



'Do assessment as if learning matters most ...'

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## *Some Strategies for Choosing Student Work for Assessment*

To keep assessment manageable and integrated into their curriculum, departments across the university are capitalizing on current learning activities in their programs and are using them as vehicles for assessment. Depending on the student learning outcome being assessed, these can include capstone experiences and courses, student portfolios and other course-embedded assignments and activities. Examples of those being used now by degree programs are: locally developed exams or selected exam questions, case analyses or reports, lab exercises and reports, design or field projects, theses, strategic plans, oral presentations, other writ-

ten products and samples of student work.

Ewell (2004) observes that one commonly encountered issue is creating appropriate assignments. Hatfield (2004) recommends starting the process by clarifying the components or elements related to the successful performance of a student learning outcome (SLO). Some examples cited: For a SLO on written communication skills, one program may decide that mechanics, voice, style and structure are the relevant components of this SLO. For a SLO that states that a student is able to test a hypothesis, a program might choose to look at developed skills in data collection, statisti-

cal analysis, graphical analysis and identification of sources of error. Breaking down the student learning outcome into components can then guide the design and creation of the appropriate processes, learning opportunities or assignments specifically to enhance and encourage the achievement of the SLO. Some of these assignments can be further selected for more systematic assessment.

For example, writing skills are being enhanced through different activities such as essays, case studies, book reports, lab reports, pamphlets, literature reviews or theses. Skills to test a hypotheses can be developed through lab experiments, simu-

## *Various Resources to Assist in Refining Measures and Assessment Activities*

Most degree programs and units are currently in the stage of collecting data as they implement their assessment plans and gather evidence to base future decisions for continuous improvement. A wide range of useful resources is available to assist in these efforts.

Web resources are easily accessible and have links to other resources. The KSU Office of Assessment's website offers a good starting point, specifically the section on '[Measures, Rubrics, & Tools](#)' section (1) under the [Assessment Manual page](#) (2), and the [Methodological Considerations/Data Analysis](#) section (3) under the

[External Resources\Online Articles](#) page (4). The section on '[Evaluating Assessment Strategies](#)' (5) in the [Assessment Cyberguide](#) (6) on the American Psychological Association's website points out both the advantages and things to look out for in various assessment measures and recommends some solutions

to minimize the disadvantages. The cyberguide itself is useful to all disciplines in understanding assessment and designing and implementing assessment plans. There are also many examples and articles on [rubrics at Winona State University's](#) website together with more assessment resources (7,8). Sample rubrics and in-

## Choosing student work (continued from page 1)

lations or field experiments.

While keeping the components of the SLOs in mind, selecting assessment measures from assignments can be done in various ways. One learning activity can promote several SLOs and their components and thus may be used as an assessment measure for these SLOs. This strategy is an efficient way of conducting assessment. For example, a debate or a group presentation in some courses can promote both collaborative and verbal communication skills and can be used to assess these skills. On the other hand, it is possible that an activity promotes only a few and not all of the components of a SLO(s), e.g.,

graphical analysis may be enhanced in one activity but not in another, or not all questions in an exam will be used to assess a SLO. Creating multiple assessment measures for a student learning outcome will give a more complete picture of the student learning that is occurring.

Ewell (2004) suggests some basic principles in looking at student work for assessment:

- 'Ensure that the assignment elicits the ability in question.
- Think about separating 'official' grades from assessment evidence.
- Incorporate multiple judgments.

- Incorporate multiple dimensions of the ability in question.'

Identifying beforehand the components of an SLO assessed in an assignment can further help clarify specific strengths and weaknesses and thus can better guide future actions for improvement. Looking not only at outcomes but also at processes and experiences that facilitate these outcomes (Ewell, 2004) also lead to better alignment of learning, teaching and assessment. Suskie (2002) similarly espouses that fair assessment practices involve giving students, who are inherently different learners, various oppor-

tunities and support to demonstrate their learning.

Sources:

Ewell, Peter. 2004. *Assessment that Matters; Creating Authentic Academic Cultures of Evidence*, US Naval Academy, Teaching & Learning Center, Assessment Colloquium Presentations, downloaded from <http://www.usna.edu/CTL/DeptPosters/DeptPoster.htm>

Hatfield, Susan. 2004. *Departmental Assessment Plans*, Academic Chairs Conference, Florida.

Suskie, Linda. 2002. *Fair Assessment Practices. Giving Students Equitable Opportunities to Demonstrate Learning*. *Adventures in Assessment*, Volume 14, Spring 2002. downloaded from <http://www.sabes.org/resources/adventures/vol14/14suskie.htm>

## Resources (continued from page 1)

struments, and many other links to assessment resources are contained in the [Internet Resources for Higher Education \(North Carolina State University\)](#) (9) and in [Outcomes Assessment Resources on the Web \(Texas A&M University\)](#) (10).

Best practices and principles, assessment techniques, together with practical examples and learning from other institutions are plentiful in several recommended books on assessment such as :

- *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses*, 2000. Mary

E. Huba and Jann E. Freed. Maryland: Allyn and Bacon.

- *Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education, Views and Perspectives*. 2004. Edited by Peter Hemon and Robert E. Dugan. Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited.
- *Assessment Essentials - Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*. 1999. By Catherine A. Paloma and Trudy W. Banta. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- *Assessment in Practice. Putting Principles to Work on College Campuses*. 1996. By Trudy W. Banta, Jon P. Lund, Karen E. Black, France W. Oblander. San Francisco:

Jossey-Bass

- *Making a Difference: Outcomes of a Decade of Assessment in Higher Education*. 1993. By Trudy W. Banta & Associates. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd Ed. 1993. By Thomas Angelo and K. Patricia Cross. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Weblinks:

- (1) <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/Learning/Measures.htm>
- (2) <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/manual/index.htm>
- (3) <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/extres/methodart.htm>

[assessment/extres/methodart.htm](http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/extres/index.htm)

- (4) <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/extres/index.htm>

- (5) [http://www.apa.org/ed/eval\\_strategies.html](http://www.apa.org/ed/eval_strategies.html)

- (6) [http://www.apa.org/ed/guide\\_outline.html](http://www.apa.org/ed/guide_outline.html)

- (7) <http://www.winona.edu/AIR/rubrics.htm>

- (8) <http://www.winona.edu/AIR/resources.htm>

- (9) <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>

- (10) <http://www.tamu.edu/marshome/assess/HTMLfiles/oabooks.html>