Fall Assessment Team, Day II Resources

Prepared by Geoffrey Dyer for the second meeting of the fall, 2008 Assessment Team on November 7, 2008.

Authentic Assessment Defined

WASC/ACCJC Rubric for SLOs

Formative Assessment

A Process for Embedded Assessment from Skidmore College

Determining Assessment Inquiry

Rubric Examples Packet
(Linked)
Authentic Assessment

WASC/ACCJC standards call for institutions to assess student learning. They evaluate our process based on a rubric. In the third tier of this rubric, “Proficiency,” the following criteria is listed first, “Student Learning Outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for courses, programs, or degrees.” So what is authentic assessment? Once you understand its definition and begin using it, you will probably agree that the standard is an excellent means to provoke student Learning Outcomes.

In *Assessing Student Learning in Higher Education*, Janet Fulks defines authentic assessment this way:

> **“Authentic assessment.”** Assessment that evaluates the student’s ability to use their knowledge and to perform tasks that are approximate those found in the work place or other venues outside of the classroom setting.”

In other words, students perform the skill, during the assessment, to do the very things they will do in their real lives, after the class, as a result of their experience in the class. Consider Linda West’s new authentic assessment in her Microsoft Word Class. Linda Felt that the textbook and exercise in the course already were good, but worried they were “like a cookbook” and wondered how likely it was the students would be able to execute the skills they were learning in their lives after the course. In the summer of 2008, Linda led a faculty in-service training on the use of Microsoft Word. To hold faculty attendees responsible for their learning and to promote the application of the new skills they acquired, Linda asked the participants to create a finished project in the newest version of Microsoft Word, implementing specific skills she had
taught, prior to leaving the workshop. Thrilled with the results, Linda decided to bring this authentic assessment into her classroom. This semester, Linda is requiring students of her Microsoft Word class to create a resume of their own using specific concepts from the course. She is already thinking about ways to improve the assignment next semester.

How can you bring authentic assessment into your classroom? What knowledge, attitudes, and skills from your class will students use in the real world? How can you assist in emulating those circumstances? What will you ask students to do to demonstrate the outcome in these circumstances, and how will you measure the performance?
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges
Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness – Part III: Student Learning Outcomes

Characteristics of Institutional Effectiveness in Student Learning Outcomes
(Sample institutional behaviors)

**Awareness**
- There is preliminary, investigative dialogue about student learning outcomes.
- There is recognition of existing practices such as course objectives and how they relate to student learning outcomes.
- There is exploration of models, definitions, and issues taking place by a few people.
- Pilot projects and efforts may be in progress.
- The college has discussed whether to define student learning outcomes at the level of some courses or programs or degrees; where to begin.

**Development**
- College has established an institutional framework for definition of student learning outcomes (where to start), how to extend, and timeline.
- College has established authentic assessment strategies for assessing student learning outcomes as appropriate to intended course, program, and degree learning outcomes.
- Existing organizational structures (e.g. Senate, Curriculum Committee) are supporting strategies for student learning outcomes definition and assessment.
- Leadership groups (e.g. Academic Senate and administration), have accepted responsibility for student learning outcomes implementation.
- Appropriate resources are being allocated to support student learning outcomes and assessment.
- Faculty and staff are fully engaged in student learning outcomes development.

**Proficiency**
- Student learning outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for courses, programs and degrees.
- Results of assessment are being used for improvement and further alignment of institution-wide practices.
- There is widespread institutional dialogue about the results.
- Decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward improving student learning.
- Appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned.
- Comprehensive assessment reports exist and are completed on a regular basis.
- Course student learning outcomes are aligned with degree student learning outcomes.
- Students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled.

**Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement**
- Student learning outcomes and assessment are ongoing, systematic and used for continuous quality improvement.
- Dialogue about student learning is ongoing, pervasive and robust.
- Evaluation and fine-tuning of organizational structures to support student learning is ongoing.
- Student learning improvement is a visible priority in all practices and structures across the college.
- Learning outcomes are specifically linked to program reviews.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is not a measure of learned skills from an entire course experience but rather a starting point from which instructors can determine necessary strategies for best facilitating learning in one group of people. They also can provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning processes.

Examples of formative assessment:

Diagnostic tests or essays, ungraded
“One Minute Papers”
Pretests
Reflection papers
Interviews or discussions on a concept from a day of class
“Admit Slips” and “Exit Slips”

To read about the effectiveness of formative assessment and examine different strategies of formative assessment, please use the following resources:


<http://www.assessmentinst.com/forms/FromFormat_k0512sti.pdf>

1 In Janet Allen’s Tools for Teaching Content Literacy(2004), she proposes the concept of the admit slip—a brief writing prompt given at the beginning of class designed to give the instructor feedback about how much knowledge a student already has about a concept of study. Some teachers have adapted the idea into “exit slips,” in which students write something they have learned and something that still needs clarification. In either instance, the assessments provide a snapshot of student skills and questions, and can be used, if reviewed carefully, to guide instructors through facilitation of learning as required by a specific group of students.
A Process for Embedded Assessment from Skidmore College

(This entire document, two pages in length, is pasted verbatim from Skidmore’s Assessment Handbook. It is reproduced with permission from the Skidmore Department of Assessment)

Assessment Handbook – Embedded Assessments

Definition:

Embedded assessments are assessments that make use of the actual work that students produce in their courses. The assessments may simply select from work that students do in various courses or may be designed overtly for assessment purposes and then incorporated into the courses. Embedded assessments are also referred to as “classroom-based” or “continuous” assessments. The faculty teaching the courses give grades to the students, but the work selected for assessment is evaluated with program goals in mind and not used for grading. The results of the assessments should not be used to evaluate the faculty teaching the courses.

Advantages:

- The students are simply fulfilling the normal requirements of the course(s) and so do not know that their work is being used for assessment purposes, thereby eliminating issues related to motivation;
- Embedded assessments can be used to evaluate developmental stages of student learning, rather than simply being summative or assessments at the end of the students’ programs;
- The assessment process is integrated into the work of both faculty and students;
- Designing an assessment process enables faculty to consider which skills or knowledge might best be introduced at which levels or in which sequence;
- There is a clear link between what is taught and what is assessed;
- Embedded assessment assignments that do not provide reliable information can be redesigned;
- Results can be compiled quickly by instructors reporting the results to the faculty;
- Results can be shared with students as a group, allowing them to understand better the criteria that faculty expect them to meet and helping them to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses.

Disadvantages:

- More complex assignments, such as research papers and projects, will have to be evaluated by a group of faculty using rubrics, thereby requiring more time;
- Test scores in and of themselves will not provide satisfactory data;
Faculty teaching courses must include the embedded assessments that the program faculty decide upon;
Assigning appropriate weight to the individual assignments may be difficult.

Varieties of Embedded Assessments:

Examinations:

Specific questions can be inserted into specific examinations for the purpose of assessment. Entire examinations need not be used for assessment unless the faculty believe it best to do so. The faculty conducting the assessment of student responses will need to decide upon the criteria for rating them. For example, are you looking for specific concepts or skills in the student responses? Note: some departments have categorized the types of questions used on examinations to determine whether they are reasonably distributed according to the program goals or may be skewed too much or too little for some goals.

Research Papers and Projects:

These major projects can be evaluated by using a rubric (see, for example, the discussion of rubrics for portfolio assessments). Faculty should decide upon the criteria to be used for the assessments before the actual assignments are given to the students.

Field Experiences or Internships:

Student work produced as a result of the field work or internships can be used to assess their learning, work such as logs, field notes, and observations.

Creating and Designing Embedded Assessments:

1. Determine the specific broad learning objectives for the academic program;
2. If you have not already done so, determine how those are translated into the individual courses;
3. Conduct an inventory of the types of assignments given in the various courses;
4. Decide which assignments would serve assessment purposes as they are and which might have to be modified to accommodate the assessment;
5. Integrate the embedded assessments within the courses;
6. Devise a way to gather the results of the assessments and translate those results for the entire faculty;
7. Determine strengths and weaknesses of the students as a result of the assessments;
8. Make appropriate changes to the curriculum if that is indicated or to the assessments when they do not provide the information desired.
Determining Assessment Inquiry

By Sharyn Eveland & Geoffrey Dyer

1. **Operationally define the inquiry you are seeking an answer for.** An operational definition leaves no room for guessing. What information are you seeking to gain from this assessment? What do you want to know? Every instructor involved in the assessment must agree on what to measure and how. For example, perhaps a group of researchers want to investigate the vague concept of “love” and the extent to which research subjects experience “love.” They know from existing research that when a human feels strong emotion, his or her pupils dilate. The researchers conducting the assessment agree to measure the extent of pupil dilation in subjects in order to gauge the love felt by research subjects.

2. For practical purposes in, say, a math classroom, once the instructors in the assessment have determined the inquiry they want to investigate, **the next step is to identify or create questions which will measure the outcome.** Questions may be “homegrown” (locally developed) or standardized questions, developed and validated by external agencies. The external agency that the instructors contact should be determined based on the original inquiry. If the instructors want to know that their assessment is consistent with other departments in higher learning, it would be most appropriate to contact other higher education institutions to see how they are measuring the same outcome. If the
instructors want to know how graduates will use these skills in the workforce beyond graduation, it would be most appropriate to contact employers who require employees to use those skills and investigate the specific applications of the skill. Questions that are industry standard are considered valid. If the questions are homegrown, the questions should be compared to abilities that are industry standard. To have any level of validity questions on exams directly measure a student learning outcome.

3. **How do you know the question measures this?** In the above hypothetical example, researchers could place pictures of subjects’ loved ones before them and then measure the dilation of pupils. The operational definition of the inquiry, “How much do subjects love,” determines the research method.

4. **Is the question diagnostic (formative), to see what needs improvement, or a mastery (summative) question?** The basis of this determination relates to the inquiry the instructors are investigating. If the inquiry seeks to adapt teaching strategies within the course, a formative assessment is appropriate. If the inquiry seeks to examine mastery of the outcome a summative assessment is appropriate.

5. **Consider applying these ideas to Taft College’s Math Departments existing framework, based on the inquiry**
faculty are investigating. In math classes, test questions that require students to show work can act as formative and summative assessments. The formative aspect is that through shown work, specific causes of error can be identified. This information will allow instructors to provide individual support to students in specific problem areas in order to help the student attain a higher level of mastery. At the same time, the number of students who answer the questions correctly indicates the class mastery of that specific concept at that moment.