

Chapter XI

A Case Study of Instructional Delivery Formats

Joan Aitken

Park University, USA & University of Missouri-Kansas City, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter uses a case study to exemplify one approach to assessment of three instructional delivery formats: (a) online, (b) distance, satellite campuses, and (c) traditional onground format. Student competencies on learning outcomes in a basic interpersonal communication college course were analyzed on a core assessment project—a course assignment portfolio—using a department-approved assessment rubric. Scoring of 95 assessments suggested that significantly more students reached competency levels in the traditional format than in the distance and online formats. A high percentage of students in all three formats failed synthesis, conceptual, values, and critical literacy competencies. This assessment effort provides an example of how faculty can employ assessment as part of a continuous improvement cycle.

INTRODUCTION

Faculty have always assessed student learning through questioning, testing, and other assessment procedures. Some years ago, however, a movement started which emphasized a more systematic approach to assessment as a way of improving student success in higher education. Today's methods for course, program, and university assessment have lead to initiatives for higher

education reform with the objective of improving program quality and student learning.

In this case study, a regional accreditation body mandated that a system-wide assessment procedure begin three years ago. The result of the directive was the establishment of a university-wide syllabus system, which required each course to use established learning outcomes, a core assessment, and a core assessment rubric. The complexity of delivery formats, compliance with

military contracts, and the high percentage of part-time faculty had created a complex instructional environment. Although the original objective was to ensure that consistent, quality learning across formats, the assessment process has resulted in a continuous improvement cycle.

This chapter is about an assessment case at a university with 44 satellite campuses, more than 12,000 online students, and students who learn in onground, ondeck (ships), and in underwater (submarine) environments. An estimated 90% of the faculty are part-time employees, and most of them have little or no traditional training in the field of communication studies. In this case, assessment offers a lifeline for saving programs that need to offer a quality education. Although this chapter examines an individual course in the department of communication, the implication is much broader. When assessment takes place simultaneously in rooms with dozens and dozens of faculty across disciplines, there is a culture of concern about quality that develops. This chapter is about the story of development of one such course. Thus, the story is really about faculty leadership to set up the environment for student learning regardless of the instructional delivery system. The purpose of this assessment was to serve as an impetus for a continuous change cycle that improves student learning.

To understand the nature of this kind of assessment process the chapter begins with a developmental perspective of assessment in communication studies.

DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

Perhaps an emphasis on test and accountability in kindergarten through graduate education has created an ethic of assessment in the United States. Much of the impetus for higher education assessment began during the 1980's, when some state legislatures began mandated assessment with the intention of linking funding to program success.

Effective assessment of programs is still crucial today (Stephen, 2008), given that this trend has continued with all six regional higher education accrediting agencies requiring systematic assessment. The state universities mandated to conduct assessment twenty years ago blazed the way, so that today there is a large body of literature to which faculty can turn.

By 1990, 82 percent of U.S. colleges and universities had systematic assessment procedures in place. Typically, these assessment procedures focused most on the program or institution rather than on the student. Further, for the field of communication studies, such systematic assessment has been used for the basic course to graduate courses (Aitken, 1994; Canary, & MacGregor, 2008; McKay, 1997; McBath, 1979; Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006; Rubin, 1984; Wardrope, 1999). When the focus changed to measuring student competencies, however, the overall purpose typically became the improvement of quality in courses, teaching, and programs (Hay, 1992).

When it comes to assessment leadership, the National Communication Association guided the field in providing assessment tools, workshops, and procedures. During the last twenty years, many faculty in communication studies implemented intensive assessment processes to analyze student success in achieving program outcomes (e.g., Aitken & Neer, 1992; McCroskey, 2007). An array of courses and programs of communication receive systematic assessment. Shelton, Lane, and Waldhart (1999) identified the development of teacher and student based tools of assessment as a major trend in communication studies. Many faculty work to implement the "three predominant trends in higher education today: a stress on interactive instruction and learning, growth in the use of teams and groups, and the escalation of computer technology as a means to facilitate instruction and learning" (Shelton, Lane, & Waldhart, 1999, p. 230).

Systematic assessment processes have been around long enough to seem matter-of-fact at many

18 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/case-study-instructional-delivery-formats/19671

Related Content

Electrical Resistivity Measures in Cohesive Soils for the Simulation of an Integrated Energy System Between CCS and Low-Enthalpy Geothermal

A. Coccozza and A. Ficarella (2013). *International Journal of Measurement Technologies and Instrumentation Engineering* (pp. 48-68).

www.irma-international.org/article/electrical-resistivity-measures-in-cohesive-soils-for-the-simulation-of-an-integrated-energy-system-between-ccs-and-low-enthalpy-geothermal/89754

Need and Difficulties in Uncertainty of Measurement

N. K. Mandavgade, S. B. Jaju, R. R. Lakhe and D. J. Tidke (2012). *International Journal of Measurement Technologies and Instrumentation Engineering* (pp. 23-33).

www.irma-international.org/article/need-difficulties-uncertainty-measurement/78328

Using an Audience Response System to Enhance Student Engagement in Large Group Orientation: A Law Faculty Case Study

Sally Kift (2006). *Audience Response Systems in Higher Education: Applications and Cases* (pp. 80-95).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/using-audience-response-system-enhance/5390

The Technology of Writing Assessment and Racial Validity

Asao B. Inoue (2009). *Handbook of Research on Assessment Technologies, Methods, and Applications in Higher Education* (pp. 97-120).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/technology-writing-assessment-racial-validity/19666

Qualitative Analysis of IT/IS Evaluation Practices in Private Organisations in Saudi Arabia

Saeed Q. Al-Khalidi Al-Maliki (2018). *International Journal of Measurement Technologies and Instrumentation Engineering* (pp. 1-16).

www.irma-international.org/article/qualitative-analysis-of-itis-evaluation-practices-in-private-organisations-in-saudi-arabia/216420