

RTD True Mastery Typology

By: Marjorie Wine
Alexander Hoffman

The RTD (Rigorous Test Development) project is an attempt to build a professionalized content development practice that focuses on individual item quality, particularly by leaning into the importance of validity throughout the content development process. It assumes that content development professionals develop professional judgment that can be raised, honed and calibrated by providing frameworks and clarifying expectations in ways that account for the constraints and demands of typical practice within test development, today. RTD is a conscious and deliberate attempt to respond to the disparity in status, training and shared knowledgebases between psychometrically oriented professionals and content development professionals.

RTD True Mastery Typology

This typology is *not* about performance levels that one might report from an assessment. Rather, it is a more theoretical framework about the true range of proficiency that people truly possess. Assessment developers and consumers should be careful to be mindful of the kinds of proficiency claims that assessments can support and the various costs (e.g., financial, testing time) of generating sufficient evidence to support

0: No Proficiency

The student has no ability with or understanding of the standard, KSA or Targeted Cognition.

1: Emerging Proficiency

The student has partial ability with or understanding of the standard, KSA or Targeted Cognition.

2: On Demand Proficiency

The student exhibits ability with or understanding of the standard, KSA or Targeted Cognition when prompted to do so, but does not know when it is appropriate to do so without such prompting. That is, the student does not realize on their own when the standard, KSA or Targeted Cognition would be useful in solving a ill-structured or complex.

3: Elective Mastery

The student exhibits ability with or understanding of the standard, KSA or Targeted Cognition on their own, but does not always remember to check whether the standard, KSA or Targeted Cognition is appropriate. That is, the student often has to consciously remember to apply the KSA or Targeted Cognition, but *is* able to so do so at those times.

4: True Mastery

The student habitually and even unconsciously applies their understanding of the standard, KSA or Targeted Cognition as appropriate as needed, and in conjunction with other KSAs.

On Demand Assessment of Mastery

It is difficult for standardized assessment to consider Level 3 (Elective Mastery) or Level 4 (True Mastery) because standardized assessments are generally on demand assessments. They usually signal quite strongly what KSAs are needed to respond to an item. Various forms of constructed response items can make it more appropriate to infer Elective Mastery, based on test results. However, the frequent heightened stakes of standardized assessment – however real or however imagined – may sufficiently focus a student beyond their usual habits that True Mastery cannot be safely inferred.