

Constructing Assessments

By Mark Kavanaugh

The general term we use for the measurement of Learning Objectives is Assessment. In the literature there are different kinds of assessment...formative and summative.

Formative assessment is used to assess how things are going...how effective instruction is coming along in order to modify the instruction. We might use quizzes, reflections, and performance tests to measure how learning is coming along. Although these may actually be part of the "grade" for the student, they are more for the assessment of the instruction.

If Formative assessments are not going well it might be time to modify the instructional approach!

Summative assessment evaluates the final learning outcomes of the specific Learning Objectives that have been outlined for the course (or lesson). These often look and act the same as Formative assessments but we conduct them for a different purpose.

Kinds of Assessments

There are likely as many kinds of assessments as there are kinds of Objectives. Depending on how you wrote the objectives you will need to use, or you may favor the use, of specific kinds of assessments.

The key in the selection of assessments is to understand what it is you are trying to measure and being sure that you are actually measuring that with your assessment. In the field of Psychology we talk about IQ tests...although they are thought to be tests of "Intelligence" we in fact really know that they do not measure intelligence. At best an IQ test somewhat predicts how well someone will do in school...and even then, there are so many other factors associated with performance at school that IQ is only part of the picture.

The question for you to answer is to look at the Learning Objective and ask "How can I best measure if this objective has been met?" Consider also that Objectives written using Bloom's higher levels require higher levels of assessment.

For example:

In the Cognitive:Knowledge level of objective you may assess an "identify" objective with a multiple-choice question. However, if you have a Cognitive:Synthesis objective you may have an essay that asks the student to "reconstruct" a process to assess learning.

Although this seems like a lot to do, it actually makes teaching and assessment much easier (in the long run). Well written objectives and assessments help you design effective teaching. In addition it makes clear what you expect from students and reduces the likelihood of conflict regarding grades.

You can likely see now that there is a connection between the course description, the course objectives, the lesson objectives, grading rubrics, and assessments. You can also draw a connection up from the class...course objectives to program objectives to institutional objectives!

There is a catch term for this..."ALIGNMENT"

A list of Assessments

For reference here is a list of different kinds of assessments that have been used at KVCC. The list is virtually endless so do not limit yourself to any specific modality...pick the one that best measures your learning objective!

- Multiple choice questions
- Fill in the blank questions
- Short essay
- Long essay
- Research papers
- Reflection papers
- Position papers
- Commentaries
- Discussion board postings
- Observation
- Skill checklists
- Demonstrations
- Community projects
- Posters
- Presentations
- Speeches
- Outlines
- Projects
- Discussions
- Oral Reflection
- Peer review
- Interviews
- Evaluations in setting
- Displays
- Rating scales

Class Evaluations

The final point on evaluations is the practice of conducting class evaluations at the end of each class. This evaluation procedure is required for every course at KVCC and evaluates how well the course was conducted from the perspective of the student. This evaluation is considered to be Formative, in that it provides feedback to the instructor as to how well the students felt the instructor did in delivering the course.

This information can be used by the faculty to self-assess how well the instruction went (overall) and what changes they may want to make in their approach.

Teaching a class "should" be a continual process of assessment and improvement so that the class remains fresh and responsive to the needs of the field of study and to the students.