Assessment conversation
2/1/12

How does a B tell us what we can do differently?

Assessment—a formal attempt to determine students’ status with respect to educational variables of interest.

Evaluation—the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation objects value (worth or merit) in relation to those criteria.

Grades

“Grading” can mean different things

Grade giving options:

1. Absolute grading—a grade is given based on a teacher’s idea of what level of student performances is truly necessary to earn a specific grade.
   a. Similar to criterion-referenced approach to assessment
2. Relative grading—a grade is giving based on how student perform in relation to one another.
   a. Somewhat analogous to norm-referenced approach to assessment
3. Aptitude-based grading—a grade is given to each student based on how well the student performs in relation to that student’s academic potential.

Many instructors will include a combination of achievement, effort, attitude, in-class conduct and growth in the grades they assign to student work.

“Although [grades] are certainly representative of what an individual student learned in a specific course, they do not determine what they learned and what they did not learn.”—Wehlburg, pg. 32

Example 1

Program outcome

Describe and explain the theories and the content of psychological science.

Results from assessment (2010-11)

The items represent a comprehensive assessment of core domains of General Psychology (biological bases of behavior, human development, learning, memory, cognition, abnormal, and social psychology). The measure also included items that assess knowledge of research methods. For each item, each student was scored as either correct or incorrect. An overall score of 70% was considered to demonstrate a satisfactory level of learning.
Program outcome

Graduates will demonstrate organized and professional writing skills for academic and clinical situations.

Department writing expectations

- Organization: Through evidence and reflection, the student addresses use of logical and sequential organization with a clear and concise message.
- Technical skills: Through reflection and evidence the student addresses grammar, APA citation, use of professional terminology and self-editing skills.
- Audience and purpose: Through reflection and evidence, the student addresses appropriate voice and style for the intended audience and intent or purpose of the assignment/experience.

Specific assignment requirements/points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All required components are present. Information is clearly connected to</td>
<td>Information is organized and grammar and spelling are accurate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>assessment results and needs of the student.</td>
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<td>All required components are present with clear, organized and specific</td>
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<td>details.</td>
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<td>Uses research supported methodology, curriculum, and realistic measurement</td>
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<td>Communicates information relevant to IEP goals. Addresses impact of therapy</td>
<td>Consider audience (parents).</td>
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<td>on learning.</td>
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<td>All resources listed in APA format.</td>
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Also included in student evaluation in this course are: 2 exams, project, and in-class discussion.

Results from assessment (2010-11)

23/27 students-work examples were considered satisfactory. Department discussion resulted in an agreement for more focus on APA citation.
Example 3:

**Program outcome**

Demonstrate competence in the core problems of Philosophy and its traditions. Students will be able to identify major philosophers and describe the problems these philosophers addressed.

**Results from assessment (2010-11)**

Measure:

2. An exam, intended to measure student knowledge of central philosophical ideas and facts.

2. Exam was administered and graded.*

*Pertains to this learning outcome most closely.

How many students were included in your sample: 9
How many students demonstrated "satisfactory" performance or higher: 9

Example 4

**Program outcome**

Compose well-written documents for specific rhetorical situations.

**Results from assessment (2010-11)**

**Why is the measure valid?**

Embedded Assignment for Assessment: “Visual Confection” (a concept visualized) The images produced by 14 students in Writ 4260, Visual Rhetoric and Culture, were evaluated. Students created a Photoshop image to communicate a "complex idea, theory, or extended narrative." More specifically, students were asked to "summarize and analyze" this idea/theory/narrative via a "single eye span" inspired by the created image. Students may use text but images are emphasized -- "images should dominate." The instructor analyzed students’ final images to determine how well their visual confections addressed a particular rhetorical situation. He asked, “Did students successfully tailor their images to a specific audience/context?” and "Did the creator have the needs of this audience in mind?” The assignment prompts students to consider Edward Tufte’s discussion of visual rhetoric in . Most significantly, the assignment asked students to avoid mere collage in their image-making and instead produce what Tufte calls a “miniature theatre of information” that makes “reading and seeing and thinking identical” (138, 151). The assignment is an appropriate measure of student engagement with the rhetorical situation) because of this emphasis on Tufte’s consideration for the advanced expectations of modern "reading" audiences. Satisfactory Level = minimum score of 2 (on a 0-4 scale, explained below).
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**How was the work assessed?**

A rubric was used to grade the assignment. In this rubric TWO elements were chosen to highlight students' achievement related to the designated learning outcome: 1. That the topic seems worth the time and effort to produce the confection. 2. The extent to which the commentary makes clear how the content and design of the confection are chosen, conceived, and realized for a specific audience of “informed viewers,” and how the needs and interests of the audience are considered. Results: Criteria 1 (Of 12 students: 9=Exemplary(4); 1=Excellent(3); 2=Good(2)). Criteria 2 (Of 12 students: 1=Exemplary(4); 4=Excellent(3); 5=Good(2); 2=Satisfactory(1)).

**How did it contribute to teaching and learning?**

Initially, the instructor did not change his course explicitly to teach the learning outcome, but he was "struck by how it became a lens for viewing much of what the class was about: from questions of language, genre, and audience to technical issues of file size and browser compatibility." Inspired by the focus on this learning outcome, the instructor emphasized the rhetorical aspect of the assignment, and in doing so realized that perhaps this emphasis had been missing before. He asked students to "conceive and produce their visualizations for particular generic settings and audiences appropriate to their chosen concept." In the past, what seemed obvious to the instructor had not been obvious to students.

