

Assessing Student Learning

Identifying the most effective assessment is directly related to the selection of well-defined learning outcomes and goals. The design of an online course will require that you review the current instructional strategy and analyze all its components.

Effective Assessments and Feedback

Assessment plays a crucial role in your efforts to improve student learning and is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional. Assessment should be correlated to the learning objectives and scaffolding required to achieve learning outcomes. Assessment works best when it is ongoing (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996).

For students, high-quality feedback consists of the following:

- Clear criteria against which to judge the feedback. A feedback rubric articulates criteria and relative weights for assignment components and can be shared with students when the assignment is introduced so they are aware of how you will assess their work.
- Comments that are detailed and related to specific aspects of their work. Consider developing a master feedback form that can be used on multiple student responses. This way, the students receive individual and consistent attention.
- Comments that are improvement-focused.

Assessments

Including a variety of assignments and assessments in your course can increase the student-to-student interaction and address multiple learning styles. The assessments listed below allow students to evaluate their own and their peers work.



Peer Review: Peer reviewing can help in two ways: the reviewers see classmates' responses to the assignment and can then gauge if their understanding of the assignment is clear, and students receive feedback from classmates prior to submitting the final assignment thus allowing them to revise their work. Peer review works well when you provide clear guidelines and/or questions that need to be answered by the reviewer. Set up a rubric, identify how peer review groups will be formed and then let them share and assess each other's work. Include guidelines for student-to-student feedback and student-to-instructor requirements or reflection.

Self-Reflection/Self-Evaluation: This assessment can take the form of journaling, blog posts, an assignment, or responses to discussion questions. This assessment type is useful because it allows students to develop metacognitive thinking. Further, students take more responsibility for their own learning in the process of evaluating themselves. While some students will not always take self-evaluation seriously, those that do will benefit greatly from it.

Group Projects: Another way to create connectivity for students is assign group projects. When students work together to solve a problem or complete a project, they also learn from each other, expanding learning for all. Group assignments increase student-to-student interaction which in turn increases student completion. Whenever you assign a group project, plan to require students to develop a team/group charter that establishes group expectations and conflict-resolution procedures. Following up with group member evaluations at the project completion also allows students to peer-evaluate each other's work and contributions to the group project. Both elements foster effective group experiences for all members while providing you with insight into group members' learning and contributions.

Quizzes: This is a typical, formal assessment and is helpful when material must be mastered by students to advance in class. Consider developing your test/quizzes so that this assessment is also closely correlated to course goals and objectives.

The Division of Student Affairs offers several resources for assessment. Although these are provided for students to review, they are also helpful sources for instructors and are available at <http://sa.utep.edu/assessment/resources/>