COURSE-LEVEL ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES: VARIETY, TRANSPARENCY & ALIGNMENT

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LEARNING OUTCOMES: EVOLUTION OF ASSESSMENT
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GOALS FOR THE SESSION

▪ Share working principles of assessment
▪ Share other principles of transparency, variety and alignment
▪ Link these principles to assessments and learning outcomes
▪ Provide some assessment examples to provoke discussion and critique
INSPIRING COLLABORATIVE SPACE
TRENT UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Opened in 2014
- Focus on teaching excellence and teaching scholarship
- Collegial approach
- Reputation for high quality teaching and research for primarily undergraduate university
- One of our tasks: gather data on ‘the first year academic experience’...
OUTLINE OF THE 1ST YEAR STUDY, 2014

- Participants: faculty, students, student support staff
- Focus on the *academic* experience
- 4 phases
- Data collection strategies
## PHASE 4—SYLLABUS SCAN RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Assessments</th>
<th>% of courses that use said form of assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>95.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Test</td>
<td>85.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment or project (not research specified)</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course participation/ contributions grade</td>
<td>51.10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper or essay</td>
<td>40.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes (in class)</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online quizzes</td>
<td>14.10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group assignment/ group presentation</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual presentations</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Post/ Discussion</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection opportunity</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight of Midterm Test(s)</td>
<td>10%-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight of FINAL EXAM</td>
<td>20%-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Grade due in last TWO WEEKS</td>
<td>2%-35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Grade due in last 2 weeks including exam</td>
<td>28%-65%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
... FURTHER EXPLORATION OF ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES
WORKING PRINCIPLES OF FAIR ASSESSMENT

Assessment strategies in a course should:

- be valid
- be communicated clearly
- allow students to demonstrate their understanding
- provide opportunities for feedback
- be connected to the learning outcomes of the course and the program
- reflect and incorporate what is valued in the course
- be authentic / relevant to the student
- be flexible
WORKING PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY

Assessment strategies in a course should be:

▪ Clearly communicated in syllabus, follow-up communications and one-to-one discussions

▪ Shared in advance - assessment strategy & evaluation process

And can include:

▪ Pre-submits

▪ Sharing of samples

▪ Negotiation of both the assignment and the evaluation (with care)
WORKING PRINCIPLES OF VARIETY

Assessment strategies in a course should:

▪ Have sufficient variety to enable different student strengths and needs to be demonstrated and further developed

▪ Include both formative and summative opportunities

▪ Offer some agency to the student: Can they negotiate the
  ▪ Content
  ▪ Process
  ▪ Product, or
  ▪ Evaluation scheme?
VARIETY EXAMPLES:

FORMATIVE

- Ticket out the door
- Muddiest point
- Writing workshop
- Jigsaw mini summaries
  - Introduction to a paper (on demand first-draft)
  - Reflection
  - Peer teaching

SUMMATIVE

- Oral presentation
- Debate
- Community-based project report
- Case analysis/case study
- Executive summary
  - Performance demonstration
  - Creative work-expression
  - Portfolio
WORKING PRINCIPLES OF ALIGNMENT

Assessment strategies for courses should be:

▪ directly aligned with course learning outcomes
▪ aligned with the \textit{content and skills} of the course
▪ aligned to evaluation process/scheme
▪ should NOT be purposefully loaded with “tricks”, or veer extremely far from the content and skills of the course
WE ARE PROPOSING INCREASE OF COURSE-EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

What do we mean by course-embedded assessment practices?

- Usually occur in class time
- Usually involve a demonstration of understanding
- Can be individual, or group-based
- Provide direct evidence that students are meeting course learning outcomes
- MAY be challenging in large classes but not necessarily
WHY DESIGN COURSES WITH EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT?

- Supports immediate feedback loop for improvement of skills and understanding
- Positively linked to attendance and retention
- Provides an enriched learning experience for both faculty and students
- Increases student motivation
WHY DESIGN COURSES WITH EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT?

- Can develop:
  - oral presentation skills (Kirby & Roman, 2009)
  - critical thinking (Alghalith, 2015)
  - research skills (Epps, 2013)
  - cognitive skills (Queen’s BASICS)

- Realistic capturing of student understanding ‘in the moment’

- Supports just-in-time learning theory and flexible teaching (Ryan & Tilbury, 2013)
A FEW EXAMPLES OF CLASS-EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT

- Learning log
- Writing workshop
- Expert-generalist learning structure for small group case study report
- Debate
- Community-based project report (weekly)
LET’S LOOK AT 3 EXAMPLES

- Persuasive letter from 2nd year Psychology course
- Learning logs from Math course
- Indigenized writers’ workshop

What do you think of these?
What might be the related learning outcome(s)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Math Learning Log</th>
<th>Total weight: 40%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular learning log entries that document views, philosophies, and experiences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- includes at least 10 thoughtful responses to text readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>- includes reflections of class learning each week</td>
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<tr>
<td>- includes 3 printed messages from Blackboard by the end of the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Small group formative</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii. 10%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>iii. 30%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Course learning outcome (what do we want the student to know, show, understand?)</td>
<td>Assessment (how will they demonstrate this understanding?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate understanding of how to use empirical evidence to structure and direct a persuasive letter pertaining to a social justice issue to a relevant authority.</td>
<td>Submission of the persuasive letter which includes: Identification of a relevant justice issue; target audience; use of research articles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course learning outcome (what do we want the student to know, show, understand?)</td>
<td>Assessment (how will they demonstrate this understanding?)</td>
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ALIGNMENT OF OUTCOME – ASSESSMENT - EVALUATION
CONSIDERATIONS FOR COURSE-EMBEDDED ASSESSMENTS

▪ Class size
▪ Requires time in class
▪ Requires pre-planning
▪ Predicated on attendance