Exams, Essays, and End-of-Semester Evaluations:

What Can They Tell Us About Our Majors?

CILA Faculty Lunch Conversation
December 4, 2012
Principles

Utilization-focused assessment (Patton, 2008):

Focus on intended uses by intended users
Principles

Backward design
(Wiggins & McTighe, 2005):

“Beginning with the end in mind”
Principles

Traditional assessment design:

Choose an assessment instrument

Gather and summarize evidence

Send a report to someone
Principles

Backward assessment design:

1. Identify intended uses
2. Locate the learning
3. Choose assessment approach
Practitioners

Sample departments/programs (pp. 1-2):

Management Studies

History

Statistics

French

Mathematics

Studio Art
Practitioners

**Studio Art** *(p. 3)*

- Developed evaluation form for senior exhibit that doubles as assessment instrument
- Addressed disconnect between student and faculty criteria for artistic excellence
- Revised requirements for the major and refocused common foundation-level courses
Practitioners

% “exemplary” ability to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-Year seminars</th>
<th>Senior seminars</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differentiate primary from secondary source</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use primary source to develop argument</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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- Gathered evidence in 2011-12 (voluntarily!) to examine sequencing in the major
- Examining ability to understand and work with historiography in new intermediate seminars for major
Practitioners

Management Studies

- **Quiz scores:** Teams outperform best individual students

- **Course evaluations:** Students believe they learned “much” or “exceptional amount” by working together in teams (73%)

- Team-based learning being extended to other courses

Mean Results – Management Studies 251 Course Quizzes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Highest individual score</th>
<th>Team quiz score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section A</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section B</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.74</td>
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Practitioners

French (p. 5)

- Used ACTFL guidelines to create oral proficiency form
- Most majors placed at “Intermediate-High”
- Follow-up curriculum analysis workshop to revisit what is taught, where, and when
**Practitioners**

**Statistics**

- Faculty collaboratively designed final exam question and grading rubric in Stats 270; two faculty graded essays
- Fostered collective “backward design” and collegiality
- Prompted changes in instructional emphasis

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**Mean Correct for the Eight Components Rated**

Results indicated weakness in three areas:

1. Communicating log-log-transformed results effectively (mean: 2.40 of 5)
2. Identifying the correct $P$-value for model comparisons (mean: 2.47 of 5)
3. Communicating a summary of the interaction results (mean: 2.52 of 5)
Practitioners

Mathematics (p. 6)

• FormCreator questionnaire on mathematics ILOs
• Results generally positive, but students saw need for more technology use and math applications
• More technology being incorporated into selected courses and new applied mathematician hired
Practices

But wait!! Aren’t we observing student work all the time anyway? What’s the difference between grading and assessment?
Practices

Grading summarizes many outcomes for one student

Assessment summarizes one outcome for many students
The purpose of assessment is to provide systematic, summarized information about the extent to which a group of students has realized one or more intended learning outcomes.
Practices

Your turn!

How can your department use work you and your students are already doing to assess learning in your academic major?
Practices

“Direct” Assessment
Evidence of what students actually know, can do, or care about

“Indirect” Assessment
Evidence of learning-related experiences or perceptions
Practices

Common direct assessment “artifacts”

- Theses, papers, essays, abstracts
- Presentations and posters
- Oral or written examination items
- Responses to survey or interview questions that ask for examples of knowledge, practice, or value
Practices

Common indirect assessment “artifacts”

- Course mapping, course-taking patterns or transcript analysis
- Responses to survey or interview questions about experiences, perceptions, self-reported progress, or impact of program experiences
- Reflective journals
Principles (redux)

*Uses in individual courses:*

- Setting priorities for content/instruction
- Revising/expanding assignments
- Clarifying expectations for students
- Enhancing “scaffolding”
- Piloting or testing innovations
- Affirming current practices
Principles (redux)

Uses in the program as a whole:

- Sending consistent messages to students
- Revising program requirements
- Contributing to hiring decisions
- Extending productive pedagogies
- Affirming current practices
Principles (redux)

More program uses:

- Telling the program’s story to graduate schools and employers
- Enhancing visibility to disciplinary and inter-disciplinary associations
- Supporting grant applications
- Meeting requirements for specialized accreditation