preceptors – Frequently Asked Questions

1. I feel that my student is only demonstrating some of the behaviours listed for an outcome. What overall rating should I provide for this outcome?

- Refer to the list of behaviours associated with the outcome. Using the agree scale, consider how strongly you agree or disagree that the student is demonstrating each behaviour. This is very helpful in determining an overall rating.
 - For example, consider an outcome with 4 associated behaviours. If you *somewhat disagree* that the student demonstrates 2 behaviours and *somewhat agree* that the student demonstrates the other 2 behaviours, then “needs improvement” is most likely the appropriate overall rating. However, if you *strongly disagree* that the student demonstrates 2 of the behaviours, then “not meeting an acceptable level of performance” is probably the most appropriate overall rating.
- Another consideration is the placement time point of the assessment; midpoint or final.
 - If a student is not demonstrating all of the behaviours associated with an outcome at **midpoint**, a “needs improvement” rating may be appropriate if you believe the student has the potential to improve enough over the remainder of the placement to succeed. However, if you believe the student will not be able to move to “acceptable” by the end of the placement because of major deficiencies in behaviours associated with the outcome, a “not meeting an acceptable level of performance” rating is appropriate.
 - At the **final** assessment, a “needs improvement” or “not meeting an acceptable level of performance” are also warranted ratings as outlined above. These ratings may impact the student’s final grade and lead to a placement failure.

2. At the midpoint evaluation, my student had deficiencies in some of the behaviours with an outcome and hence I gave a rating of “needs improvement” for that outcome. At the final assessment point, my student is still not meeting an acceptable level of performance. What rating should I give for this outcome in the final assessment?

- If the student has improved since midpoint but is still not demonstrating all of the associated behaviours to an acceptable level, it is appropriate to still give the student the same rating of “needs improvement”. A student can have some improvement, but not enough improvement, to meet an acceptable level of performance.
- If a student’s performance declines over the remainder of the placement, a rating of “not meeting an acceptable level of performance” may be appropriate.

3. Based on my observations of the student, I feel there are deficiencies in behaviours and skills described in the assessment that warrant ratings that will ultimately lead to a placement failure. This makes me uncomfortable due to feelings of guilt, fear of potential resentment from the student, or disappointment in my precepting ability. What should I do?

- As a preceptor, The Faculty understands that you are providing your assessment of how the student is performing based on the criteria stated in the course performance assessment. If a student is not performing the behaviours and/or skills expected, it is not your fault. You are simply conveying the information to The Faculty and The Faculty will support you in your assessment. In these challenging situations, we encourage you to reach out to Faculty for additional assistance early in the placement whenever possible.

4. When do I use “unable to rate”?

- Unable to rate should only be used when you have not been able to observe the behaviours associated with the outcome. If “unable to rate” is used at the midpoint, it should trigger the preceptor to incorporate the learning activity into the remainder of the placement in order to observe the behaviours associated with the outcome prior to the final assessment.

5. My student is struggling to fulfill the role of the pharmacist, however, I’m having difficulty identifying the specific deficiency; it may be a gap in process or it may be a lack of knowledge. How do I use the student assessment tool to tease out where the gap exists? And is this an appropriate place to use “unable to rate”?

- Although the tool separates knowledge (scholar outcomes) from process (care provider outcomes), these key areas are not mutually exclusive. If the student has a lack of process, the knowledge gap may be present as an inability to apply their knowledge. If there is a knowledge gap, the student’s process may be insufficient to self identify the knowledge gap. Since these outcomes are closely linked, it may be appropriate to give a more conservative rating for the applicable outcomes from both areas.
- This is not a good place to use “unable to rate”. This rating should only be used when you have not been able to observe the behaviours. If you are truly uncertain of their knowledge because of possible process deficiencies, then rate the outcome as “needs improvement” based on your observations of their inability to apply knowledge.

6. I have difficulty in determining what level of proficiency my student should have in order to meet the requirements of the outcome.

- Many of the behaviours listed for an associated outcome will indicate the level of proficiency expected of the student. This may be done using words like “with support” or “independently” or it may be inferred within the behaviour statement itself. Consider your observations of the student performing each of the associated behaviours as written in the assessment outcome. This will guide you to determine your student’s ability to meet the required level of proficiency for the course outcome.

7. I have a student that is doing very well. When I review the assessment questions, my student is displaying behaviours well beyond the proficiency described for the associated outcome. At times I feel the assessment tool is no longer applicable to my student. For example, my student engages patients independently and requires no prompting. However the assessment asks me whether I agree that my student requires little prompting. How do I complete the assessment?

- The behaviours in the tool describe the minimum requirement to meet an acceptable level of performance. If your student has displayed behaviours and skills that surpass the minimum requirement then “exceeds an acceptable level of performance” is an appropriate rating of the outcome.

8. What additional resources exist to help me with assessment?

- Additional resources include:
 - A YouTube webinar titled “Experiential Education Student Performance Assessments” presented by Dr. Ken Cor, Director of Assessment, Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences provides an overview of the underlying principles and use of the student assessment forms. The link is https://youtu.be/helc7ynfe_k
 - For BSc Pharm courses, the “Quick Reference Guide” accessed at <https://www.ualberta.ca/pharmacy/preceptors/preceptors/course-information> provides assessment tips and an overview of the course assessments.
 - For PharmD courses, the course syllabus and “2 page course overview” (<https://www.ualberta.ca/pharmacy/preceptors/preceptors/course-information>) provides an overview of course assessments in table format.
 - The Preceptor Guide, available on our website at <https://www.ualberta.ca/pharmacy/preceptors/preceptors/training-and-resources/preceptor-guide>, has an abundance of information for preceptors including assessment information.