

A SCOPING REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT APPROACHES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Introduction

Assessment is a dynamic and fundamental component of the educational process, particularly in higher education, where it plays a pivotal role in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes (Gudoniene et al., 2025; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Winstone & Boud, 2022). Traditionally, assessments in higher education have been categorized based on their primary functions: evaluating student performance or program effectiveness at specific points in time, typically through standardized tests or end-of-term exams; supporting ongoing learning by identifying areas needing improvement and delivering constructive feedback to students; and promoting students' ownership of their learning process through metacognitive development (Glazer, 2014; Scriven, 1991; Wiliam, 2011; Millard & Breukelman, 2025). These three functions (evaluation, developmental support, and self-regulation) provide distinct yet complementary lenses through which to understand assessment's multifaceted role in higher education and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. This chapter aims to provide insight into the interplay between assessment and learning in college education and to analyze how the role of assessment has evolved over the past decade.

From functions to influence: how assessment guides learning

Assessment serves as the engine that shapes learning in higher education because it signals which knowledge and skills matter, guides students' self-regulation, and supplies educators with evidence to refine instruction. As Schellekens et al. (2021) note, assessment "affects students' understanding of learning tasks and impacts the quality of students' involvement." The implications of assessment extend far beyond grades and credentials. Crisp (2012) and Boud (2016) stress that assessment must significantly contribute to students' future learning goals and enhance their capacity for self-regulation. Boud (2016) further argued that all assessments should be sustainable, extending beyond a single college course to cultivate life-long learners who can evaluate their own performance and adjust their strategies accordingly (Bennett, 2011; Boud et al., 2016; Crisp, 2012; Glazer, 2014; Hattie et al., 2005).

This recognition has fueled a strong argument that assessment must transition from focusing solely on evaluation to prioritizing developmental support. In this approach, assessment procedures and practices are designed to actively support learning rather than undermine student confidence, achievement, and progress (Torrance, 2007; Børte et al., 2023). Nevertheless, many scholars suggest that all assessment functions, when thoughtfully implemented, can serve students' learning needs. In their comprehensive review of assessment in higher education, Benseman et al. (2005) highlight its importance to effective teaching, specifically emphasizing the often-overlooked role of diagnostic assessment. Diagnostic assessment is used to identify weaknesses in prior knowledge or skill levels to guide teaching activities, functioning, as well as developmental and evaluative assessments to create a more complete picture of student learning (Benseman et al., 2005; Luo et al., 2025).

The landscape of assessment in higher education underwent dramatic changes during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2023), when educational institutions worldwide were forced to adapt quickly to online learning environments. As a result, according to Yang and Xin (2022), traditional educational measurement is now facing a systematic transformation, shifting from primarily evaluative functions toward greater emphasis on developmental support and student self-regulation. While the concept of online learning itself is not new (Smith & Drago, 2004), the pandemic period underscored the urgent necessity of reliable assessments designed specifically for digital contexts. This shift moved higher education away from traditional paper-and-pencil methods toward digital assessment, alternative assessments, and sophisticated e-assessment tools. As Buzzetto-More and Alade (2006) note, e-assessments may include pre- and post-testing, diagnostic analysis, student tracking, rubric use and analysis, the support and delivery of authentic assessment through project-based learning (such as WebQuests, simulations, and e-portfolios), artifact collection, and data aggregation and analysis (Drago et al., 2002; Gikandi et al., 2011; Kaya-Capocci et al., 2022; Sillat et al., 2021). These technological innovations have not only expanded the toolkit available to educators but have also raised new questions about equity, authenticity, and the future direction of assessment practices in higher education.

More recently, the rapid advancement and widespread availability of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, particularly generative AI such as large language models, have introduced unprecedented challenges to assessment practices in higher education (Kofinas et al., 2025; Perkins et al., 2023). The ability of AI to produce sophisticated written work, solve complex problems, and generate creative content has fundamentally questioned traditional assessment methods that rely on independent student work. Educators now grapple with distinguishing between student-generated and AI-generated content, prompting urgent discussions about academic integrity, the design of AI-resistant assessments, and whether assessment practices should adapt to incorporate AI as a learning tool rather than simply attempting to prohibit its use (Farrelly & Baker, 2023). This technological disruption has accelerated conversations about what competencies higher education should assess and how authentic learning can be demonstrated in an AI-augmented world.

Assessments and feedback

Feedback stands at the core of assessment, serving as the vital mechanism that transforms evaluation into learning. Without feedback, assessment remains a static measure of performance rather than a dynamic tool for growth and development. It is through feedback that assessments become meaningful to students, enabling them to understand not only what

they have achieved but also how they can improve (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wisniewski et al., 2020). In essence, feedback converts assessment data into actionable insights, bridging the gap between where students are and where they need to be in their learning journey.

The sources of feedback in education vary widely, typically including teacher feedback, peer evaluation, and self-assessments (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Black and Wiliam (1998) argued that teacher feedback, which is considered a form of formative feedback, is essential to the learning process and can lead to significant gains when effectively implemented. Lipnevich et al. (2021) showed that enhanced learning outcomes are associated with specific types of feedback, such as explanations or identification of areas for improvement. However, the effectiveness of feedback is not guaranteed, and positive effects on learning cannot be assured. A student's ability and willingness to use feedback are critical factors in determining its effect. Students must mindfully process feedback information for it to influence their learning (Lipnevich et al., 2021; Lipnevich & Smith, 2018; Wisniewski et al., 2020; Winstone et al., 2017).

Another important source of feedback is peers. Peer feedback is recognized as a valuable educational tool that enhances learning. Research indicates that students who engage in peer feedback demonstrate greater improvement in their learning outcomes (Noroozi et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2024). Similarly, groups utilizing peer feedback achieve higher levels of success compared to those relying solely on teacher feedback (Gielen et al., 2010; Huisman et al., 2019). Furthermore, studies show that peer feedback in online platforms fosters interaction benefits, allowing students ample time to review and reflect. Vonderwell and colleagues (2007) argue that asynchronous discussions allow students to assess their knowledge, revisit previous messages, and compose carefully thought-out and meaningful responses (Gikandi et al., 2011). Dominick et al. (1997) and Lerchenfeldt et al. (2019), for example, explored feedback in peer groups. Their results showed that receiving feedback within groups was highly effective because it promoted collaborative learning and engagement. Research shows, however, that students favor teacher feedback, even if peer feedback is of better quality (Lopera-Oquendo et al., 2025).

Self-assessment and self-feedback encourage students to take an active role in their learning. Klenowski (1995) describes self-assessment as the evaluation of one's performance, which is crucial for learning (eNicol, 2021; Tomazin et al., 2023). While self-assessment has gained traction in higher education, studies reveal that its implementation remains extremely limited in many countries. For instance, in Spanish universities, only 5.7% of courses incorporate self-assessments, and a mere 2.6% utilize self-grading (Panadero et al., 2019). In addition, the effectiveness of self-assessments depends on proper implementation, including clear training and well-defined criteria (Mannion, 2022). Panadero et al. (2019) emphasize shifting from evaluative self-assessment (simply grading oneself) to developmental self-assessment focused on reflection and improvement. Key steps include defining clear assessment criteria, teaching students how to use these criteria, providing feedback on their self-assessments, and helping them apply the insights gained to enhance their performance.

In language learning, written corrective feedback (WCF) is particularly popular (Barrot, 2021; Truscott, 1996; Benson & Dekeyser, 2019). WCF involves providing students with written comments on their work, specifically addressing errors in grammar, punctuation, syntax, and mechanics to enhance students' writing skills and overall language proficiency. However, researchers have argued that corrective grammar feedback may be counterproductive for developing writers and should be abandoned in favor of alternative feedback such as responding to students' ideas, organization, and methods that support the overall writing process (Zhang & Cheng, 2021).

It is essential to address rubrics when discussing feedback, as they provide the necessary framework for evaluating and understanding performance. According to Reddy and Andrade (2010), rubrics are utilized across a wide array of disciplines, including the liberal arts, medicine, and education. Rubrics are used to enhance student achievement, instructional improvement, program evaluation, and, most importantly, feedback (Cockett & Jackson, 2018; Nicol, 2021; Lipnevich et al., 2023). A study by Andrade (2000) found that students who used rubrics scored significantly higher on performance tasks than those who did not. Specifically, the study showed a 10–30% increase in scores when rubrics were utilized (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Lipnevich et al. (2014) studied 100 undergraduate students across three urban campuses who were randomly assigned to receive one of three types of feedback: a detailed rubric, proposal exemplars, or both together. Analysis of the students' drafts showed that all feedback types resulted in significant improvements in writing quality; however, feedback with detailed rubrics produced the strongest effects. The researchers followed up with a study that involved several tasks and, again, demonstrated the effectiveness of rubrics for feedback purposes (Lipnevich et al., 2023).

Feedback has also evolved over the years to include video, audio, and AI-generated formats. The systematic review by Lee and Moore (2024) synthesizes findings from ten empirical, peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2023, focusing on the use of generative artificial intelligence for automated feedback in higher education. The review highlights significant opportunities, such as timely and personalized feedback and a reduction in teacher workload. The study also finds that AI feedback is predominantly applied across various disciplines, including language learning, academic writing, and STEM. Venter et al. (2025) argued that AI-generated feedback has changed the traditional teacher-student dynamic within education. It allows students to receive timely feedback without placing pressure on teachers. However, there are many challenges with AI-generated feedback. For instance, GPT-4 generates feedback based on statistical patterns rather than a true understanding of the materials. Additionally, AI learns from vast collections of text, and any inherent biases present in this database will be reflected in the student feedback. Another issue is the rapid pace at which AI is evolving; rules and regulations cannot keep up with the changes (Mulaudzi & Venter, 2025). Samuelson (2023) examines the ethical issues and copyright challenges posed by AI, focusing specifically on the ongoing legal disputes surrounding the use of copyrighted material as training data for AI systems.

To examine assessment and feedback in the studies included in this scoping review, we organize assessment and feedback practices according to their primary functions: evaluation, developmental support, and promotion of self-regulation. Evaluative assessments typically measure student achievements at the end of a course or module. Examinations, essays, and multiple-choice tests represent the dominant evaluative formats. Although these methods are limited in revealing the depth of student knowledge, they are commonly used in higher education. Portfolios can also serve an evaluative function if used to gauge final performance (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Elton & Johnson, 2002; Glazer, 2014; Lipnevich et al., 2021; Wiliam, 2011). In other words, evaluative assessments primarily function to produce a final grade or credential rather than to guide ongoing improvement, as they typically provide minimal feedback (Pereira et al., 2016).

Assessments designed for developmental support extend beyond simple procedures such as questioning, feedback, sharing criteria, and peer and self-assessment by emphasizing the nature and sequence of tasks. This focus cultivates a learning environment where students become active participants and take ownership of their progress (Marshall & Drummond,

2006). For teachers, developmentally oriented assessments prove valuable because they provide clear learning objectives, shared criteria, and regular, focused feedback that directly guides instruction (Torrance, 2007). In essence, these assessments utilize clear learning objectives, shared success criteria, targeted questioning, and timely feedback to support learners as they advance toward established goals. The primary purpose is to make the learning process visible and enable teachers to adjust instruction effectively. However, when assessment activity is designed not merely to give teachers feedback but to make students the primary agents of their own assessment, it becomes focused on promoting self-regulation (Minott, 2024).

According to Minott (2024), assessments that promote self-regulation are student-centered, requiring learners to monitor, evaluate, and adjust their own work, turning assessment into a tool for self-directed learning rather than teacher-directed feedback. The scoping review by Schellekens et al. (2021) shows that such self-regulatory assessment practices are still emerging in higher education settings. The researchers showed that only 26.7% of the 131 studies examined were conducted in higher education, indicating that most college classrooms continue to rely on traditional, teacher-directed assessment. Self-regulatory assessments view the student as the “critical connector” who actively uses assessment information to set goals, self-monitor, self-evaluate, and adjust strategies, essentially making assessment a metacognitive process that drives further learning. In practice, learners engage in self- and peer assessments (Berry, 2013; Schellekens et al., 2021; Torrance, 2007). Additionally, assessments focused on self-regulation explicitly target students’ self-regulatory capacities. The literature identifies self-assessment, self-directed learning, self-regulation, and self-evaluation as core elements. By requiring learners to monitor, evaluate, and adjust their own work, these practices improve the ability to plan, track, and modify learning strategies (Minott, 2024).

The evolution of assessment practices in higher education reflects a fundamental shift in how educators conceptualize the relationship between evaluation and learning. While evaluative assessments continue to serve important credentialing and accountability functions, the growing emphasis on developmental support and self-regulation signals a broader recognition that an assessment’s ultimate value lies in its capacity to promote learning rather than simply measure it (Ross & Rajkoomar, 2024). This shift is evident in the increasing attention to diverse feedback sources, from teachers and peers to AI-generated systems, and in the proliferation of tools such as rubrics that make assessment criteria transparent and actionable for students (Weidlich et al., 2025).

Moving forward, the field faces critical questions about how to balance evaluation, developmental support, and self-regulation within coherent assessment systems; how to ensure that feedback, regardless of its source, is both actionable and equitably accessible to all students; and how to design assessments that prepare students not merely for final grades but for lifelong learning in a rapidly changing world. The following sections of this chapter will examine how these challenges and opportunities have manifested in research published between 2014 and 2024, providing insight into current practices and identifying directions for future inquiry.

Current study

During the past decade, from 2014 to 2024, many studies on assessment in higher education were published. We focused on a carefully selected sample of studies that met our specific inclusion criteria (see Figure 22.1). These articles reported on diverse research methods

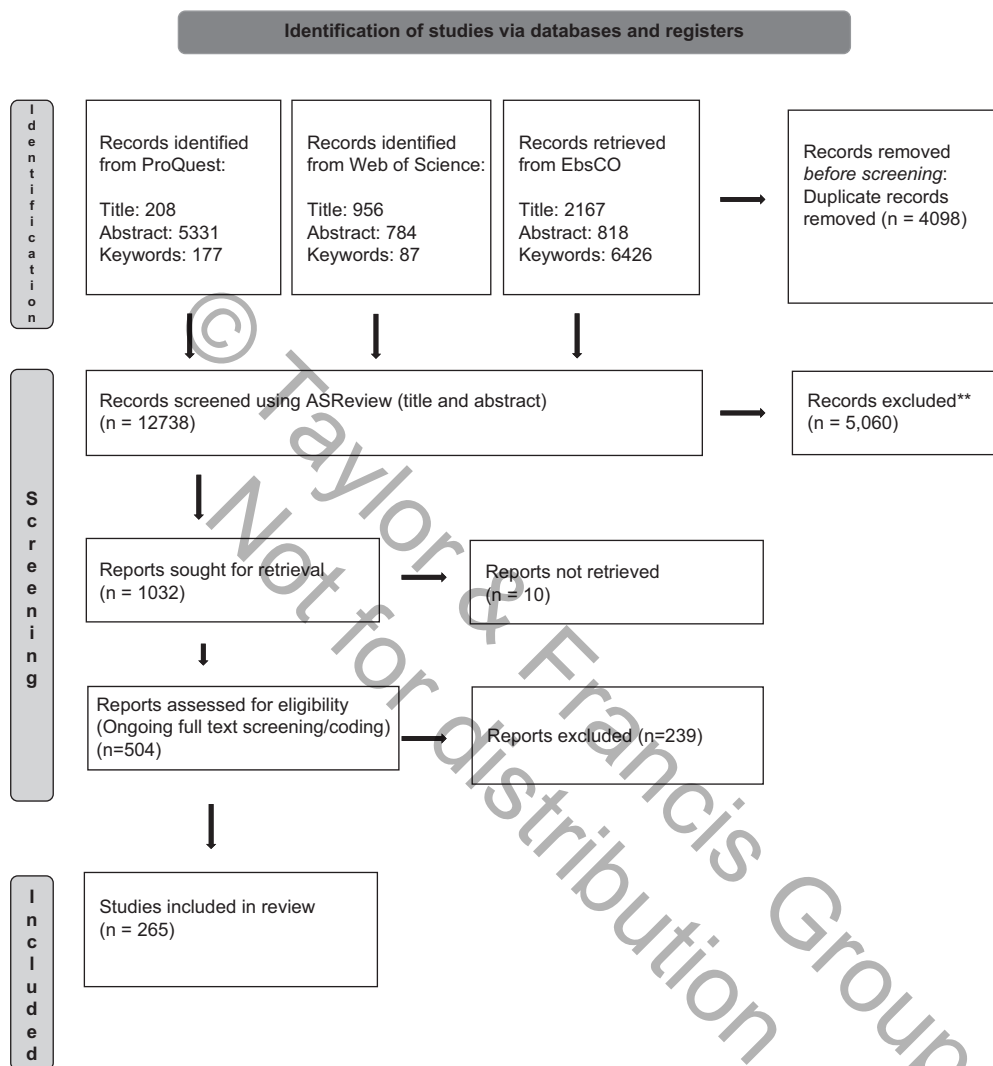


Figure 22.1 PRISMA flow diagram.

employed in higher education assessment across different countries and disciplines. This chapter summarizes and discusses a selection of these empirical studies, examining assessments through the lens of their primary functions: evaluation, developmental support, and promotion of self-regulation. In light of the rapid expansion of online learning during the pandemic and the rise of AI, this review investigates current trends in assessment and feedback practices. By systematically mapping cross-country differences, the most common assessment approaches, and the research methods used to study them, this chapter reveals both enduring patterns and emerging shifts, providing evidence to inform more effective assessment design in higher education. To guide this systematic investigation of assessment practices in higher education, we posed the following research questions:

- 1 What were the primary aims of studies concerning assessment in higher education between 2014 and 2024?
- 2 What assessment trends were observed across different countries?
- 3 What methods were used to investigate assessment in higher education?

Methods

Eligibility criteria

This research follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol (Moher et al., 2015) (see Figure 22.1). The study examined assessment practices over a ten-year period from 2014 to 2024. While sources from 2025 were incorporated into the introduction to contextualize emerging trends, they were excluded from the systematic data collection. The research process was initiated and concluded in December 2024, focusing specifically on the decade prior. In addition to this time-frame, the study adopted the following eligibility criteria for the screening process:

- C1:** Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, case studies, interviews)
- C2:** Academic settings in higher education and post-secondary education (universities, colleges)
- C3:** Assessment methods (formative, summative, peer assessment, self-assessment, feedback)
- C4:** Written in English

Information sources and search strategy

This systematic review followed the recommendations of PRISMA (Moher et al., 2015) and APA's (Appelbaum et al., 2018) reporting standards for systematic reviews. The literature was searched in the following databases:

- Web of Science (White literature)
- EBSCO (White literature)
- ProQuest Dissertations (White literature)

The following search terms were used to search the database: ("university education" OR "higher education" OR "tertiary education" OR "Post Secondary" OR "college education") AND ("assessment" OR "assessment approach" OR "assessment method" OR "formative assess" OR "summative assess" OR "peer assess" OR "self-assess" OR "feedback" OR "grad").

Once all the papers were located in the databases based on title and abstract, the data were exported to the Zotero library, a bibliography management tool (Ivey & Crum, 2018). Then, the articles were de-duplicated using the ASReview Lab, an AI tool that helps with title and abstract screening (van Dijk et al., 2024). The steps were as follows:

- Phase 1: Given the rapidly growing volume of scientific publications, ASReview and Rayyan were employed to streamline the identification of relevant studies (Scherhag & Burgard, 2023). ASReview was used to rank papers according to their relevance to the

inclusion criteria. The highest-ranked studies were then exported and uploaded to Rayyan, a free web-based tool that facilitates efficient screening of large numbers of articles (Ouzzani et al., 2016).

- Phase 2: Abstracts of the Phase 1 studies were reviewed to determine whether each article met the inclusion criteria. Studies that passed this initial screening were then subjected to full-text review, applying the selection criteria to confirm eligibility.
- Phase 3: A PRISMA flowchart (Figure 22.1) was used to document the complete search and screening process, providing a transparent record of study selection across all phases of the systematic review.

Data extraction and data analysis

To manage the results of the different searches, Zotero (Corporation for Digital Scholarship, 2023) was used. A spreadsheet labeled “Search-Results” was utilized to document the extracted information from the papers. In this file, the filtering process was coded to include Phases 1 and 2, as previously described.

Data synthesis

Systematic review processing was conducted using R (R Core Team, 2018). First, a script was applied to remove duplicate records. The remaining articles were then uploaded to ASReview, which ranked studies according to relevance based on the inclusion criteria. Screening continued until 8% of the total articles had been reviewed, which served as the stopping criterion for ASReview. The most relevant studies identified by ASReview were exported to the AI-powered systematic review management platform Rayyan, where full-text screening was performed to determine final inclusion or exclusion. A total of 265 studies met the criteria and were included in this review.

Results

After applying our inclusion criteria and screening procedures, we ended up with 265 studies. We now turn to an analysis of these studies, examining the functions of assessment, their distribution across countries, and the research methods employed. This approach allows us to identify both global trends and methodological patterns in how assessment practices have been studied and conceptualized in higher education.

Trends in the functions of assessments

Studies included in this review focused on three primary assessment functions: assessments designed for developmental support (formative assessment), assessments promoting self-regulation (peer and self-assessment), and evaluative assessments (summative assessment). Across the 265 studies selected, there is a clear predominance of research on developmental and self-regulatory assessment practices, with comparatively fewer studies addressing evaluative assessment. Specifically, studies addressing developmental support and formative feedback accounted for the majority of the sample, reflecting the field’s sustained emphasis on guiding and improving student learning rather than solely measuring outcomes. Research on self-regulation, including peer assessment and self-assessment, also represents a substantial

portion of the literature, highlighting an ongoing interest in promoting learner autonomy, metacognitive awareness, and active engagement in the learning process.

Evaluative assessments appear less frequently and are often studied in combination with formative or self-regulatory practices, rather than in isolation. For example, some studies examined the interplay between formative feedback and summative exams to better understand how ongoing guidance influences end-point achievement. Alsuwaidi (2019) explored the integration of formative and summative assessments to provide a more holistic view of learning, while Broadbent et al. (2021) investigated how self-regulated learning influences both formative outcomes and summative grades in online and blended learning contexts. These combined approaches underscore a growing recognition that assessment functions are interdependent and that understanding student learning requires examining the relationships among multiple assessment types.

Across disciplines, this pattern persists. In STEM education, health and medical education, and language learning, the focus is predominantly on developmental assessment, particularly in relation to feedback practices that facilitate skill acquisition and concept mastery. Self-regulatory assessments are often incorporated alongside these practices to encourage students to monitor their own progress, reflect on learning strategies, and adjust behavior to achieve desired outcomes. Evaluative assessments are generally included to provide summative confirmation of learning but are rarely the central focus of investigation.

This distribution of studies points to several important trends in assessment research. First, there is a clear international consensus on the importance of assessments that support learning and self-regulation, transcending disciplines and educational contexts. Second, research increasingly recognizes that assessment functions are interconnected; formative, self-regulatory, and summative practices often operate synergistically to shape the student learning experience. Third, there is growing attention to technological integration, including AI-supported feedback and digital platforms, which can enhance the scalability and immediacy of formative and self-regulatory practices. Finally, while evaluative assessment remains necessary, it is largely examined in relation to other assessment functions, highlighting a shift in the field toward understanding assessment as a dynamic process embedded within learning rather than merely a mechanism for documenting achievement.

Taken together, these findings indicate that contemporary assessment research prioritizes supporting, guiding, and improving student learning, with formative and self-regulatory practices occupying a central role. Evaluative assessments remain part of the landscape but are increasingly studied as complementary to practices that actively foster learning, autonomy, and reflection. This integrated view of assessment reflects a broader theoretical and practical shift toward understanding assessment as an essential component of learning processes, rather than as an end-point measure alone.

Cross-country trends

Examining national trends in assessment research reveals both variation in research output and a striking convergence in substantive focus. In terms of volume, the largest contributions originate from the United States (35 studies) and China (33 studies), followed by Turkey (23), Thailand (15), the United Kingdom and Iran (14 each), Australia (13), and Canada (12). While these figures reflect uneven research productivity across countries, they also provide a useful lens for examining how assessment priorities align or diverge across national contexts.

Across all high-contributing countries, assessments designed to support student development dominate the research landscape. These studies most commonly examined teacher-provided feedback, portfolios, oral presentations, and related classroom-embedded assessment practices. Research on assessments promoting self-regulation was also well represented, focusing primarily on self-monitoring, self-assessment, and metacognitive strategies. Within this category, the United States contributed 12 studies, closely followed by China with 10, while Turkey, the United Kingdom, Iran, and Australia each contributed 4, and Canada 3. In contrast, evaluative assessments received markedly less attention. Studies examining final examinations and other summative measures were relatively rare, with the United States contributing four and other countries contributing between three and none. Notably, a substantial proportion of the studies from China focused on English as a Second Language instruction and essay writing, reflecting the specific instructional priorities and assessment contexts shaping research agendas within that national setting.

This pattern extends beyond the highest-contributing countries. Nations producing between five and nine studies, including the Netherlands, Japan, Spain, Germany, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Oman, and Malaysia, show a nearly identical distribution of emphases. Of the 52 studies from this group, 38 addressed assessments aimed at supporting learning processes, 19 focused on assessments related to self-regulation, and only 3 examined evaluative assessment practices. Despite differences in educational systems and policy environments, research attention in these contexts remains firmly oriented toward assessment as an integral component of learning rather than as a mechanism for final judgment.

The same consistency is evident among countries contributing between one and three studies, a group that includes Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Nepal, the Philippines, Romania, Singapore, Tunisia, Bahrain, Brazil, Finland, Pakistan, New Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Oman. Although research output from these countries is modest, their collective contributions reinforce the broader pattern. Together, these nations produced 37 studies focused on assessments supporting student development, 22 addressing self-regulatory processes, and only 6 examining evaluative assessments. The recurrence of this distribution across such a diverse set of educational and cultural contexts suggests that the observed emphasis is not an artifact of a few dominant research systems.

Taken together, these findings point to a strong and coherent alignment in assessment research priorities across national contexts. Despite substantial variation in research volume, educational structures, and cultural settings, studies consistently privilege assessment practices that are embedded within learning processes and that foreground student development and self-regulation. The comparatively limited attention devoted to evaluative or end-point measures suggests a field-wide shift in how assessment is conceptualized, from a tool for documenting achievement to a mechanism for shaping learning. The persistence of this pattern across countries with both extensive and limited research contributions indicates that this shift reflects a broader rethinking of the role of assessment in education, rather than a set of isolated or context-specific trends.

A note on methods of research

Across the body of studies reviewed, qualitative approaches were most prevalent, accounting for 57.31% of the research. Within this group, interviews constituted the most frequently

used method (28%), followed by focus groups (16%), with the remaining qualitative studies employing approaches such as document analysis, classroom observations, and reflective artifacts. This strong reliance on qualitative methods reflects the field's sustained interest in capturing participants' perspectives, instructional practices, and contextualized experiences of assessment, particularly when examining processes related to feedback, self-regulation, and learning development.

Quantitative methods were employed in 31.40% of the studies. Surveys represented 16% of the total sample, indicating a continued emphasis on measuring perceptions, attitudes, and self-reported behaviors at scale. Experimental designs accounted for 16.5% of the studies, with an equal proportion (16.5%) using quasi-experimental approaches. These designs were most often used to examine the effects of specific assessment practices or instructional interventions on learning-related outcomes, though they appeared less frequently than qualitative approaches overall.

Taken together, this distribution suggests that assessment research in this area prioritizes depth of understanding and contextual sensitivity over large-scale measurement or causal inference. While quantitative and experimental methods are clearly present, the dominance of qualitative designs highlights the complexity of the phenomena under study and the challenges associated with operationalizing assessment processes in controlled or standardized ways. At the same time, the relative scarcity of experimental and quasi-experimental studies points to an opportunity for future research to strengthen methodological diversity and contribute more robust evidence regarding the effectiveness of specific assessment practices across contexts.

Discussion

Trends and research approaches in assessment studies

Across the literature, assessment research is characterized by a sustained emphasis on feedback-rich, technology-supported practices that position assessment as integral to learning processes. A dominant strand focuses on technology-enhanced assessment, including online assessment systems, e-feedback platforms, screencast and video-based feedback, virtual reality applications, and automated writing evaluation. These studies frequently examine how digital tools support timely feedback, learner engagement, and iterative revision, particularly in language and writing contexts (Baleni, 2015; Martínez et al., 2015).

Peer assessment and peer feedback represent another major focus, especially in studies of writing and language learning. This work investigates feedback quality, peer interaction patterns, ability grouping, and feedback training, as well as impacts on performance, engagement, and self-efficacy (Huisman et al., 2017; Alqassab et al., 2017). Many of these studies rely on qualitative approaches, particularly interviews and focus groups, to capture learners' and teachers' experiences with peer-mediated feedback. Quantitative survey designs are also common, especially when examining students' perceptions of feedback usefulness or confidence in peer review processes.

Teacher-provided feedback constitutes a complementary line of inquiry, examining written, audio, video, and rubric-based feedback, as well as comparisons between instructor-generated and automated feedback. These studies often employ quasi-experimental or experimental designs to compare feedback modalities and assess their effects on outcomes such as writing accuracy, oral performance, and revision quality. At the same time, qualitative analyses are frequently used to explore how students interpret and act on teacher feedback.

Research on self-assessment and self-regulated assessment practices examines learners' use of criteria, reflective tasks, portfolios, and learning analytics to monitor and guide their own progress (Shintani & Aubrey, 2016; Korpi, 2019; Farahian & Avarzaman, 2018). This strand of research is predominantly qualitative, drawing on interviews, reflective artifacts, and observational data, though survey-based studies are also used to examine relationships between self-assessment practices, metacognitive awareness, and learning outcomes.

An increasingly visible body of work examines automated and AI-supported feedback, including automated writing evaluation systems and large language models such as Chat-GPT. These studies often adopt mixed or quantitative designs, using experiments or quasi-experiments to compare machine-generated, teacher-generated, and hybrid feedback models, alongside surveys measuring learner perceptions and engagement (Gozali et al., 2024; Kurt & Kurt, 2024; Wang, 2024). Complementing this work, studies of mobile and immersive assessment environments use platforms such as Moodle, Padlet, WhatsApp, virtual reality, games, and video-based tools to deliver formative feedback, with research designs ranging from qualitative case studies to controlled comparisons (Chang & Lin, 2019; Mahmoudi & Bugra, 2020; Yarahmadzahi & Goodarzi, 2020).

Across thematic areas, the methodological landscape of the literature reveals a clear preference for qualitative inquiry. Qualitative approaches account for 57.31% of the studies reviewed, with interviews comprising 28% and focus groups 16%, alongside document analysis, classroom observations, and reflective artifacts. This methodological emphasis reflects the field's sustained interest in understanding how assessment practices are experienced, interpreted, and enacted by learners and educators, particularly in relation to feedback processes, self-regulation, and learning development. Quantitative methods were employed in 31.40% of the studies, including surveys (16%) and both experimental and quasi-experimental designs (16.5% each). These designs were most commonly used to examine the effects of specific assessment practices or instructional interventions on learning-related outcomes. Taken together, this distribution suggests that research in this area prioritizes depth, context, and process over large-scale measurement or causal inference, while also pointing to opportunities for future work to expand methodological diversity and strengthen causal claims across contexts.

Despite these shared thematic and methodological patterns, national research traditions reveal distinct emphases. Studies from Turkey frequently prioritize teacher-driven and peer-mediated feedback, using qualitative and design-based approaches to examine rubric use, social media platforms, recorded oral feedback, and learning-analytics-informed process feedback. Research from China and Thailand places greater emphasis on technology-intensive feedback systems, including automated writing evaluation integrated with peer review, eye-tracking methods to examine engagement with feedback, and learning-analytics-driven personalization (Ma, 2020). In the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, research commonly combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to study peer feedback, technology-enhanced formative assessment, self-assessment through e-portfolios, and integrated feedback systems that blend teacher, peer, and AI-supported input. Across these contexts, authentic and portfolio-based assessments are frequently examined as mechanisms for supporting sustained learning and iterative improvement.

Limitations and implications for future research

As with any review, the present synthesis is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. Articulating these constraints is important not only

for appropriately situating the conclusions of this chapter but also for identifying promising directions for future scholarship in assessment research.

First, the review was restricted to English-language publications. While this decision was necessary for feasibility and consistency, it may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant research conducted and disseminated in other languages. Because assessment practices are closely intertwined with cultural, institutional, and policy contexts, studies published in non-English-speaking regions may offer perspectives, conceptual frameworks, or empirical insights that are underrepresented in the current synthesis. Consequently, the patterns identified in this chapter may reflect the priorities and assumptions of Anglophone and internationally indexed research communities more strongly than those of the global field. Future research would benefit from broader linguistic inclusion, as well as from reviews and empirical studies that deliberately engage with multilingual and regionally grounded scholarship.

Second, there is a notable imbalance in the geographical distribution of the included studies. A disproportionate number originate from the United States and China, whereas several countries, including Israel, are represented by only a single study. This uneven representation limits the generalizability of the findings and raises the possibility that dominant trends reflect context-specific educational systems, accountability structures, and research traditions. Although some patterns appear consistent across national contexts, the relative absence of studies from many regions constrains the extent to which claims about assessment practices can be considered globally representative. Addressing this limitation will require greater attention to cross-national and comparative research designs, as well as intentional inclusion of underrepresented educational contexts.

Third, the review focused primarily on published empirical studies and did not incorporate institutional artifacts such as course syllabi, grading policies, or formal assessment guidelines from colleges and universities. These materials play a central role in shaping assessment practices and may reveal tensions between institutional expectations and classroom-level enactment. Excluding such sources limits insight into how assessment is formally structured and regulated across systems. Future research that integrates institutional-level documents with empirical classroom studies could offer a more comprehensive and systemic understanding of assessment in higher education.

Finally, the methodological distribution of the reviewed studies warrants careful consideration. Although the strong reliance on qualitative approaches is well suited to capturing the complexity, nuance, and contextualized nature of assessment processes, it also constrains the strength of causal claims that can be drawn across studies. The relative scarcity of experimental and quasi-experimental designs suggests that many commonly endorsed assessment practices remain supported primarily by descriptive and interpretive evidence. Expanding methodological diversity through experimental, quasi-experimental, and longitudinal designs would strengthen the evidentiary base of the field and enable more robust conclusions about the effects of specific assessment practices across contexts and over time.

Taken together, these limitations highlight important opportunities for advancing assessment research. Broadening linguistic and geographical representation, attending more explicitly to cultural and contextual factors, diversifying methodological approaches, and incorporating institutional-level data all represent critical steps toward a more inclusive, rigorous, and theoretically grounded understanding of assessment in higher education.

Concluding remarks

Despite these limitations, the findings synthesized in this chapter offer a valuable snapshot of contemporary assessment research and practice. The convergence of themes across diverse contexts suggests a field increasingly concerned with how assessment supports learning, engagement, and student agency. At the same time, the limitations identified here underscore the need for more inclusive, methodologically diverse, and contextually grounded research. Addressing these gaps will be essential for advancing assessment theory, informing policy, and supporting effective and equitable assessment practices in higher education worldwide.

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