

Adapting Classroom Assessment Techniques

Thank you for joining the Student Life Studies assessment podcast. Our goal is to educate people about assessment resources and topics, so they can more easily incorporate assessment into their daily lives. Feel free to contact Student Life Studies by calling 979-862-5624, emailing sls@tamu.edu, or coming by 222 John J. Koldus Building. Let's get on with today's podcast.

I wanted to share a couple of great assessment resources with you. A classic educational book, *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, by Angelo and Cross, published in 1993, provides great examples of creative ways to assess student learning. Many of the techniques can be adapted to the co-curricular. Barkley and Howell Major, in 2016, published a similar book called *Learning Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. Based on Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning, they provide activities that can be adapted to out-of-class experiences as well. The activities in the books are described in terms of ease of preparation, time for students to respond, and time and complexity to analyze data collected.

One of my favorite flexible activities is the Minute Paper, and its cousins, Application Cards, Muddiest Point, and Quick Write. It's easy to prepare, easy and quick to implement, and easy and quick to analyze. Literally, this activity can take one to two minutes. Basically, it provides feedback about a lecture, training, or other experience where you want students to learn something. Students have one minute to write an answer to a question. The question could be something such as: What was the most important thing you learned from this workshop? How will you apply what you learned from this class? Or What was the muddiest point from the seminar? Students respond to the one question on a 3x5 or 4x6 index card or half sheet of paper for about one minute. Then you collect their responses and analyze to see how effective you were in presenting material or what you might need to clarify. You can either do it anonymously or have students write their name on their paper.

The Misconception/Preconception activity assesses the students' prior knowledge but also addresses knowledge or beliefs that could hinder further learning. This technique might work really well if you are presenting a workshop on topics that are sensitive or commonly misunderstood. For example, it might be something like alcohol or drug use, sexually transmitted infections, or mental health. The presenter would develop a list of common misperceptions and make a brief questionnaire using multiple choice or short answer questions. You could also ask students their degree of certainty of their answers to see how deeply held the belief is. In most cases, students would be answering anonymously. You could collect their responses to see what the common misconceptions/preconceptions are. If you are working with the same group of students over time, you could always administer the questionnaire later to see if their responses become more correct.

The Prediction Guide might be a good idea for students who are planning an event or even looking at things through a risk management lens. Students respond to a series of questions to make predictions prior to an event and then revisiting those predictions after the event. Students are encouraged to bring in previous knowledge to help them connect to new ideas. This also helps to uncover misconceptions they might have. The questions could be yes/no, fact/opinion, or agree/disagree. Following individual responses, the group can discuss the answers. This activity does take a little preplanning by the advisor or student leader.

If you are looking for a way to structure a case study, you might try the Triple Jump. Although this is a little more complex and time consuming than other methods, it can help students critically think and make informed decisions. When students have a real-world problem presented to them, they (1) articulate a plan for solving it, (2) gather resources, and (3) attempt to provide a viable solution. This activity might span a couple of meetings or be part of a retreat where there is enough time to define the problem, identify resources, propose solutions, and evaluate the potential solutions. You can document their learning through a rubric or similar tool.

At the beginning of a new year, or when new student leaders come on board, the Learning Goal Listing is a way to come to agreement about what students will learn from their experiences. The advisor prepares student learning goals that they see fitting the experience and their expectations. The students might get a handout template that asks them to rank order their five learning goals for their experience and determine whether they match the organization's or advisors objectives. Their responses can be the learning artifacts, but they can also be used to launch a discussion about the students' professional development plans or training that might take place.

Another one of my favorites is What? So What? Now What? Students can use this format to write brief reflections about an experience or activity. The What? could include a description of what happened and what the student did. It might even address the difference in expectations and reality. The So What? answers what students learned. Why is it important? To whom is it important? The Now What? gets to the application of learning. What are students going to do, learn more about, or share with others? Students tend to be really good at the What? but struggle a little with the reflective pieces until they have practice. You might collect these and give feedback to the students.

Here's the bottom line. There are many ways to get students engaged in their learning outside of the classroom. You can use these tools and activities for individual and group development, but you can also develop means to assess and document the learning that has taken place. Assessment and learning do not have to be boring and just in the classroom. Be creative when you engage students in learning!

Thanks for listening to today's podcast. Please let us know if this was helpful or if you have additional questions. You can contact us by calling 979-862-5624, emailing sls@tamu.edu, or coming by 222 John J. Koldus Building. Check out our website at studentlifestudies.tamu.edu for more resources and information. We hope to hear from you.