Assessment Times Newsletter:

Social Distancing Edition

Harold Washington College Assessment Committee

Spring 2020

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A Note from the Chair
By Erica McCormack

The last weeks of this semester are not playing out the way that any of us had in mind when we first crafted our syllabi at the beginning of the semester or when we implemented our first activities to build camaraderie within our face-to-face classrooms. And yet, our communities of learners must find a way to still engage with each other, and we must find ways for students to demonstrate their learning.

Under less-than-ideal circumstances, faculty have been radically adapting their own teaching practices in order to ensure that our students still meet the learning outcomes that are most vital to our courses and programs. Some faculty who already have experience teaching online may have felt better prepared for this abrupt transition, but every one of us has had to convert our plans, assignments, and life due to our mandate to encourage social distancing.

As we embark on Emergency Remote Teaching, we have had to take into account that many more of our students may now be struggling to maintain their basic necessities. And yet our classes are continuing.

These are challenging times for us as faculty, staff, and administrators and even more so for our students. I have been personally encouraged by the cooperative spirit I have witnessed as full- and part-time faculty as well as staff and administrators from across the college extended encouragement, resources, and all manner of offers to help one another. They demonstrate our collective awareness that anything that can be done to enhance the working conditions of our colleagues will enhance the learning conditions of our students.

Those of us on the learning assessment committee decided to make this issue of the *Assessment Times* primarily focused on sharing some practices that we're implementing in our now fully-online courses to engage students and find evidence of learning. Focusing on the central question of assessment--what is it we want our students to be able to do by the time they complete

our course?--can serve as a helpful guidepost for the work we're doing in this uncharted territory.

In addition to some practical suggestions, we want to update the community about the surveys that the HWC Assessment Committee administered to the faculty, staff, administrators, and students earlier this semester. Analyzing that data will continue to inform our assessment activities moving forward.

We are grateful to every member of our community who shared their input, and we look forward to sharing more about this snapshot of our priorities, questions, and challenges related to better understanding our students and their learning at the GenEd level. Thank you for all you're doing to support our students and each other.

Source: https://xkcd.com/2282/
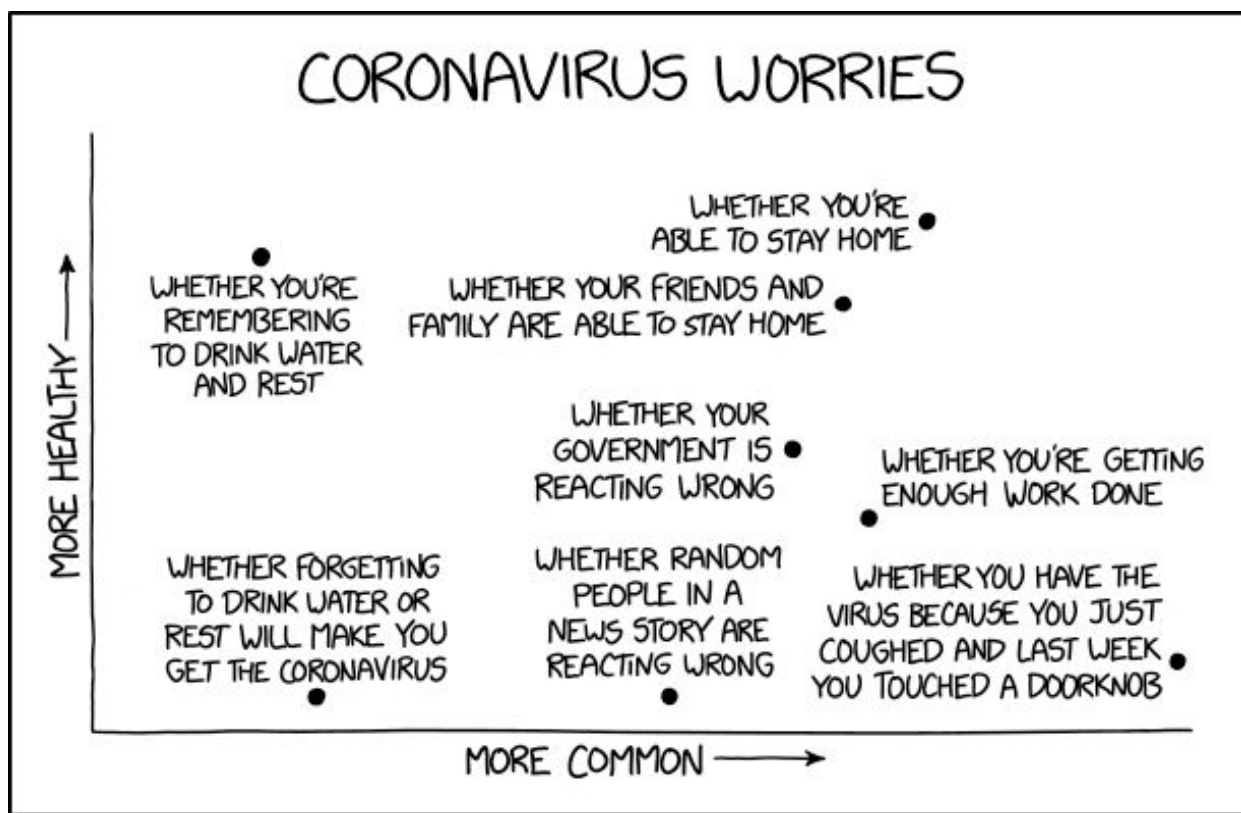
First Assessment Committee Zoom Meeting:

Taking Care of Business, and Each Other, from a Distance

The weekly Assessment Committee meetings (3-4 PM on Wednesdays) continue in the era of social distancing! *(Screenshot from Wednesday, March 25, 2020)*
The camaraderie that we experience in a regular semester on campus through the HWC Assessment Committee is something that helps many of us power through ordinary weeks of the semester, so the opportunity to continue to engage with our beloved colleagues is especially meaningful now.

Top Row: Jack Whalen (Social & Applied Sciences), Erica McCormack (Humanities & Music), Ingrid Riedle (Social & Applied Sciences), Yev Lapik (Biology), Gustav Wiberg (Physical Science)

2nd Row: Phil Vargas (Physical Science), Jennifer Vogel (Advising), David Richardson (Humanities & Music), Fernando Miranda-Mendoza (Mathematics), Bridgette Mahan (Business)

3rd Row: Kristin Bivens (English, Speech, Theater & Journalism), Jeffrey Swigart (Mathematics), Matthew Williams (World Languages & ELL), Vincent Wiggins (Office of Instruction), Paul Wandless (Art & Architecture)

Bottom Row: Farahnaz Movahedzadeh (Biology), Camelia Salajean (Mathematics), Ukaisha Al-Amin (English, Speech, Theater & Journalism), Ignatius Gomes (Biology)

Of Prescient Pilot Projects
By David Richardson, Vice-Chair of GenEd

The truth is: most of the time, we don't know how our projects are going to work out. Take our latest General Education Assessment project. The story of its beginnings is too long and roundabout to try to communicate here amid the exigencies of our new COVID-19 reality, but suffice it to say that we recognized a need, in order that we could do better Gen Ed assessment down the road, to find out what students had to say about their own learning experiences.

After a review of feedback from Faculty, Admins, and Staff about what they'd like to know about student learning, we crafted a set of 24 questions that we voted down to three in a multi-round, raucous ceremony only a little less complicated (but a lot shorter) than Iowa's caucusing in our late February meeting. The top three questions at the end of it all were:

> · What are or have been your obstacles to learning?

> · If you could change something at HWC that would positively impact your learning, what would it be?

> · What can the college do to motivate and keep you motivated to reach your educational goals?

After one more discussion in the first week of March, committee members then chose one of two options to present to pilot in one of their classes and invite students to answer. The options were:

PILOT OPTION A:

~If you could change something at HWC that would positively impact your learning, what would it be?

~What are or have been your obstacles to learning?

PILOT OPTION B:

~If you could change something at HWC that would positively impact your learning, what would it be?

~What can the college do to motivate and keep you motivated to reach your educational goals?

Most participants piloted Option A, but faculty also had the freedom to change the question order if they wished, so different faculty asked the two questions in different orders.

On March 11th, after reviewing initial results, we figured out that the process seemed to work—almost all of the students answered both questions, and a majority of students identified one thing as an obstacle to their learning, and the order of the questions didn't seem to make a significant difference in terms of which were answered--if students skipped a question it was less likely to be the "obstacles" question, whether it was asked first or second. There was some evidence that the A option provided better information; responses to Option B tended to be less differentiated than those of Option A, indicating a higher likelihood that students were more likely to conflate the different questions into a single response, expressed in two different answers. Regardless, on March 11th, there were already rumblings that significant changes might be coming, and so we wanted to do what we could while we could.

That day, we encouraged committee members (and anyone they could recruit) to offer the survey to students in any of their remaining sections and collect responses while we could as an "extended pilot." Only four days later classes were put on "hiatus," effectively ending our pilot assessment. So, you might be ready to say, "Bummer for you—all that work only to have no results."

But, you can save your sympathy, friend, because, like I said at the top, surprises abound in the world of assessment.

In the week of the initial pilot and the next four days, 14 different faculty members from eight different departments managed to collect 331 responses from 21 sections of classes, and the results, while not sizeable enough, random enough, nor representative enough to allow for confident generalization to the student body at large, give us an interesting snapshot of what some of our students, across the college, thought of as their obstacles to learning (pre-COVID-19).

I recently completed a first round of analysis (to be followed by more), coding student responses to the "Obstacle" question as falling into one of five categories:
1. Personal
2. Instructional
3. Financial
4. Informational
5. Eutactical*
6. N/A

The "Personal" category was applied to students' responses that identified some aspect of themselves as their primary obstacle or challenge to learning. Sometimes these responses were related to self-reported and perceived deficits (e.g. poor time management, inability to pay attention, difficulties with language) and others were related to the students' personal needs or desires (e.g. more social space, better food options, sports teams). A little more than a quarter of the students' responses (26%; n=85) fit in this category. Almost no students identified their knowledge of technology to be an issue, though a couple mentioned internet access as an obstacle.

The most common response from students fit in the "Instructional" category, but still only made up about one-third (34%; n=111) of the responses, and again, was a mix of deficits and desires. Answers in this category included mostly unsurprising answers but a lot of variety therein (e.g. too much lecture, inflexible policies regarding attendance and exams, too fast of a pace, too slow of a pace, too inconsistent of a pace from one class to the next, and some mentions of Brightspace). Very few of them mentioned their instructor's fluency with technology, though they might now.

The "Financial" category was the least mentioned category (5%; n= 18). Interestingly, there were students who identified their work schedule as an issue, but because those were coded into the Eutactical category instead. *"Eutactical" is a semi made-up word (from a word I didn't know—eutactic, meaning "perfectly ordered"). This was a catch-all category for student responses that identified schedule-related or time-related issues as being their primary obstacle. Three times as many student responses fell into this category (16%; n=54). Many of them related to course times and scheduling, but others related to commuting times or CTA issues.

We actually expected to get more answers related to finances (not to mention food and housing insecurity) as well as more related to work and family-care. The absence of those in the responses we received led us to wonder if students were reluctant to share those or, alternately, if they were thrown off by the wording of the question. Our Chair, Erica McCormack, put it this way: "Maybe there are less likely to consider the parts of their life that they love and yet which still create additional challenges around learning as they answer the questions—it may not feel comfortable to characterize their loved ones as 'obstacles.' Maybe even their jobs that provide nourishment and some degree of security can be something they hesitate to describe that way if it's literally what's allowing them to be in the classroom in the first place."

"Informational" related responses were responses that specifically identified a lack of
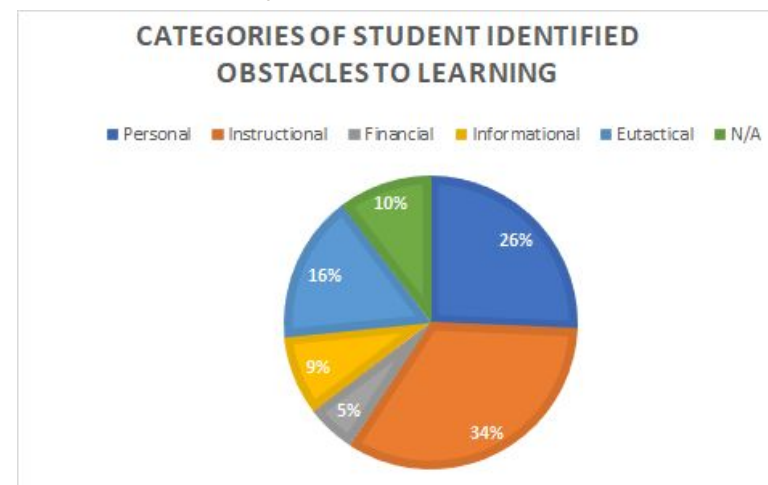
key information, or a desire for more access to information (this category did not include curriculum/instruction related information; those fell under "Instructional"). Many of these responses (9%; n=29) identified a need for more advisors or advising appointments, and many mentioned tutoring. There were a handful that expressed a need for more consistent information and a few others that expressed desires for more information or reminders (or different kinds) about events going on at the college.

Finally, there was a significant amount of submitted responses (10%; n=34) where students said something like they "haven't had any" or that the obstacles they had pre-dated their time at HWC. Note the question does not ask students to limit their considerations to their time at HWC, though nearly all of the responses that mention an obstacle imply or clearly refer to their time with us. Many of these responses were paired with suggestions for change to make things better, but, when paired with the "Personal" responses, a plurality of students (39%; n=119) say their biggest obstacle to learning is NOT the college or something related to the college, suggesting a higher degree of student awareness of their personal responsibility in the learning process than might have been predicted by some faculty members.

A second interesting finding is that, while there were a few responses that identified faculty or staff attitudes as being dismissive or unhelpful (or students who wished for more lenient or positive kinds of engagement), only three responses (.09%) mentioned anything about social or institutional discrimination—two mentioned race related discrimination, one of which also mentioned age-related discrimination; and one mentioned disability discrimination. That's three too many, but also notable as a signal of a broadly positive climate, at least in relation to sex, gender, and sexuality-related

discrimination, which went unmentioned. Also completely unmentioned were the federal, state, and city governments, as well as any specific policies of any of the current administrations. Given the interventions of the last few weeks, I wonder if that will be different the next time we look. Another thing that will almost certainly be different the next time we look is that sixteen of the twenty-one classes surveyed did not mention anything about coronavirus, but all three surveyed ELL classes had responses that identified student fear of the virus (or of coming to school) as a major obstacle, as did two chemistry classes surveyed at the end of the week. I would bet those numbers will be much higher in the fall, too.

In any case, we have a lot more to learn from this snapshot, and we have to remember that we don't have the data to generalize to the student body as a whole, but it is an interesting pre-virus baseline to look at and, eventually, compare to a future inquiry. I know better, by now, than to expect anything other than more surprises.
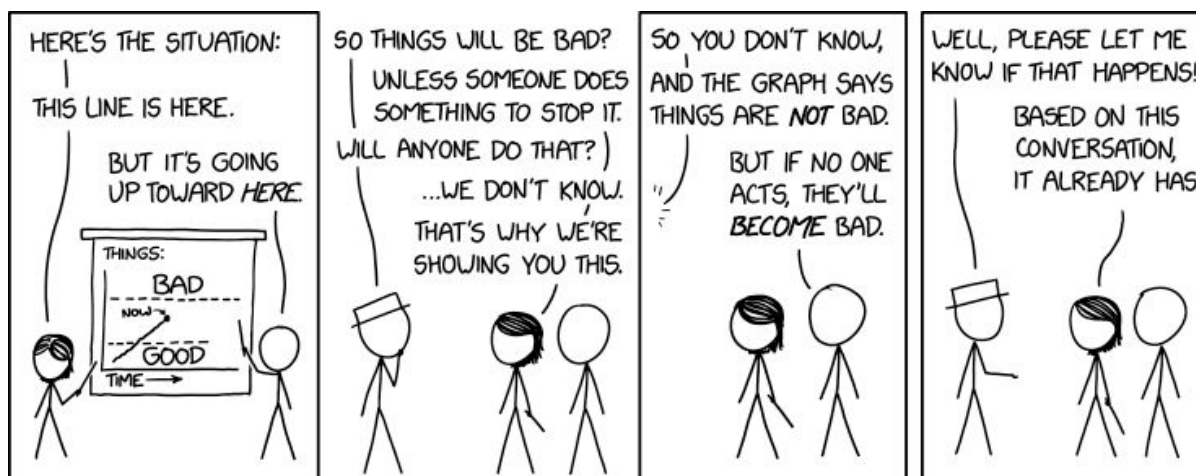

CATEGORIES OF STUDENT IDENTIFIED OBSTACLES TO LEARNING

Personal — Instructional — Financial — Informational — Eutactical — N/A

One More Thing to Do

Ok, so I know you don't need another thing to do while trying to keep yourself calm (and healthy) and manage your class transitions to Brightspace and "emergency remote teaching" and making big pots of soup to freeze, and everything else, BUT…if you should find

yourself with the chance to do some basic data collection, we'd love to see it!

An example of a simple data point that you can collect, write down somewhere and send to the Assessment Committee now or later, would be something like the percentage of students who were in good standing in your class who logged in to Brightspace in the week after the hiatus, from March 23 to March 29th (it was 85.2% for me; n = 69—but I'd love to have more data on this).

It's pretty easy to count. Just go on your Brightspace course site and click on "Course Admin" and then on "Class Progress." Pick a student and then scroll down to "Course Access" and click on that (Note: do not trust "Login History"—that just tells you about whether they've been on Brightspace, not whether they've visited *your* course). There,

on in the world' (i.e. the COVID-19 Pandemic and associated issues)." To my surprise, 100% of the responses said, "True."

You may be collecting (or interested in collecting) other data about your students, too. If so, pile it up and send it to me, Dave Richardson (drichardson2@ccc.edu) or to your department liaison. Or, if you have an idea for an interesting data set, ask your colleagues to pile up some numbers and share those, too!

We are living through a moment of history, and we won't know what it means until we get through it. In the meantime, though, we can take some steps to make sure we have some good records of what's happening (and not happening) with respect to student learning, and that is a job best done by *all* of us.

Source: **https://xkcd.com/2278/**

you will see the history of your student's access to your course. On the left side, under the student's name, you'll see an arrow, and if you click on the one pointing to the left, it will show you the course access history of the next student, and so on. Count them up and blam-o, you've got a data point.

Another point of interest for me was whether my students wanted to talk about coronavirus or get away from it, so in a survey, I posed a few questions to them, and one read: "Is the following sentence True or False for you: *" I hope we will spend a lot of what's left of this class talking about Philosophy and 'what's going*

Quantitative Literacy in the Time of COVID-19
By Fernando Miranda-Mendoza, Research Analyst

As the entire world faces a period of uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, quantitative literacy reveals itself as a crucial skill needed by all citizens to understand myriad numerical summaries and graphical displays presented by various organizations, so that swift and informed decisions can be made.

Our HWCAC's 2017 Quantitative Reasoning (QR) report highlighted how a pool of assessed students struggled with visual

representations of data and real-world numerical summaries. We believe this struggle is not just exclusively found in our sample but also exists in the general population. We have recently witnessed several instances of individuals that fail to grasp basic risk measures (e.g. "If I get corona, I get corona"), some of them coming from leaders of vulnerable nations (e.g. "If you're able and have the means to do so, continue taking your family out to eat [...] because that strengthens the economy"). Now, more than before, we need to empower everyone with a basic toolkit of skills so that our society can better face our current and future calamities.

Quantitative literacy "is not the same as statistics. Neither is it the same as mathematics, nor is it (as some fear) watered-down mathematics" (Blair & Getz, 2011). Quantitative literacy is an ability to think logically and critically. It gives individuals the power to understand that mathematical models are approximations and, consequently, have strengths and limitations. Knowing the extent of these limitations is extremely important when attempting to assess the risk posed by a new pandemic: Is the new virus really a threat? Can we delay intervention for the sake of economic prosperity? Do I need to be worried? Furthermore, quantitative literacy gives the capacity to learn new sophisticated concepts that aid in understanding why we had to act now (or, by the point of publication, a few weeks ago) to "flatten the curve" (Pueyo, 2020). These concepts help us answer critical questions: What does it mean for a rate of contagion to have "exponential growth"? Why are overall COVID-19 test numbers not as good an indicator as tests per capita? Why is a vaccine not available now?

This is a call to arms. Quantitative literacy cannot (and should never) be an ability exclusively bestowed upon engineers, scientists, statisticians, and mathematicians. Quantitative literacy must be offered to and achieved by all. Everyone must embrace it. It is one of the most effective weapons humanity has devised to help us surmount dangerous challenges like the one we are presently facing. Do not be afraid of the "numbers" anymore. We cannot wait; waiting is not an option.

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Capturing Student Learning and Interaction as We Transition Online
By Yev Lapik, Online Learning Assessment Coordinator

As we are dealing with this incredibly difficult COVID-19 crisis, moving our classes online and populating our BrightSpace shells with resources and assignments, many of us are wondering– what is the value of our face-to-face classrooms that goes beyond the content presentation and core assignments? And how can we re-capture it online? There's no simple answer to these questions, but there are certain key principles about learning that are important to carry over to the online modality: learning is an active, continuous and social process.

It's much more difficult to gauge the learning atmosphere in the online classroom (even if we are offering synchronous sessions): how do we know that students are "getting it," how do we decide which aspects of our online teaching need adjusting to improve student learning? Essentially, we are wondering how to approach formative assessment in the online environment. A study of 24 online courses found that online (OL) discussion was the second (after written assignments) most frequently utilized assessment strategy [1].

OL discussion boards allow us to assess a wide range of SLOs, from conceptual understanding to application and communication skills, and they make it possible to provide constructive instructor and peer feedback [2].

In the Spring 2019 issue of the *Assessment Times,* I provided a literature review of various aspects of OL discussions, including the benefits [3], such as the potential for better structure and cohesiveness, deeper and more reflective student contributions, "group-centered" and interactive environment, and more active student participation.

Online Discussion Questions

Even more so than in F2F discussions, good questions and thought-through discussion structure are crucial for success [4]. The type of discussion question plays a significant role in inducing higher-order thinking in students. A good practice in OL discussion expectation is for students to read an assigned "hot topic" article in addition to the textbook. In that scenario, the following questions were found to be most influential in promoting higher-order thinking in undergraduate students [4] (in a descending order):

"Course link questions:" questions requiring a specific piece of information from the course to be integrated with a topic from the article

> Example of question structure: *Using [course concept], explain how [topic from the article]*.

"Direct link questions:" the direct link to the assigned article should be in the stem of the question or as a requirement of student response

> Example of question structure: *[A quote from the article]. Why is this quotation important for [course concept]*.

"Brainstorm questions:" should be structured to generate all possible ideas or solutions.

> Example of question structure: *How would you...?*

Online Discussion Structure

Another example of good pedagogical practice in OL discussions is to offer staggered deadlines: one for submission of discussion question answers (usually referred to as a "main post") and another one, usually a couple of days later, for posting comments to peer posts (or a "reply"). In the past few semesters, I started to introduce an additional third deadline for student self-corrections and updates, which allows students to improve their initial main posts.

Writing Thoughtful Forum Responses

One of the major downsides of OL discussions is a superficial quality of student comments to each other's posts. To this end, it helps to provide students with detailed expectations and examples of desirable answers as outlined in the section below (it is addressed to students and can be cut-and-pasted as is or edited to your preference and used in OL discussion forums in your courses).

Sample Instructions to Students

The purpose of the Online Discussion assignments is for you to research the topic, reflect on it and discuss the topic with your classmates in ways that can clarify and deepen your understanding, as well as to generate new ideas. Responding to your classmates can feel awkward, especially if they made a mistake or have a different viewpoint; however, providing purely positive yet vague feedback such as *"I really like your post"* and *"Good job"* is not helpful and does not allow for a productive discussion. While

your comments to your peers should be respectful and supportive, they should also foster a conversation and enable you to express your ideas and thoughts [6, 7, 8].

If you are new to the world of online discussion a good simple formula to start with is the step-by-step **3C&Q Model**:

1. **Compliment**: Sincerely compliment the classmate on something specific you have read in their post:

    Thanks for sharing your thoughts! I really liked …

2. **Comment**: Comment on something specific and relevant your classmate wrote about the discussion topic. You can agree or disagree.

    I agree with you about …

    I respectfully disagree with you about … because …

3. **Connect**: Connect with something your classmate wrote and explain your connection in detail.

    I can identify with you about … I've recently read / encountered …

4. **Question**: Ask a specific genuine question about what the classmate has written, or share a question about the topic.

    Why do you…?

    Do you think that…?

If you are already familiar with online discussion dynamics and want to be a better participant, you can focus on finer points of the process:

1. Make Meaningful Conversations - Write comments to the posts of your peers in a way that allows for a conversation to continue. Do not just agree or disagree – respond constructively.

Agree and expand ("Yes, and …") – Take a classmate's statement you agree with and expand it (point out additional facts or factors), or consider other angles. Contemplate whether you can provide a clearer picture of the topic.

> *I definitely agree with you about… In fact, …*

> *I like how you … this makes me think about …*

> *I agree with your answer to … I can also infer that …*

Agree and expand ("Yes, but …") - Take a classmate's statement you agree with and point out things that do not mesh with it (think "devil's advocate").

> *I like how you refer to…, but I really do not know what/why …*

> *I agree that …, but what if …*

> *I agree that …, but I am not certain that…*

Respectfully disagree ("No, because …") –

Show your classmate that you respect their opinion but have a different one. Avoid personal attacks or emotional appeals, instead, focus on examining logic and facts. Summarize what you think the student has articulated to avoid misunderstandings.

> *I really appreciate your insight about…, but I am not sure why/ what …*

> *I definitely see your point about… however, …*

> *While I understand your concerns about …, perhaps you/ we might consider …*

> *I see your point about …, but could you elaborate upon …*

2. Assist – Politely point out where a classmate might have gone astray or missed important details or misunderstood the topic or the question. Provide hints, references and quotes. Suggest ways in which an idea or an answer can be expressed more clearly.

3. Ask Genuine Questions – If you have questions, whether they are small and technical or the big ones with no answers, ask them. Also, if you have questions about the topic that you are unsure about – ask your peers. Do not, however, make up questions just for the sake of writing it

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Social and Collaborative Writing in the Online Environment
By Ukaisha Al-Amin

"Write with the door closed, rewrite with the door open."
--Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*

While moving my writing courses online, one of the SLOs that continued to stay present in the front of my mind was the ability for students to "Collaborate and utilize the social aspects of the writing process." This particular learning outcome isn't just specific to the ENG 102 classroom; it is present in some version in most writing courses, and the concept is utilized by other courses across the curriculum.

Online learning has its issues, but it does give professors the ability to see if students are learning how to collaborate. Usually in the classroom setting, after students are placed in groups, I'm able to walk around the classroom and hear some of the conversation happening. When the conversations diverge from the task at hand, I'm able to redirect back to the lesson, and then groups can share out. There are also so many other ways that I use group work in my writing courses that it has become an essential part to the way I formatively assess students. This is not surprising since I come from a writer's workshop background.

After considering what I do in the classroom, I asked myself, "How can this work be imitated in the online learning environment?" Using an LMS or other software often takes training, and there are definitely some pitfalls, but writing within these different systems can be done and be productive. Also, the professor can track whether students are learning by giving tasks, doing formative check-ins, and having summative assignments turned in at the end. Even then, opportunities for further collaboration on revisions is possible, and reflective writing on the process of collaborative writing is a way to close the loop.

Brightspace

The go-to function on Brightspace for collaborative writing is the discussion boards. While teachers use the discussion boards in many ways, it comes in handy to the writing process. One of the features on the discussion board that lends itself to collaborative writing is the instructor's ability to create assigned groups. This way, the student is only sharing their drafts with a small group of students. As the moderator, the professor can read the posts but does not have to comment on the work. Let students be independent. I like to save feedback for assignments or writing submitted directly to me.

Once in groups, students can share a specific paragraph like their introduction. This way there is not too much text in the comment box, and it becomes a manageable task. I give students detailed tasks and questions to use when commenting on work. For instance, I might ask them to post their introduction paragraph to the discussion board. In the instructions, I'll remind them what should be in their introduction. Then I'll give them a checklist for reading their classmates' paragraphs. At the end of the checklist, there are usually two open ended questions that they can use to respond to their classmate. Professors can create a new discussion forum for Peer Review, add a new topic for each group, then students will share their paragraphs in their groups' thread.
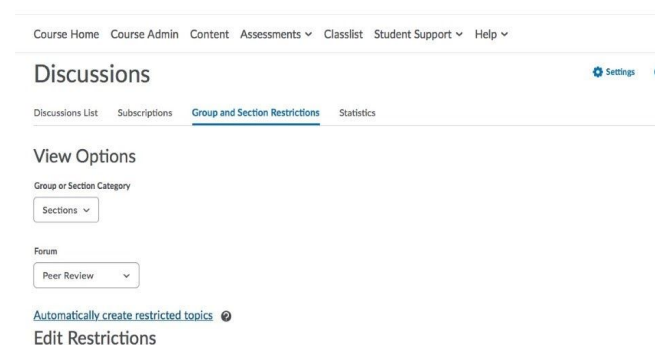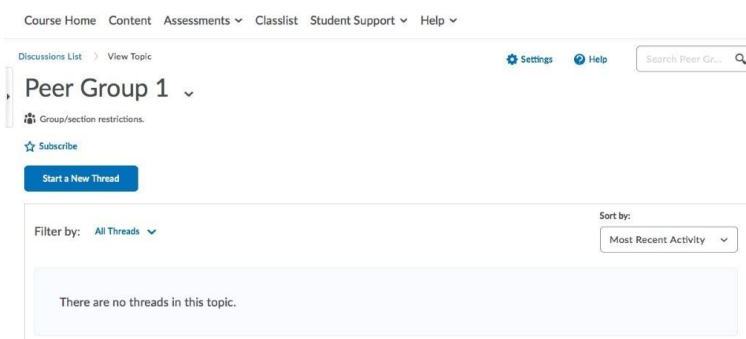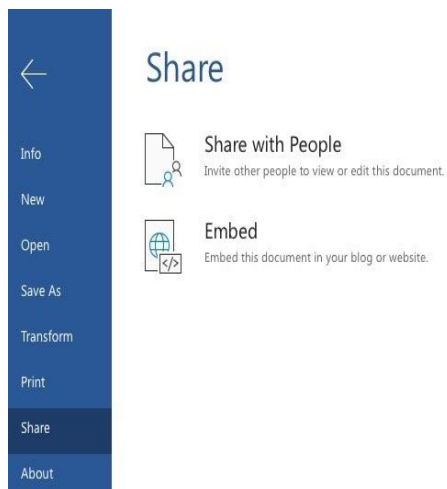
Apart from the discussion boards, there are other functions that students can use to collaborate with their classmates on their essay. The *Classlist* tab is a function that most students think is just for the teacher, but I encourage students to reach out to their classmates in this way. (Connecting with other students in other formats outside of the school jurisdiction is fine, but for some students, it is less creepy getting a message from a classmate about schoolwork in the LMS than on their Instagram, Snapchat, or WhatsApp. Obviously, if students are using these social media sites for book clubs or other groups, that's great; we can continue to encourage community learning.) So, with the *Classlist* tab, students can click on the people in their group or their review partner and send an email or instant message containing questions about their draft.

Other Online Software

Other ways to collaborate online include Microsoft Online, Google Docs, and Zoom.

An instructional video about how to use these different pieces of software would be helpful in this instance. With Zoom, professors can pre-record lessons and instructional videos that include transcripts for accessibility. Create a meeting for yourself, then join the meeting, screen share your PowerPoint or webpage, and record the lesson. Once you record, you can edit it and give the link to students. This video from Content Sparks provides some guidance for creating online course videos using Zoom.

Formats that students commonly use are Microsoft online and Google Docs. For the writing community, these word processing programs are essential. The best part is that you can edit and comment on documents in real time as long as you share the documents with proper permissions. Students are very comfortable with Google docs, but I prefer Microsoft Online because of the formatting abilities.

HWC Online Tutoring Services

Option 1:
Free 24/7 Online Tutoring

smarthinking

Follow these four easy steps to access online tutoring:

1. Login to Brightspace
2. Select Online Tutoring
3. Select Tools
4. Click the Smarthinking Login
5. Navigate the site and select the content area in which you would like assistance.

For questions, contact Angela Winters- Harmon at awintersharmon@ccc.edu

Option 2:
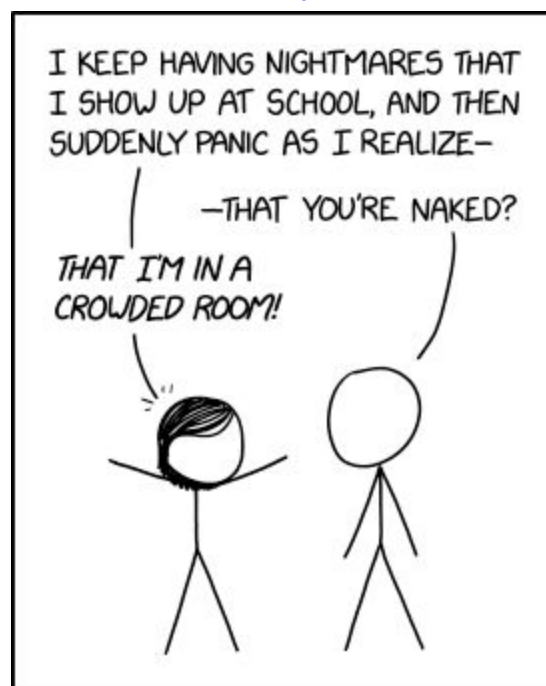**Tutoring with Your Favorite HWC Tutors**

zoom

Request an appointment here.
Bit.ly/hwc_virtualtutoring

Appointments must be made at least one-hour prior to your requested time.

Writing can easily feel very isolating and with the current "Shelter-in-Place" order, for many, it can seem insurmountable. What I have tried to tell students from day one, is that drafting may be done alone, but the writing process is done within a community. I hope this philosophy resonates with them in these uncertain times.

Source: **https://xkcd.com/2285/**

Finally, the last part of the writing community that is important to remember and encourage students to engage with is the writing tutors. Writing tutors are offering one-on-one virtual tutoring until the end of the semester. This gives the student one more person of contact.

Backing away from Online Exams: Following Other Paths to Meet Student Learning Outcomes in the Online Environment
By Erica McCormack, Chair

Depending on the questions that comprise them, exams can be used to assess a range of student learning outcomes, from lower-order thinking skills like identification to higher-order thinking skills like analysis and synthesis. When faced with the challenge of administering online an assignment that was originally designed for a face-to-face space, especially under emergency conditions, we may be tempted to automatically translate all assignments into an online environment despite the fact that there are new challenges as well as new opportunities to consider.

If an in-class exam was going to focus on lower-order skills like recognition and identification, how can we ensure that students answering those questions online do so without "cheating" by accessing things like Google and Wikipedia? Some instructors will choose to utilize specific technologies designed to freeze the student's computer browser so that other windows can't be accessed during the exam or will require that students keep their device's video camera on while taking the exam to ensure that they are following the rules.

Other instructors may opt to only use such identification quizzes as formative assessments or ungraded self-assessments for students to get a better idea of gaps in their learning and to instead convert all the summative, more heavily weighted assignments into ones that, by virtue of relying on higher-order thinking skills like analysis and synthesis, are inherently more resistant to cheating.

I teach in a discipline where exams are common but certainly not the only way to assess student learning toward my course outcomes. In my face-to-face art history classes, my students were originally going to complete an in-class exam that incorporated some recognition (matching and multiple choice), identification (matching, multiple choice, and short essay), and analysis (essay questions). This exam was designed to help assess the following student learning outcomes:
- Identify artistic and architectural styles from the time periods studied.
- Compare/contrast styles of art and architecture.
- Recognize examples of painting, architecture, and sculpture from the periods covered
- Apply key art and architectural terminology to descriptions of artworks.
- Analyze an individual artwork based on its visual elements and historical context.

But with the switch to a fully-online environment, I didn't want to worry so much about clamping down on cheating just to try to force this assignment to still work. Instead, I decided it would be a better use of my students' time if I could find a different way to assess their learning. I therefore chose to get rid of the exam assignment and replace it with a project that would give students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning, particularly higher-order skills like analysis and synthesis.

Instead of taking a final exam, my students will now complete a final project that requires a bit more creativity. Students will have an opportunity to either critique our textbook and offer their own suggested additions to rectify what they see as noteworthy omissions or a skewed perspective by the authors, or students can design and curate a virtual exhibition of artworks around a theme.

These assignments still assess the outcomes listed above, plus the additional outcome "Justify personal and non-personal critiques of art and architecture," so students are not missing out on an opportunity to demonstrate learning; rather, I think this version of the final assignment will give them better opportunity to show their learning given the current circumstances. Perhaps I'll continue to give these final projects as options to my face-to-face classes going forward.

It's a good reminder that while we have shared student learning outcomes across all sections of a course, regardless of instructor or modality, there are numerous ways to assess each of those outcomes. Sometimes it's easiest to realize that there are multiple routes to an outcome when we as an instructor develop a couple of them ourselves. Some approaches may work best in-person, others online; some may work best in a 16-week version of a course, others in a mini-session. Whatever assignment we choose should give students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning towards that outcome.

Source: https://xkcd.com/610/
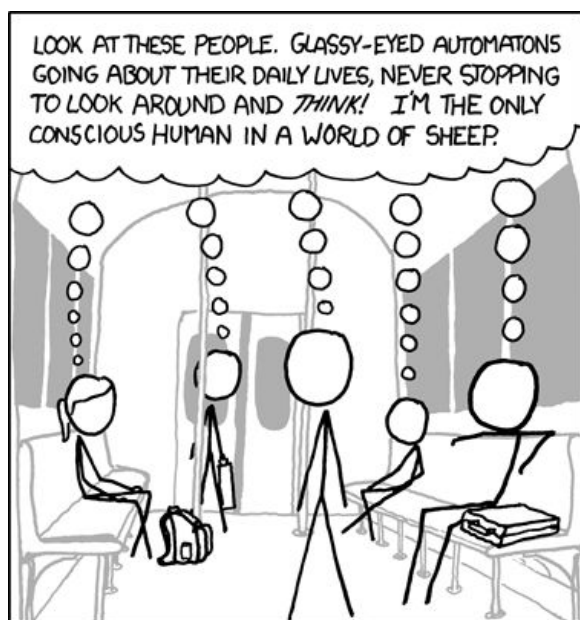
Research Readiness: Library Assessment
By Todd Heldt, Unit Liaison for the Library

Traditionally, the HWC library has focused on direct, skills-based assessments attuned to our departmental outcomes. However, as can be corroborated by our experiences, researchers have typically found little or no change in deep library learning after students attend a single instruction session or "one-shot" (See Hsieh and Holden (2010) and Portmann and Roush (2004)). Likewise, information literacy literature has documented millennials' and/or digital natives' negative or neutral attitudes about libraries and librarians, as well as their specific research dispositions. These students prefer to do research online for its ease and convenience, will accept inexpert sources if they are easier to find than expert sources, and will value information or information-seeking advice supplied by peers if it is easier than consulting a librarian or professor (Gross and Latham (2009)). Unsurprisingly, students also overestimate their actual information literacy skills (Jackson (2013)).

With these things in mind, we were intrigued by a comment in our last ICCB report that we presented entirely as an academic department and neglected to mention anything about our student support function. Though we are an academic department, and librarians are teaching, student-facing faculty, realistically, we often also serve in the capacity of student support. Even as teachers, we most often help students complete tasks for other professors. In that sense, our role is unique: We assist, we coach, we train, we even at times nurture. Yet we were not assessing student learning related to these additional components of our role.

R. Wang's *Assessment for One-Shot Library Instruction: A Conceptual Approach* (2016) recommends teaching and assessing "research readiness skills," which may be briefly summarized as students understanding their assignment, having clarity about their topic, recognizing where to look for sources, demonstrating willingness to ask information professionals for help planning their research, and learning the mechanics of searching (621). This approach corresponds to the roles that we naturally play, so we decided to take elements of Wang's thinking and combine it with our skills-based questions, alongside some questions meant to gauge student feelings of comfort.

In Spring 2020, the HWC library added research readiness questions to our skills-based assessment. The questions offer encouraging findings, showing that the library

does indeed offer valuable academic student support. Students leave our one-shots with a better understanding of their research assignments, a clearer and more focused research topic, a more systematic approach to completing their research assignments, and with greater confidence about approaching librarians for help:

· 84% felt the library session helped them understand their research assignment.
· 79% felt it helped them find a clear and focused research topic
· 76% felt that it helped them develop a systematic process for completing their research assignment
· 84% felt that it made them feel more confident about approaching a librarian for assistance with their research.

These findings show that students leave instruction sessions with a clearer grasp of what research entails, how to think productively about the process, how to approach research, and where to go to get help if they need it. In light of student attitudes, perceptions, and abilities, the library should strive not only to teach information literacy skills but to instill in students a willingness to access and accept the expert guidance of the librarians.

Greater and more in-depth exposure to information literacy concepts and the critical thinking that we engender about information and sources will hopefully shift student dispositions away from convenience and toward accuracy. In this regard, the most encouraging findings from this measure are that students both feel more prepared to undertake a research assignment and **more willing to consult a librarian for help with it.**

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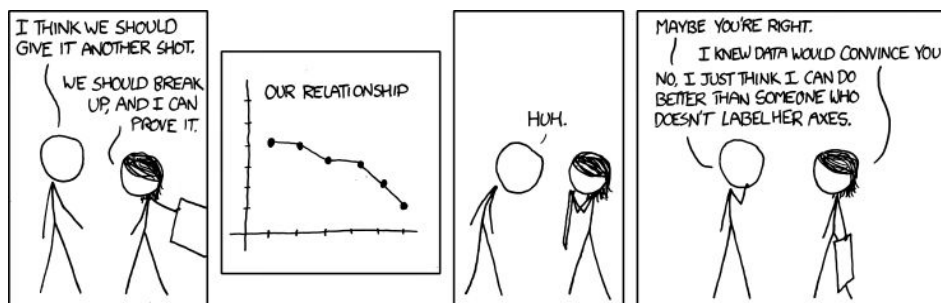Portmann, C., & Roush, A. (2004). Assessing the effects of library instruction. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ697422

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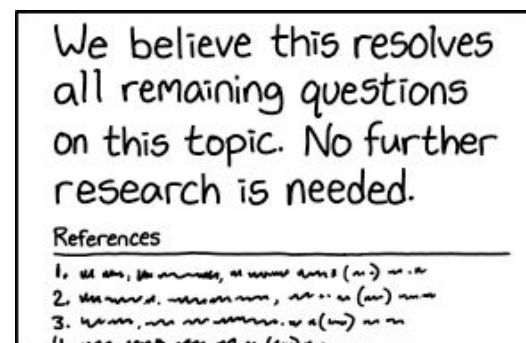
Source: https://xkcd.com/2268/

Source: https://xkcd.com/833/

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