CAL STATE EAST BAY
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Using Assessment Checkpoints in Your Course

Using Assessment checkpoints in your course for greater meaning and relevance

We can gauge the impact of curriculum in a course by deciding what we want our students to learn (student learning outcomes) and making sure they learn it. Looking for evidence of student learning is called assessment. When we determine how well student learning matches our expectations, we can use the resulting information to improve instruction.

Check for prior learning to reveal what students already know

Background Knowledge Probe

Description: Collect useful feedback on students' prior learning by providing short, simple open-ended or multiple choice questionnaires (on board, paper and pencil, create online quiz). Ask students to provide brief responses or to circle a response. Let them know results are not graded and that their thoughtful answers help you make effective instructional decisions.

Example: The Golden Triangle
- a) Have never heard of this place.
- b) Have heard of it, but don't really know where it is.
- c) Have some idea where this is, but not too clear.
- d) Have a clear idea where this is and can explain.

Source: Angelo. Thomas A. & Patricia Cross. "Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers." p.121-125. Jossey-Bass. 1993. (Available in the University Libraries).

Misconception or Preconception Check

Description: Focuses on uncovering prior knowledge or beliefs that may interfere with learning. This could fit well with common misperceptions or preconceptions about a discipline. Results of writing could be collected anonymously, re-distributed to students for discussion probing how students came up with answers and pointing out ideas that could block deeper learning.

Example: Take five minutes to write everything you know about:
- How many people lived in North America in 1491?
- About how long had they been on this continent by 1491?
- What significant achievements had they made in that time?

Source: Angelo. Thomas A. & Patricia Cross. "Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers." p.132-137. Jossey-Bass. 1993. (Available in the University Libraries)

Formative Assessment: Assessment for student learning

Formative assessment is the assessment of the learning process while learning is still taking place to help understand why students are or are not learning. In many cases, there is not a grade. If you want to check students' understanding along the way when you are lecturing or conducting an in-class activity, there are a number of quick and easy approaches you can use to get students' responses. Then, you can decide where to go from there --such as revisit points already covered, engage more deeply with the material, or move on. Below are number of simple and electronic ways instructors can use to stop and check for understanding (formative assessment) to assess how students are doing to prepare them for graded assessment (summative).

Think-Pair Share

Description: Think-pair-share can be a prelude to a large class discussion. Rather than immediately go from lecture to large group discussion, consider this three-minute strategy to help students feel more comfortable and prepared to participate by first reflecting on a concept or question, sharing it with a neighbor, and offering to share with the whole class.

Example: Ask a question related to the lecture material and ask each student to think about it for one minute (taking notes as desired). Ask each student to turn to a neighbor, and each take about 30 seconds to share his/her response. In the third minute, have them come up with a response they can both agree on. After that, open the full class discussion with something like "So, Sarah, what did you and your partner consider to be a good answer to our question?"

Letter Cards for fast quiz

Description: Students use pre-printed cards with lettters (e.g. A-D), and use letters to answer questions.

Example: Stop and ask a multiple choice question for which you have put the possible responses on the board with a corresponding letter such as A-D. Have students hold up a pre-printed card with the letter of the answer they believe to be correct, just in front of the chin (so others cannot see their response).

Muddiest Point

Description: Ask students to reflect on and assess their own understanding of their own learning. At the conclusion of a segment of learning ask students to write down what was clear and what was not clear or what was important and what do they still have questions about. You can collect the information and begin the next class using this information.

Hand Signals

Description option 1: Students use a "thumb's up," "thumb's down," or "thumb to the side" to answer true, false, or unsure.
Example: Stop and ask a true false question. Ask students to indicate if they believe it is true by placing a "thumbs up", if they believe it's false with a "thumbs down", or if they are really not sure with a "thumb to the side."
Description option 2: Students hold up 1-4 fingers to answer multiple choice questions.

Example: Stop and ask a multiple choice question for which you have put the possible responses on the board. Number each response from 1-4. Have students hold up the number of fingers corresponding to the answer they believe to be correct.

Smart Devices for polling students

Description: Poll Everywhere is a free classroom response system that lets instructors engage with students during class. Students answer given questions with their cellphones or other smart device. You can sign up https://www.polleverywhere.com/

1. Ask your students a question with the free Poll Everywhere app
2. Students answer in real time using mobile phones, Twitter, or web browsers
3. You can present collective responses live on the web or in a PowerPoint presentation

Clickers

Description: Clickers are electronic hand-held devices students use to respond to quiz-like questions posed by the instructor. Immediate feedback shows how many have answered correctly.

Example: In the CSU East Bay Freshman Learning Community, General Studies and some discipline classes have previously used iClickers to anonymously poll for student understanding or as a survey tool for students' opinions.

Source: https://www1.iclicker.com/

Additional approaches for formative assessment
- Early draft papers with feedback to students for improvement (scaffolding)
- Practice presentations
- Quizzes
- Faculty observation and feedback
- Peer/self –assessments

Summative Assessment: Assessment _of_ student learning
Summative assessment is the usually a graded assessment of student learning– the knowledge, skills, attitudes students have after completing a course or a segment of learning.

Examples: (any of these could be used with a rubric)

- Artistic product
- Case study analysis
- Exam, (review/field test/certification/licensure/ - faculty, peer, juried, clinical)
- Group project
- Portfolio (including ePortfolio)
- Poster presentation
- Paper (e.g. essay, research, report, project, case study analysis, service learning reflection, field work summary, term paper)
- Performance, skill demonstration (e.g. theatrical, dance,)
- Individual or group project
- Reflective journal
- Exhibition
- Product (e.g. art work, poster session, exhibition,)
- Skill demonstration (e.g. lab skills, oral presentation)
- Performance (e.g. dance, theatrical, recital)
- Simulation
- Thesis, Dissertation