Proposal for Best Practices in Online Assessment Strategies

Paula M. Bigatel, Penn State University

Introduction

Among the many areas of concern for the online instructor is the question of designing effective and efficient assessment methods for the online environment. Developing the correct sequence, timing and frequency of assessment techniques is a critical component of any course design. In this workshop, we will focus on the following questions regarding the design, development and deployment of assessment techniques in the online environment:

* In what ways can you assess student learning to ensure that intended learning outcomes are being met?

* How can you use this information to improve your teaching?

* Are you checking for student understanding on an on-going basis?

In this session, we will be discussing ways that faculty can assess student' learning throughout the course in a dynamic way that is integrated seamlessly into the learning process. Emphasis will be placed on effective strategies that not only target learning outcomes, but also efficiency. Good strategies are efficient ones by definition. However, they do not exist in an equal relationship. Some strategies take time on the front-end that can save you time on the back-end. This workshop will focus on strategies that have proven successful and I would like to give an opportunity for participants to share their own success stories as well as obstacles. We will discuss strategies to overcome those obstacles so that we may all come away with new ideas on how to achieve our teaching goals and improve our teaching in the process. Ultimately, our students reap the benefits.

The following are objectives for this session:

Participants will come away with new strategies for assessing learning outcomes

Participants will gain access to a “bank” of strategies

Participants will gain access to additional resources for further investigation

The ultimate goal for this workshop is that attendees gain knowledge in effective use of online assessment strategies. It is further expected that there will be a sharing of successful online assessment strategies as well as obstacles to success. We will attempt to discuss means of overcoming obstacles to successful implementation of assessment strategies.
This session will deal with the following topics:

What do we mean by assessment?

Assessment vs. Evaluation

Purpose of assessment and evaluation

9 Principles of Good Practice

Examples of assessment strategies

Focus Questions:

1. What assessment strategies or tools have worked for you in the classroom? In the online environment? What made it successful? What evidence do you have that supports this claim of success? (e.g., student feedback, achievement measures, etc.)

2. What has not worked? Why? What could you do to improve the assessment strategy/tool for the next time?

3. How do you assess the effectiveness of the assessment strategies you use?

Summary:

1. Assessment & Evaluation are related, but not the same.

2. Desired learning outcomes / objectives must be clearly defined up front.

3. Assessment strategies must be appropriate for the kind of learning objective being considered.

4. Assessment is a two-sided tool. We assess our teaching while assessing our students’ learning!

Resources (to follow)