Course – Level Academic Assessment Made Simple and Easy

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Learning Objectives

- Are the intended learning outcomes faculty want their students to attain by the end of the course.

- They are designed to:
  - Communicate your course expectations to students
  - Provide a framework for students, indicating what they will learn and how well they will do it
  - Provide a framework for the assessments you design for the course
Learning Objectives

- Based on two fundamental questions:
  - What do you want your students to learn?
  - What do you want them to be able to do with the knowledge and skills they will acquire from your course?
Some Quick Points

- Student learning objectives should:
  - Be measurable and manageable
  - Clear and understandable to students

- Some Good Examples (students will be able to)
  - Demonstrate a basic understanding of interdisciplinary theories and applications.
  - Describe the ways you can create a successful experience in college.
  - Develop a philosophy of career development.
Assessment Instruments

Questions to ask yourself before you select an instrument:

- What outcome(s) are you measuring?
- What type(s) of criteria will you need to measure the outcome(s)?
- What type of data is most meaningful to you (direct, indirect, qualitative, quantitative)?
The Great Debate: Grades

- The most commonly used assessment instrument is the course grade
- Grades are straightforward, simple, and time-saving
- But, do grades really indicate how well students are learning?
Grades & Assessment

This example is designed to clarify how grades can be used to assess student learning

Assignment

Overall Grade by Student  9.2
Types of Assessment Instruments

- There are two types of instruments: direct and indirect

- Direct instruments enable faculty to formulate a perception of how well their students learn. The instruments include the following:
  - Capstone projects
  - Senior theses
  - Exhibits
  - Performances
  - Pass rates or scores on licensure, certification, and subject area tests
  - Student publications or conference presentations
  - Employer and internship supervisor ratings of student performance
Indirect instruments allow faculty to get student and non-student perceptions of how well students learn. These instruments primarily include:

- Focus group interviews with students
- Student perception surveys (course evaluations, NSSE, CIRP, SSI)
- Employer surveys
- Alumni surveys
Item Analysis

- One simple, effective method is the item analysis
  - For an individual item on an exam, divide the number of correct responses by the total number of responses.
  - For example, 20 students respond correctly to an item. 100 total students attempted the item. \( \frac{20}{100} = .2 \), or 20%. What does this tell you about this particular item?

- The resulting index provides a quick piece of data that can help you plan or revise instruction
Embedded Questions

- They can measure what students have learned about a particular topic, and also measure their critical thinking/analytical skills.

- For example:
  - With knowledge gained from class lectures and supplemental readings, if you were an advisor to King George III, why would you advise him to antagonize such groups as merchants, lawyers, ship captains, newspaper editors, and tavern owners with a tax on their legal stamps?
Other Types of Instruments

- Course and homework assignments
- Exams and quizzes
- Term papers and reports
- Research projects
- Class discussions
- Rubrics
- Others?
“Closing the loop” is part of a reflective, ongoing process by instructors to:

- Examine student learning performance and make changes (if they are necessary)
- Determine if students are meeting expectations
Closing the Loop

- Closing the loop should consist of data-driven reflection on course changes
- It should also ask and answer the question: do the results align with the course objectives?
- Make gradual, incremental changes
  - Easier to do
  - Easier to assess
What the Process Looks Like

1. Identify Objectives
2. Continuous Improvement of Student Learning
3. Specify Measures
4. Make Necessary Changes
5. Share Results
6. Perform Assessments

The process is cyclical, moving from identifying objectives to sharing results and performing assessments, with continuous improvement and specification of measures.
In Closing

- Many ways to do meaningful assessment, but all must “close the loop” in some way
- Assessment work must be supported by the administration
- Most of all, make it meaningful and useful
Good References to Consult

- UNLV’s Assessment Website (Click on the Toolbox)
  - http://provost.unlv.edu/Assessment/

- UNLV Academic Assessment Handbook (also available on the Assessment Website)

- The University of Hawaii at Manoa’s assessment website
  - http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/
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