



Course-Embedded Assessment

Virginia Assessment Group

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What is it?

- Takes place in a class or a group of classes
- Determines whether students are learning pre-established learning outcomes
- Takes advantage of pre-existing student motivation to perform well
- Assesses what is actually taught

Techniques of Course-Embedded Assessment: some examples

- Questions embedded in final exams
- Common questions in tests/exams across course sections
- Rubrics used to grade a class project/presentation/performance
- Pre/post tests
- Samples of student work
- Some forms of authentic assessment
- Specific assignments that provide feedback to the instructor about desired outcomes, e.g. *Classroom Assessment Techniques*



Examples from *Classroom Assessment Techniques (Angelo and Cross)*

- RSQC2 (Recall, Summarize, Question, Connect, and Comment)
- Muddiest Point
- Minute Paper
- Chain Notes
- Directed Paraphrasing



Audience Examples

- Good course-embedded techniques that you use and like.....
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of your technique?



Advantages of Course-Embedded Assessment

- Student motivation is high because the assessment activity is part of a course activity
- Costs are reduced because incentives are unnecessary
- It usually does not require additional student time as it is part of the curriculum
- It is faculty-driven and thus, more likely, to be used for improvement
- Because it's linked to the curriculum, it's more likely to identify specific curricular needs/deficiencies
- Feedback to faculty is usually quick

Disadvantages of Course-Embedded Assessment

- Faculty commitment is absolutely essential, but can be hard to get
- Faculty resistance to the process may be substantial
- Achieving agreement among faculty on an assessment approach across courses is a challenge
- Usually there are no comparable data

Process of Embedding Assessment

1. All faculty involved must identify specific learning goals for course(s)
2. The goals should be succinct and central to the overall objectives of the course
3. For multiple sections, all faculty must agree to the goals and commit to teaching to the goals
4. Assessment methods must be agreed upon, including when and what will be used, e.g. pre/post, final exam, etc. Rubrics, exam questions, prompts, etc.
5. Standards must be agreed upon
6. Results must be analyzed and then interpreted
7. Information must be shared with all relevant faculty
8. Where appropriate, the course should be improved or the assessment technique modified

Example of the Process from George Mason University: *Scientific Reasoning*

- Chairs/faculty representatives from all science disciplines draft goals
- Goals are shared with all units and revised
- Brainstorm assessment ideas, find science articles, and develop test questions that reflect goals
- Call for volunteers to use test in class
- Pre/post testing in courses
- Assessment office prepares analysis of tests and committee reviews and interprets results
- Revisit the fit of learning goals and teaching practices, and the assessment approach



Example of the Process from George Mason University: *Written Communication*

- Representatives from all colleges and some departments
- In workshops, each unit selects writing prompts and brainstorms criteria for good writing, and creates a rubric [and sets standards]
- Academic unit selects writing-intensive course(s) to collect sample papers
- Using the rubric, a faculty team rates papers
- Unit prepares a report analyzing the results and describing changes to be made

Task

- Convene in small discipline groups (if possible)
- Identify a course with multiple sections and multiple instructors
- Create one learning goal
- Design one approach to assessing this goal
- Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of this approach
- Describe how you will engage other relevant faculty
 - Take about 15 minutes
 - Designate a reporter



Considerations

- Political considerations if selecting samples, e.g. Why me or my class?
- Incentives for faculty to be involved?
- Incentives for students?
- Course-embedded assessment can be labor intensive
- It is the most likely to produce real improvement in the classroom.