Evaluating Course Learning Outcomes(CLO)

How to conduct the assessment?

Overall the strategies are classified as direct (where actual student behavior is measured or assessed) or indirect. Indirect measures include things like surveys, focus groups, and other activities that gather impressions or opinions about the program and/or its learning goals.

Direct measures are most effective if they are also course-embedded which means the work done by the student is actually work that counts towards the grade. Most studies that look at assessment data show that if the student work is also used in the grading criteria the student takes the activity more seriously.

While indirect measures can be useful, assessment of learning must include mostly direct measures. This is increasingly the mandate from accrediting agencies. It is also acceptable and often good to have multiple measures for the same goal. For example, as a result of an assessment of critical thinking, focus group discussion could be used to learn more about how the students viewed the assignment, etc.

**Examples of Direct Assessment include but are not limited to the following:**

**Written work, Projects, Performances or Presentations**. According to Suskie (2009), these kinds of assignments typically have students demonstrate skills and are considered alternatives to objective exams or essays. Students have the opportunity to learn while working unlike traditional tests and are considered more authentic in that they should be more realistic and challenging, often requiring complex answers or outcomes.

**Capstone Assignments**. Similar kinds of course-embedded assignments include Signature Assignments and Performance Tasks. The work produced by these assignments is typically driven by multiple program goals or student learning outcomes and challenge students to produce work that demonstrates a variety of outcomes. Advantages of course-embedded assessments include no additional assignments or work for students or faculty, a direct measure of progress on program-specific, mission-linked learning goals actually covered in the curriculum, increased involvement of faculty and students in assessment, and ability to address deficiencies in individual student learning before graduation. The primary disadvantage is the time necessary to develop the assessment systems as well as the time to collect and analyze the assessment data collected.

**Portfolios**.  According to Suskie (2009), “A portfolio is compelling evidence of what a student has learned. It assembles in one place evidence of many different kinds of learning and skills. It encourages students, faculty, and staff to examine student learning holistically – seeing how learning comes together – rather than through compartmentalized skills and knowledge. It shows not only the outcome of a course or program but also how the student has grown as a learner. It’s thus a richer record than test scores, rubrics, and grades alone” (p. 204).

**Examples of Indirect Assessment include but are not limited to the following:**

* **Assignment of Course Grades.**
* **Surveys**, such as satisfaction, attitudinal, feedback, employer or alumni perceptions.
* **Focus Groups.**
* **Interviews**.
* **Self-evaluations**, such as student or alumni self-ratings of learning. 1

Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

**TYPES OF ASSESSMENT**

The point of assessment is to ensure that learning objectives are being met and that teaching is helping students develop the skills they ought to be achieving throughout your course. The assessment techniques you implement will depend on your preference and the standards in your field, but to help you get started, we’ve listed a few standard assessment types below:

* **Formative Assessment**: An ongoing process with a wide variety of formats, formative assessment can include quizzes, papers, projects, and any other formal or informal tests provided to gauge your students’ understanding of course content.
* **Summative Assessment**: The final assessment of student learning after a course has completed, summative assessment can include final papers, projects, or exams. Summative assessment should be used to assess both standard teaching procedures and the effectiveness of any changes made following the formative assessments provided throughout your course.
* **Student Self-Assessment**: Methods for allowing your students to rate their own confidence in their work and their understanding of course content; examples include writing discussion board posts, drafting exam questions, and filling out confidence rating scales on exams.
* **Student Peer-Assessment**: The process by which students evaluate the work of their peers within a course, peer assessment is often used as a learning tool to help students reconsider their own understanding of course content as they evaluate the work of their peers.
* **Student Assessment of Teaching (SATs)**: The manner in which students report on the effectiveness of an instructor’s teaching on their learning, often given at the end of a course but sometimes handled as an ongoing process. The most ubiquitous SATs are student surveys given at the end of a course.2

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