

Student Work Products for Assessment

Loyola Marymount University Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan:
Discipline/Subject/Program

Kelly Wahl
Director of Assessment and Data Analysis
February 2003

When measuring student learning, researchers should use student work products. Although the list below is not exhaustive, it suggests sources of information regarding students' academic performance, with an emphasis on the value of course assignments that are evaluated routinely by instructors.

Examinations:

Any examinations currently being used to evaluate students' performance.

Other examinations can be designed or appropriated for this purpose as well:

Pre- and post-test examinations for a cohort, with a placement examination serving as the pre-test. This research design compares students' performance before and after the course or the educational experience, to determine whether there is any change in skills mastery, knowledge, values, or behaviors.

Examinations such as the GRE test for the subject area. Some departments may elect to require students to take a national examination and forward their scores to the department for analysis.

Standard examinations of all students in a particular course (i.e., the same examination used for each section). Provided there is consistency among the sections considered, using the same examination for all sections of a course would allow comparison of learning outcomes for all students studying at a given level.

Standard examination questions. One set of standard examination questions to which all seniors must respond before graduating would serve this purpose.

Consistent scoring methods used on multiple examinations throughout the curriculum. These data collected could be used to compare evaluations of learning at multiple levels within the curriculum.

Licensing and certification examinations. Passage rates of such examinations could indicate mastery of skills, knowledge, and mental activities.

Academic profile tests, nationally designed tests with benchmarks, etc. Most are designed to be aptitude tests for developmental purposes; however, an analysis of such scores may suggest a baseline or independent measure prior to further analysis.

Assignments and Projects:

Any assignment or project already in the curriculum and currently being evaluated to determine a student's course grade can be used.

Other assignments or activities can be designed for this purpose, too:

An assignment given only to seniors, or an assignment all graduates must complete before exiting. Similar to the examinations, this would provide course-embedded work evaluation for learning outcomes assessment.

Simulated “real life” practices to measure student mastery of course content. This assignment serves as an opportunity to measure students' application of knowledge and skills in a context outside the classroom.

Consistent scoring methods for performance or exhibit evaluations. To facilitate the analysis of data, scoring methods can be standardized. Or open-ended evaluations can be scored by a software program that codes responses for statistical analysis.

Capstone experience, or thesis and research projects. Assessment of student work in the senior-level courses requiring application of major-relevant skills.

Structured oral examination as an exit interview. Could serve as the senior examinations or senior assignments described above.

Case study, with students demonstrating problem-solving skills. Emphasis can be placed on how students approach and analyze the case study.

Collaborative projects. Group efforts can be evaluated to determine success of students during academic collaboration.

Open-ended critical reflection on course content. When students respond critically to the course-content they have studied, their open-ended comments can be used to evaluate their critical thinking skills.

Assignments that relate course-content with co-curricular or relevant interdisciplinary thought or analysis. Any deliberate effort to integrate other perspectives and disciplines into the major field highlights the durability and utility of students' acquisition of skills and knowledge.

Oral presentations. Such presentations can be analyzed for both content and quality of presentation.

Descriptions of problem-solving processes. Open-ended responses are analyzed.

Evaluations of student performance during internships and co-curricular employment. Ratings of student work by supervisors and external evaluators can be collected and analyzed.

Monitoring of Student Progress:

Students' progress and transitions from one level to another within the program are determined, implicitly, by the quality of their work products:

Prerequisite to target course progressions and relationships examined. Performance comparison on either side of a critical period, to demonstrate prerequisite validation.

Tracking the mid-term deficiency reports by course, level, and area within discipline. This approach can underscore the source of students' best preparation for the major's coursework.

Techniques and Methods:

Numeric scoring of skills acquired over time. Instructors evaluate all students using a brief form in addition to the final grades they award for the courses. Analyzed independently of course grades, these data suggest where and when mastery is taking place, and which skills are mastered at higher rates than others. These data can be related during statistical analysis to other factors such as facility and equipment use or participation in co-curricular activities.

Qualitative (based on open-ended response) evaluation of assignments or performance. Using a text-based analysis tool, open-ended responses can be coded for statistical analysis.

Item inventories describing assignments or skills acquisition. Instead of determining a numeric rating of student performance, instructors can complete a survey that lists characteristics that differ between two projects of a single student or characteristics of an individual student's work. By marking only whether characteristics are present or not, instructors create profiles of student learning.

Portfolio collection and review. Either portfolios for individuals or for cohorts at different levels of performance (comparing groups) can be collected. The material collected can be limited in scope (the first and last assignments for a course) or all encompassing (the best assignment from every course taken by a student in the major).