Good Assignments Make Good Assessment

Assumptions:

1. Student learning outcomes (SLOs) exist for your course.

2. Course SLOs are aligned with program outcomes.

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Learning matters!

1. Build a _culture of learning_ supported by assessment.

2. Use assessment to improve learning.

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Assessment matters!

1. Yields meaningful and actionable information about student learning.

2. Use to improve student learning.

3. Support program improvements.

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What counts as an assignment?

1. Nearly all student tasks

2. Formative and summative:

   • Formative: during learning

   • Summative: after learning

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Why assignments?

1. More authentic than exams: emulate tasks commonly undertaken within a discipline.

2. Provide evidence for achievement of SLOs.

3. Used in all learning environments.

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Good assignments:

1. Elicit an intended outcome.

2. Reflect the intended SLOs at the course and program levels.

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"We all have these things that we're subconsciously looking for when we grade assignments...that we're regularly disappointed with. And then you get to poking around in your assignments and realize that nowhere in there do you ever really ask them to demonstrate those things."

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Assignment template (Ewell 2013)

1. Central task
2. How task should be undertaken and the results communicated
3. How extensive or evidential the response should be

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Compare the substance of [argument X] with [argument Y] by means of a written essay [of Z length] that cites at least three examples of important ways in which the arguments differ.

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Compare the substance of [argument X] with [argument Y] by means of a written essay [of Z length] that cites at least three examples of important ways in which the arguments differ.

1. Task
2. How task should be undertaken and results communicated
3. How extensive or evidential the response should be

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Compare the substance of [argument X] with [argument Y] **by means of a written essay [of Z length]** that cites at least three examples of important ways in which the arguments differ.

1. Task
2. How task should be undertaken and results communicated
3. How extensive or evidential the response should be

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Compare the substance of [argument X] with [argument Y] by means of a written essay [of Z length] **that cites at least three examples of important ways in which the arguments differ**.

1. Task
2. How task should be undertaken and results communicated
3. How extensive or evidential the response should be

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Assessing assignments:

1. To what extent did students achieve an intended outcome?

2. What patterns (of success and difficulty) emerged from student work?

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Metrics:

Checklist: list of required attributes or elements for an acceptable response

Rubric: description of performance levels for required attributes or elements

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Embedded or signature assignments

1. Yield information about achievement of SLOs

2. Inform continuous improvement efforts at course and program level

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Next steps

Join an assignment charrette:

- Small group meets to review and provide feedback on each other's assignment designs

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