

# ASSESSING TECHNOLOGY

Using the  
**SECTIONS**  
model

## WHAT IS SECTIONS?

**S**tudents  
**E**ase of Use  
**C**osts  
**T**eaching & Learning  
**I**nteractivity  
**O**rganizational Issues  
**N**ovelty  
**S**peed

The **SECTIONS** model is a framework for selecting and using technology developed by Bates and Poole and described in the book *Effective Teaching With Technology in Higher Education*. The questions defined in the original model were fairly broad and designed to “facilitate decisions with regard to choice of technology at both the strategic and the tactical level, and also to help decide within a particular technology the most appropriate balance between different media.”\*

We attempted to drill down within each of the broad areas defined by SECTIONS (students, ease of use, costs, teaching and learning, interactivity, organizational issues, novelty and speed) to develop some questions around the kinds of considerations that seem important to the people we work with. This is a draft tool and we’ll refine as we work with it in various contexts over the coming months. Please send any feedback to [cindy.underhill@ubc.ca](mailto:cindy.underhill@ubc.ca).  
**We want to know how this works for you!**

### Planning Framework

The intent of this framework is to provide instructors and others who are integrating technology into their learning projects, with a framework for planning that will allow you assess the fit between:

- technology selected
- Your goals
- Support requirements

The framework encourages the consideration of questions in 8 areas of the SECTIONS model:

1. Students
2. Ease of Use
3. Costs
4. Teaching and learning
5. Interactivity
6. Organizational issues
7. Novelty
8. Speed



#### \*Reference

Bates, A.W.; and Poole, G. (2003)  
*Effective Teaching With Technology in Higher Education: Foundations For Success*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 79-80

Use it as a **guide for discussion** or more formal assessment depending on your needs



# Using the Framework

We hope the framework questions will help you to achieve clarity about the match between the technology you have chosen, your goals, and the expected support requirements that the technology will require – both for you and your learners. There are 3 parts to the process:

## PART 1: Define

Map out the direction you are headed. Specifics related to your context and goals are defined. See example below.

### Example

## PART 2: Assess

Use the checklist to evaluate the technology that you have chosen to use or investigate. You can use the checklist in consultation with your instructional designer, technology support person or other resource person familiar with the learning technology you are looking at. See example below.

## PART 3: Refine

Reflect on initial explorations of the tool (or initial experiments with its use). What feedback did you receive from students? What questions or “to-dos” do you need to address?

## Response Key

Each question can be responded to in the following way:

**Y** (yes)

**N** (no)

**N/A** (not applicable to my context)

**Importance:** Indicate the level of importance this item holds for you: high, med, low). This is useful as it defines the “deal breakers”.

**I need to consider:** Make your notes for things that you may need to follow up with.

### Part 1: Define

The text in red illustrates an example to refer to when completing your own assessment.

I really want students to learn: **to collaborate effectively on assembling research and writing an article in an authentic environment**

I think I could be more effective in facilitating this learning if **I used a platform that is already a part of students' everyday life and that I am intrigued by.**

The learning activity that I've chosen to address these objectives is **collaborative research on wild food sources in British Columbia.**

I'm considering this technology to support the learning activity **MediaWiki (public platform)**

### Part 2: Assess

	Questions to Ask...	Y	N	N/A	Importance (high,med,low)	I need to consider...
S	Students					Issues related to FOIPOP if I require students to sign up to use a service hosted outside UBC. Need orientation resources: public writing and editing.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are transferrable skills being developed?</li> <li>Does the technology allow for an appropriate degree of openness to the community beyond registered course participants?</li> <li>Can students show their work via web link (url)?</li> </ul>	X			High High	Need to be able to see evidence of participation in one place.

### Part 3: Refine

- What worked?
- What didn't work? Why?
- What needs to change?
- What's my plan for making those changes?



## PART 1: Define

I really want students to learn...

I think I could be more effective in facilitating this learning if...

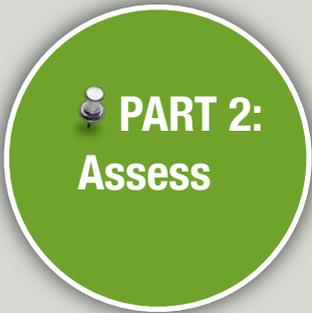
The learning activity that I've chosen to address these objectives is...

The technology I'm thinking of using to support this learning activity...



### Why?

Defining what you are trying to accomplish is important in establishing some direction for your efforts. To assist in your thinking/planning, complete these sentences.



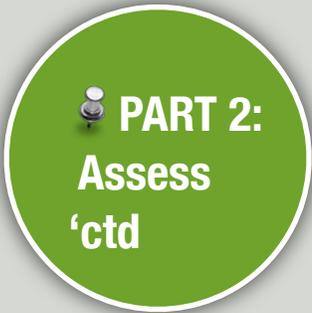
## PART 2: Assess

Questions to Ask...	Y	N	N/A	Importance (high,med,low)	I need to consider...
<b>S</b> Students					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are transferrable skills being developed?</li> <li>• Does the technology allow for an appropriate degree of openness to the community beyond registered course participants?</li> <li>• Can students show their work via web link (url)?</li> </ul>					
<b>E</b> Ease of Use					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will students need to make a major investment in time to learn how to use the technology?</li> <li>• Will I need to make a major investment in time to learn this technology?</li> <li>• Am I comfortable enough with the technology to guide students?</li> </ul>					
<b>C</b> Costs					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the time costs relatively low to design a learning environment using this technology (or at least cost/benefit ratio is favorable)?</li> <li>• Will students incur additional costs as a result of incorporating this new technology/approach?</li> <li>• Are there licensing costs associated with the hosting/archiving of materials beyond the life of the course?</li> </ul>					
<b>T</b> Teaching and Learning					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this technology support the learning goals that I have identified?</li> <li>• Will students be engaged in authentic, real-world learning as a result of implementing this technology?</li> <li>• Does this technology support peer/self assessment as well as instructor assessment?</li> </ul>					



### Why?

**Assessing the potential fit between the technology you want to use, your goals, and the anticipated support requirements can lead you to a decision that will match what you want to do with the resources available. The questions encourage you to consider the features that are important to you and the considerations that you may want to note along the way – perhaps to come back to later**



## PART 2: Assess 'ctd

Questions to Ask...	Y	N	N/A	Importance (high,med,low)	I need to consider...
<b>I Interactivity</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does this technology support interactions with peers, instructors and others associated or contributing to the learning tasks?</li> <li>Does this technology allow for sharing/collaboration with learning communities beyond registered course participants?</li> <li>Can people easily interact with the products/resources developed in the course?</li> </ul>					
<b>O Organizational Issues</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the support structures in place to maintain and update this technology?</li> <li>Is there help available for me or my students if we need it?</li> <li>Is there a way for me to retrieve my material if this technology fails or is replaced?</li> <li>Does this technology work with the SIS?</li> <li>Will students need to manage their own accounts?</li> <li>Will I need to add students manually into the online environment?</li> </ul>					
<b>N Novelty</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will this represent a new approach to teaching for me?</li> <li>Will this provide a new and (novel) learning experience for students?</li> <li>Are there examples of use in an educational context?</li> </ul>					
<b>S Speed</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can I make changes to content and learning activities on the fly?</li> <li>Is this a new "beta" technology or tried and true?</li> <li>Can I be independent (ultimately) in my use of this technology?</li> </ul>					



### Consider...

**You may want to address the questions on this checklist with your instructional designer, technology support person or another resource person who has experience with the technology you are considering.**

**If you decide to move ahead with your plan to use this technology, consider Part 3 as your follow up after implementation.**



## PART 3: Refine

What worked?

What didn't work and why?

I need to change....

My plan to make this change is...



### Why?

**Refining your approach requires some reflection on the activity. Create a plan to make any changes or refinements.**