FALL EDITION | 2021

Assessment Times: Highlights Edition

"Assess with a Purpose"

SPARKING JOY AND FUN ALONG WITH LEARNING

by Erica McCormack, Chair of HWC Assessment Committee

We on the Assessment Committee take our work--of better understanding and improving student learning--very seriously. But that doesn't mean we don't have fun! After all, in the words of Carrie Nepstad, "Assessment is fun!" And so is learning.

We actually have quite a bit of fun, whether it's from learning alongside fabulous colleagues, sharing snacks in our face-to-face meetings of yore, or generating fun themes to shape our newsletters.

This time, we are pleased to share with you a collection of **memes** (or parodies of memes) as well as a *Highlights Magazine*-inspired collection of content. Whether you explore it at the end of the current Fall 2021 semester or come back to it later, we hope it brings a smile to your face while also offering some food for thought.

MORE GREAT READS IN THIS EDITION:

Me looking out the window at my car, wishing I could drive to an Assessment Committee meeting complete with snacks purchased during a trip to Target where I spend two hours browsing aisles, touching everything, and buying things I don't need.

meme parody by Erica McCormack

You are Invited!

Assessment Committee Meetings in Spring 2022 will take place remotely, using this zoom link.
We meet every Wednesday (between weeks 2 and 15 of each semester) from 3-4 PM

Now You Try!

There are six stages that the HWC Assessment Committee follows in a cyclical process to structure our work.

Can you arrange the six stages of assessment (below) in the correct order?

answers on the bottom of page 3

SIX STAGES OF ASSESSMENT

1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6____

Assessment Research and Design

The Assessment Committee uses a sub-committee structure to maximize our expertise in researching and designing a specific methodology for each general education outcome. In this stage we find, create or review appropriate tools and processes for our specific outcomes and diverse urban context. Recent Assessments have involved use of national assessment tools, customizing existing tools and creating from scratch our own innovative assessment tools

Pilot Assessment Tools and Processes

Faculty and small number of student sections are used to pilot any assessment tool and process, so that when the full assessment is used we have minimized potential errors and anticipated logistical and methodological challenges.

Administer Specific Assessment

A successful assessment requires buy-in and active contributions from many stakeholders. We are conscious of achieving a significant sample size and one which mirrors the diversity of our student body. Committee members recruit faculty and sections, ensure sample size, and conduct the testing process in formats that are accessible to all our students.

Supporting Evidence-Based Change

Committee members partner with other stakeholders to present findings and to recommend change. A broad range of techniques are used to disseminate findings and encourage dialogue about improving
student learning. This stage also includes a review of the specific student learning outcomes under investigation and the restarting of the assessment process by returning to Step One

Outcome Definition

Committee members formulate and approve specific general education student learning outcomes. This is often done in consultation with key faculty in the discipline area. The student learning outcomes form the foundation of our assessment work. These remain fixed for a full cycle of the assessment process and then are open for change as we re-start assessment on specific outcomes in the light of our learning.

Data Analysis

Assessment data is codified and input, reliability and validity checks are undertaken and the committee produces analyzed and usable data. This data analysis process also includes a methodological review of our process and assessment tool.

Goofus and Gallant

Goofus thinks assessment is about instructor evaluation.

Goofus leaves his projects unfinished and blames the pandemic.

Gallant knows assessment is about attempting to understand and improve student learning.

Gallant reviews his pilot study and thinks about how shifting his assessment online may improve data acquisition.

Goofus assesses to say he did in his ICCB program review.

Gallant assesses to share his results with his colleagues and close the loop.

Goofus searches assessment data for evidence supporting his preconceived opinions.

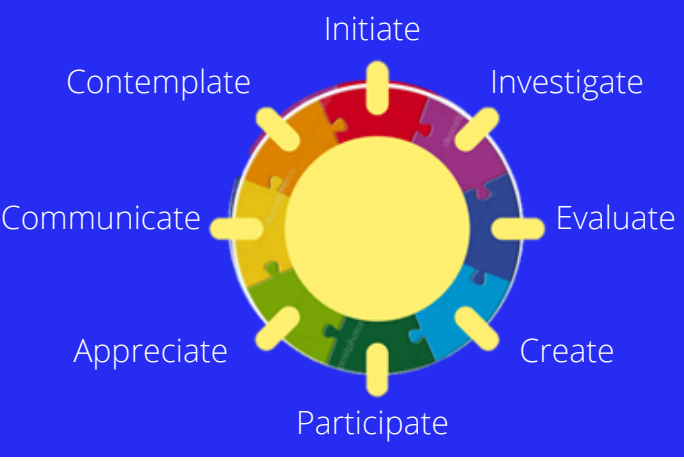
Gallant approaches assessment data with humility and an open mind to find where student learning can be improved.

parody by Phil Vargas

Answers to Page 2's Activity:

Correct order of the Six Stages of Assessment

1) Outcome Definition, **2)** Assessment Research & Design,
3) Pilot Assessment Tools and Processes,
4) Administer Specific Assessment, **5)** Data Analysis,
6) Supporting Evidence-Based Change



Student Capabilities and ILOs (Institutional Learning Outcomes)

What every student should be able to do as a result of their coursework and other experiences at HWC.

NEW INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

by Ukaisha Al-Amin, Vice Chair of the HWC Assessment Committee

Rationale

The Assessment Committee has moved from General Education Outcomes to Institutional Learning Outcomes. This means that we have added the largest scope of outcomes possible that colleges and universities use to assess student learning.

We asked ourselves, “What should students have learned while at HWC as a whole, not just in the classroom or their selected program?” This created space to include classes and workshops outside of the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) along with the learning happening in cocurricular areas, at events, and during everyday interactions with faculty, staff, and administrators at HWC.

These learning outcomes are meant to be interpreted broadly so that they connect in some way to students’ overall coursework and experience. Students may come to us at varying levels of these outcomes: milestone, benchmark, capstone; therefore, we will be assessing where they are in their learning at the time of any given assessment cycle.

For example, a student might participate at the milestone level, but through participation in two transfer workshops, a job fair, and the Student Symposium, they are able to reach capstone before leaving HWC. In other words, we know our students are learning inside and outside the classroom, so we want learning outcomes that reflect that.

Harold Washington's 8 Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Initiate: Purposeful learning activity requires personal agency, especially in regard to improving knowledge skills and competence, building on and refining prior knowledge, interest and curiosity, and foundational literacies: problem solving, quantitative literacy and ethical reasoning. It is evident in students’ curiosity, proactiveness, and ability to work and learn independently of external direction.

Investigate: A systematic process of exploring issues/ objects/ works through the collection and analysis of evidence that result in informed conclusions & judgments. Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them.

Evaluate: Critical evaluation is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Create: The capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, materials, or expertise in original, skillful ways by thinking, reacting, and working in imaginative ways, i.e. characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and resilience in light of difficulty.

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Participate: To participate constructively is to engage in action that facilitates progress toward shared ends and includes (but is not limited to) student effort put into group tasks, their manner of interacting with others on team, and the quantity and quality of contributions they make to group/team discussions; this objective includes civic engagement, understood as the ability to participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community and entails intercultural knowledge, understood as "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts."

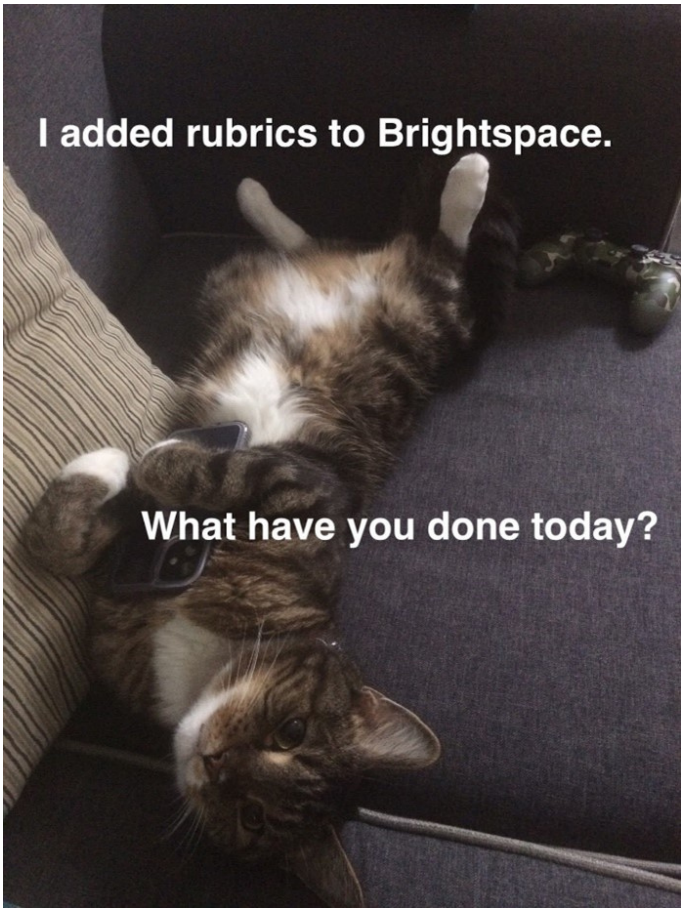
Appreciate: Appreciation deals with human interaction, with others and their creative work, through particular lenses. Generally speaking, appreciation is the act of recognizing or understanding that something or someone is valuable and important (from a certain point of view). In order for students to "appreciate" they must be able to think deeply about and respond to multiple perspectives and actively show the ways in which they have learned to value people, perspectives, and creative works and activities across the curriculum. Cognitive actions associated with appreciation are defined by Clinton Golding as complex, flexible, independent, and applied forms of thinking.

Communicate: Communication focuses on written, oral, visual, and nonverbal methods in order to develop and express ideas. These methods involve learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with and interacting with many different texts, data, and images. Students learn to prepare purposeful presentations designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, while evaluating their own texts or published texts that seek to promote/persuade change in the audiences' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors. Here 'texts' means the information with which the student is transacting or creating: anything from essays, to speeches, to songs, to commercials, to gestures.

Contemplate: A form and consequence of Integrative learning, that is both an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and cocurriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.

We are also still working with other smaller units of assessment

We will still be working with unit level liaisons and continuing to be a space to help them–and their respective departments–build and go through the six stages of assessment. We will still continue to be a place where anyone can share ideas and ask questions about assessment of student learning while enjoying a snack. -Once we are back on campus, obvs.



meme parody by Ukaisha Al-Amin

Newsflash

"Whether it stems from specific teaching, cultural attitudes, international beliefs about the ownership of ideas, forgetfulness, procrastination, or a combination of factors, many students enter college-level courses with a broad and fuzzy range of practices in relation to attribution, citation, and integrtiy."

EVER WONDER...WHAT STUDENTS KNOW ABOUT PLAGIARISM?

By Amy Rosenquist, Liaison to English, Speech, Theater, and Journalism

Several years ago, I attended a back-to-school night proudly offered by the middle school faculty at a CPS neighborhood magnet school, showcasing how well they prepared the students to compete for entry into the top high schools. We rotated in and out of the various academic subject rooms, with each faculty member highlighting their role in the current school wide project: Science Fair. The English teacher put a passage from a scientific website up on the smartboard, then demonstrated how she had the students fill in synonyms in place of the original text, thus ensuring the students were using "their own words" to avoid plagiarism.

I died.

Recovering swiftly, I raised my hand. "So.. they're encouraged to right-click and substitute synonyms?" This, for the uninitiated, is an unambiguous form of plagiarism.

"Absolutely not!" She pounced on the opportunity to further demonstrate her pedagogical genius. "I make them use a thesaurus. An actual, paper thesaurus! Every one of them has a copy in their desks."

I am pleased to report that, although that English teacher is still teaching active plagiarism to this day, the science teacher got wind of the practice and shut it down, at least for Science Fair.

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Four years later, my son was, in fact, in a competitive CPS high school; despite the early plagiarism lessons, he'd landed in one of the best IB programs in the state. Upon returning from winter break, the entire sophomore class was unexpectedly tasked with writing an essay for Black history month, due to a recent mandate by CPS downtown. It hadn't officially been added to the IB curriculum that February; as such, it wasn't going to be graded, but it was mandatory nonetheless.

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Three weeks later, the sophomores were called to an assembly, where they were yelled at by several key players in their program. It seemed that, burdened with the weight that only sophomore year in an IB high school can bring, many students had approached the extra ungraded assignment from the point of view that since it didn't count, they'd just borrow something from their friend Google.

When my son came home that night, he asked me to sit down: "Mom, I want you to try to stay calm, but I have to tell you something that happened at school today."

He hadn't plagiarized. However, there had been an even more egregious incident at the assembly, when the guidance counselor addressed the class.

"Those of you who plagiarized this essay are a disappointment to yourselves, your families, and this entire school," she railed, accompanied by looks of piercing disappointment from the other administrators who sat glowering out at the sophomores. "You're the type of students who will end up at" - in my son's rendition, she spat the last two words - "community college."

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These are anecdotes, something we on the Assessment Committee are simultaneously skeptical of and intrigued by. Nonetheless, they represent a rampant, unchecked reality running through students' prior learning: there is not a consistent (and certainly not a consistent college-level) understanding of what plagiarism is, or how to avoid it. Whether it stems from specific teaching, cultural attitudes, international beliefs about the ownership of ideas, forgetfulness, procrastination, or a combination of factors, many students enter college-level courses with a broad and fuzzy range of practices in relation to attribution, citation, and integrity.

Because prior knowledge tends to be lacking or incorrect, teaching students how to avoid plagiarism is an important component throughout our composition curriculum, and we wanted to know more about where students fall in terms of their understanding of the issues involved in relation to their composition sequence completion. After piloting a tool in the spring, followed by a summer and early fall filled with faculty input and major edits, the English, Speech, Theater, and Journalism department is running a department-wide assessment this fall that seeks to understand how our students approach these ideas.

The assessment looks at basic facts (can you reuse a paper for another class without permission? Can you use ideas from a source without a citation, if you paraphrase?) as well as where students perceive the line between correct and incorrect paraphrase - the issue of what, truly, are your own words vs. the synonym substitution error of 6th grade science fair fame. The assessment runs through the end of Week 16, so there are no results to report yet, but we - the gatekeepers of attribution - eagerly await learning and responding to what we find.

Plagiarism is also an excellent example of an important multidisciplinary concept, one that we all share the burden to some extent of instructing and assessing. Most often when it occurs, it is unintentional, creating opportunities for learning and academic growth. As Maya Angelou famously remarked, "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better." When it comes to plagiarism, long may it be so.

Screenshot of Assessment Committee attendees in November 2021
Top row: Ignatius Gomes, Erica McCormack, Zeke Yusof, Loretta Visomirskis
Second row: Phil Vargas, Matthew Williams, Jeff Swigart, Amy Rosenquist
Third row: Dave Richardson, Bridgette Mahan, Todd Heldt, Paul Wandless
Bottom row: Ukaisha Al-Amin, Farah Movahedzadeh, Juanita Del Toro, Chao Lu

We would love for you to join us for some or all of our meetings in Spring 2022. Assessment Committee Meetings will continue to take place remotely, using this zoom link. We meet every Wednesday (between weeks 2 and 15 of each semester) from 3-4 PM

HOW DO I ASSESS REMOTE VS ONLINE VS IN-PERSON LEARNING, OR: HOW IMPORTANT TO ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING IS MY ABILITY TO SEE YOUR FACE?

By Bridgette Mahan, Liaison to Business

The times we have been living in with the pandemic have opened the door to numerous questions. I was joking when I created my article title linking assessment to my ability to see a student's face, lol. However, there have been many times in the last 18 months that I have longed for the opportunity to lecture and note from my students' countenance their understanding of the course content.

Certainly, from an academic perspective, student success and learning across all of the different modalities– in-person, online-synchronous (remote), online-asynchronous, and hybrid–has come into sharp focus during the pandemic and raised the question of how to best present course content and assess student learning across modalities.

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With complete degree programs being offered totally online, how do we as instructors access evidence of student learning across modalities and ensure course content is successfully communicated?

This question has become particularly relevant to the HWC Business Department for several reasons.

1. In addition to in-person, our Business Economics AA Degree is also offered fully online.
2. Our upcoming ACBSP reaffirmation review requires our review of data regarding student success across modalities.
3. We are building assessment tools that can be administered across modalities in key introductory prerequisite courses.

The Business Department has previously built and administered end-of-the-semester assessment exams across in-person sections of our Business 111 (Introduction to Business), Business 181 (Financial Accounting), and Business 182 (Managerial Accounting) courses. However, these assessment exams have not been modified in several semesters and should be reviewed and updated. Also, ideally, we want to pilot these exams across all modalities in Spring 2022.

Further, in addition, to the review of student knowledge of course content through these direct assessments, we would like to gather indirect assessment data from students regarding their impressions of learning under the different modalities to identify teaching tools that they consider particularly effective and supportive of student learning. Obviously, all students have different learning style preferences but some mechanisms such as the use of breakout rooms, polling, or regularly scheduled synchronous meetings even for traditional online courses may enhance the student learning experience; and as a department, we are focused on gathering this type of data.

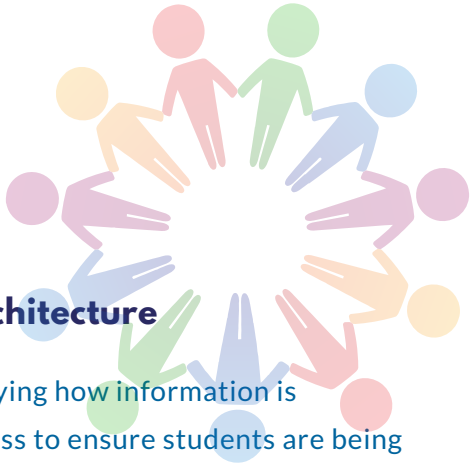
Finally, as part of the HWC Online Learning Support Committee, I will be contacting fellow Assessment Committee members to help formulate a school-wide strategy for online learning assessment at both the unit level and program level.

At this point, a few academic disciplines are considering developing assessment tools to measure the successful fulfillment of student learning outcomes across modalities while other disciplines are determining the best online assessment tools to incorporate into our assessment regimen. I, also, will be following up with HWC Research and Planning to discuss the preparation of a dashboard to capture student success data for online courses in a format that we can utilize as we develop and implement an assessment plan for online learning.

Preliminary data we have discussed capturing includes assessment of student learning outcomes and student success rates. Please join me in this discussion as we head into Spring 2022.

meme parody by Veronica Villanueva

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUCCESSFUL ASSESSMENT



By Paul Wandless, Liaison to Art and Architecture

A big part of having a successful assessment tool is getting feedback from everyone that uses the tool. The tool itself yields data from the students' participation in the assessment and is invaluable in determining how well students are meeting the learning outcomes that the tool targeted. This data is then used for recommendations to improve, reinforce or modify how information is disseminated in the course to students.

With a course-level assessment, this means any needed improvements can happen as quickly as the next semester. This has happened in the past with Art 131 (Beginning Drawing). A need for a shared vocabulary list was recognized through the assessment tool results. Conversations with the Art 131 instructors and students after the assessment was run, revealed vocabulary terms were not consistently introduced, used or reinforced in all sections. So students and instructors felt having a shared vocabulary list specific to supporting the learning required by a few course-level SLOs was needed. Such a list was created and given to all instructors for the class, and the very next semester scores rose because of this new resource.

Sometimes a deeper look is needed at recommendations to address a data point that can't be addressed just through student feedback. This is where instructor feedback is so important to have as a constant part of the process.

Through speaking with instructors in a group setting, one-on-one and via email, much can be accomplished to address challenges faced in all sections of a course.

Since each instructor may approach course material a little differently, having group discussions helps to find out where the commonalities and differences are for each person.

Changing or modifying how information is disseminated in class to ensure students are being properly prepared to meet the SLOs on the syllabus takes a group effort. When solutions are found using input and feedback from all the instructors, there is also better ownership and buy-in for the new recommendations, making the class stronger. It also helps with continuity across sections for the course and builds camaraderie among those who teach the class. This was the case when we added anew skill to the Art 144 Two Dimensional design class assessment. After many discussions about what the instructors felt was missing from the pilot assessment, additional skills and tasks were added to the assessment. The assessment became broader, more in-depth and covered more syllabus SLOs as a result of instructor involvement in updating the assessment.

Everyone who teaches a course has the same end goal in mind: to do their best with the information and materials given to students to make sure they are meeting the SLOs by the end of the semester. In the studio art classes, three different instructors can give three different projects that all address the same exact SLOs in the syllabus. This is why it's important to have communication among all instructors to keep each other informed on their different approaches to meeting the same informational goals. This scenario is what prompted shared course vocabularies.

Working together like this maintains academic freedom for the instructors within the parameters of having continuity of the materials, skills and processes required for syllabus SLOs. Successful assessments occur when everyone involved is on the same page and working together towards a common goal of making the course the best experience it can be for students.

TEACHING IN-PERSON AFTER THE PANDEMIC

By Samar Ayesh, Liaison to Physical Science

Towards the end of the school year, sometime around April 7th 2021, I attended a Zoom call for my children's school. The school has teamed up with Mosaic Experience to help guide both parents and teachers on how to best support each other and set our students up for success in quarter 4. I was really very excited and was looking forward to the Zoom meeting.

Both teachers and parents were sharing experiences about remote learning. I wanted to thank the teachers and the school staff for all their hard work during the school year. As soon as I turned my mic on and started speaking, I quickly became emotional and found myself crying! My kids ran to me to see why I was crying, and I had to turn both my camera and mic off for a few seconds to calm myself down. At that moment, I realized how stressed I was. After one whole year of being home, teaching online, helping my kids with their remote learning, and taking over the role of the department chair position for the spring semester, I was very stressed and tired! I finally broke down! I was totally burned out.

Teaching lab-based coursework in a virtual format has been very challenging. I felt my regular workload increased trying to adapt the laboratory to fit with the virtual modality. So, when we had a chance to go back to campus and teach in-person, I took advantage of that and offered to teach one of my sections fully face to face. We all know how essential it is for students to have hands-on experience. However, I quickly realized the effects of the pandemic on our students. I felt student's concentration during class was very low; they lacked motivation, and they had to be reminded all the time to stay on top of their course work

I am teaching two sections of General Chemistry I (CHEM 201) this semester. One is in-person, while the other is remote. I expected from the beginning that my remote section would do better, since they will be taking all the exams online with access to class and web-based materials. So I decided to give my in-person section a similar experience. I allowed them to use their textbook and class notes during exam 1. However, the results showed that my remote section performance was significantly better than the in-person section. I noted while the students were taking the exam, that they were literally looking for the answers. I explained to them after that this is not the way to take the exam. They should really study and just use the textbook or the class notes for things they don't understand. On Exam 2, I allowed them just to bring in a 1-page "cheat-sheet". Unfortunately, the results were still the same. The table below shows a few of the SLOs tested during exams 1 and 2.

SLO Tested	In-Person	Remote
Apply derived units, such as volume and density, to perform calculations.	10 % correct	27 % correct
Apply dimensional analysis toward solving problems with multiple steps or conversions.	60 % correct	95 % correct
Apply Afbau and Pauli Exclusion Principle and Hund's rule in drawing electron orbital diagrams.	25 % correct	57 % correct
Use the periodic table to determine the electron configuration of an atom.	25 % correct	76 % correct

There is much to do if we want to help students succeed. The pandemic had tremendous effects not only on faculty but on students as well. It is not going to be "normal" to go back to teaching in-person. I feel it will be a while before we can get over the emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by the virtual experience. As faculty, we have to keep in mind that students were affected as much as we were.

HANDS-ON GROUP ACTIVITIES IN SCIENCE COURSES

By Farah Movahedzadeh, Liaison to Biology

Over the last 20 months, science professors have struggled to include hands-on activities, and engage students in a meaningful collaboration in remote learning. When we finally had a chance to teach some courses face to face in the fall of 2021, I enthusiastically volunteered to teach both my classes in a hybrid learning modality. While a number of activities could be taught online, students would have a chance to perform laboratory practices and group class activities again!

One of the complex subjects in Bio121 is Mitosis/Meiosis. Mitosis and Meiosis are the splitting of cells, where the chromosomes in a cell arrange themselves to be duplicated and then separated as the cell splits. This process involves many parts that lead to a successful cell division. Understanding mitosis and meiosis can be difficult when attempting to teach maternally- and paternally-derived homologous chromosomes, sex chromosome differentiation, telomere structure, and chromosomal mutations and rearrangements.

Students who benefit most from hands-on activities have a difficult time comprehending the steps of mitosis and meiosis during online learning. An activity that greatly increased comprehension was a simple one that involved socks, binder clips, and yarn. Imagining that the socks were chromosomes, where a pair could be held together at the center by a binder clip and moving through the different stages of separation and duplication of the chromosomes greatly increased comprehension of this topic. Utilizing the binder clips and yarn, the students were also able to visualize mutations and rearrangements of the chromosomes.

This was a highly beneficial tool to demonstrate the process of mitosis and meiosis. I feel fortunate that I was able to provide in-person activities such as the sock-chromosome lab this semester. Here are some photos to share. In one case, students went the extra mile and used their shoes to show the cell membrane

photo courtesy of Farah Movahedzadeh

By doing this activity, students should be able to answer the following questions in a group presentation at the end of this lab:

- What are sister chromatids?
- What are homologous chromosomes?
- What are non-homologous chromosomes?
- What is the purpose of mitosis?
- How many daughter cells will be produced at the end of mitosis from a parent cell? And what type (diploid or haploid)?
- What is the purpose of meiosis?
- How many daughter cells will be produced at the end of meiosis from a parent cell? And what type (diploid or haploid)?
- Does mitosis happen in diploid or haploid cells?
- Does meiosis happen in diploid or haploid cells?

photo courtesy of Farah Movahedzadeh

DESIGNED FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

By Matthew Williams, Liaison to World Languages

I am administering a scaled down version of the assessment tool that I tested previously. So, in a way, I am testing that new version but also collecting data from it.

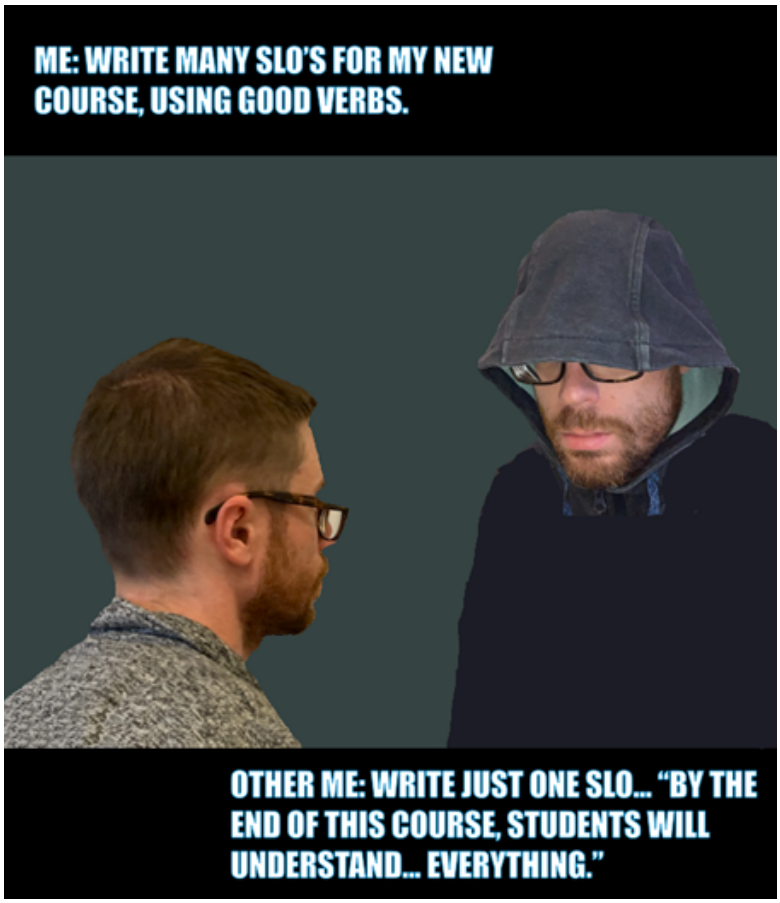
Attempting to conduct my particular assessment during the pandemic has involved many challenges adapting it to the online environment, resulting in very low response rates from students. One of the reasons for the difficulty is design related, meaning that the assessment I designed and tested is not suited for use in an online environment, either synchronous or asynchronous.

The task type involves a learning curve, so it is necessary to carry it out in a face-to-face lab environment. Another reason for recent difficulties is technology-related. The procedures call for the students to use specific (free) software that can only be used on a desktop or laptop computer, but not smartphones, a fact that creates an obstacle for many students who can only use their smartphone.

This semester, therefore, I have opted to carry out a simple multiple choice type survey using google forms, an approach that circumvents the challenges described above. First, the task type (multiple choice) is very familiar to the survey-takers, and it can be accessed easily on any type of device that has an internet connection.

French professor Andrew Aquino-Cutcher has offered to have the following list of his courses participate in the pared-down survey:

- French 101 WW1 (Online asynchronous)
- French 102 LP (Online live)
- French 103 PR (Online live)
- French 104 PR (Online live)



meme parody by Jeff Swigart

As for the survey that the students will see, it is brief and to the point, consisting of just three multiple choice questions, reflecting the fact that the standard French speech sound inventory includes only three discernible nasal vowels. For each question, the students must select the correct response from a list of five options including 'none of the above.'

Specifically, the survey challenges the students to listen to a single vowel sound in isolation (either an oral vowel or a nasal vowel) and then to choose from a list of French words the one word that contains the same vowel sound.

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Excerpt from the survey:

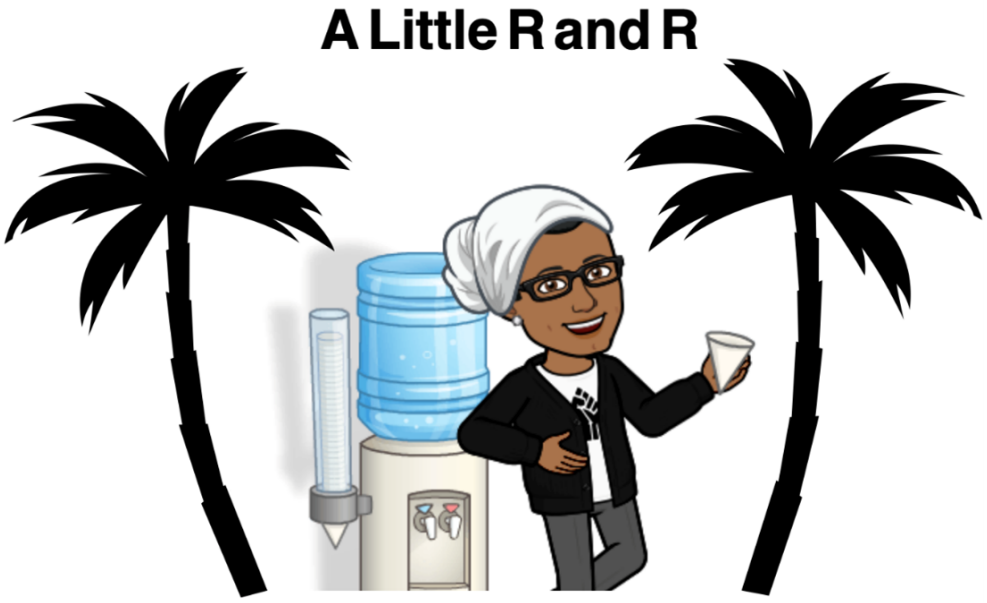
Which French word below contains “this” [ɔ̃] vowel (https://www.lawlessfrench.com/wavs/on.wav)?

- dormir
- maison
- bonne
- robe
- none of the above

Professor Aquino-Cutcher began sharing the survey with all four class sections listed above during week 14.

The results of the survey will aid professor Aquino-Cutcher in two ways: it will demonstrate the aural proficiency of his French students as an end of term assessment, and it will serve as an enticement for any students that are interested in improving their pronunciation. Indeed, Professor Aquino-Cutcher is offering a new course in the Spring semester called French 206 - Intensive Oral Practice.

Since most French courses will continue to be offered online or remote next semester, I anticipate that I will need to continue using the same pared-down tool.



Reflecting and Reimagining Assessment with Ukaisha Al-Amin

bitmoji by Ukaisha Al-Amin

REFLECTING AND REIMAGINING ASSESSMENT

By Ukaisha Al-Amin, Vice-Chair of the HWC Assessment Committee

Episode 1: Critical Thinking

At some point in our teaching careers, we’ve taught a class where critical thinking was a category for student learning outcomes, or it was the student learning outcome in and of itself. This means that over the years, experts have tried to figure out ways to accurately assess critical thinking: something that is seemingly internal. In order to make critical thinking tangible, educators have relied upon Bloom’s Taxonomy to formulate and revise student learning outcomes.
It follows that there are six categories of learning: basic knowledge, secondary comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The last four are directly connected to critical thinking. Using these and the verbs that accompany them, it is supposed to help make assessing different aspects of critical thinking easier. Unfortunately, that’s not always the case.
We often are able to assess how well students have learned specific concepts in our classes through application. But what about synthesis and evaluation? Are we really assessing their critical thinking skills beyond application in a 100 -200 level course? Some may answer, “Indeed. Of course we are.” While others may say, “Indeed. Well…at least we have tried.”

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Take the informal fallacies learning outcome for English 102 for example:. "**Identify logical fallacies and authorial bias and analyze the effects on an argument.**" If I want to assess whether students understand what informal fallacies are, I could assess them by giving a quiz with scenarios where they have to match the fallacy to the correct scenario. That would cover the *identify* part of the learning outcome.

I could take it a step further by making them add an explanation of why they chose the fallacy. Or to really get a complete evaluation from students, I could also have them examine the ways in which the fallacy could be persuasive and how it could also fall under other fallacies. This is a much more difficult task than the initial assessment.

Using the fallacy assignment as an example, I could close the loop by adding the same type of analysis and evaluation as a requirement on future writing assignments in the course. As I reflect, I also wonder how I could do this with more of the other student learning outcomes in the course, especially those not written with the verbs used to assess higher-level critical thought.

Beyond "closing the loop" on this particular assessment, I also wonder if critical thinking should be assessed each time or whether it only needs to be assessed once in the course because it is being assessed in other courses across the college. All of these things I think about. What about you? How do you assess critical thinking skills in your classroom? Join us next semester, to hear from some folks around campus discuss their thoughts on this pervasive yet sometimes still elusive learning outcome.

TRIGONOMETRY EQUATIONS

By Chao Lu, Liaison to Mathematics

Many students find that mathematics is one of the most difficult subjects that they encounter in their academic journey. Mathematics, as a pure theoretical subject, is not that enjoyable for some students. Learning it can be somewhat stressful and challenging. One example of this is Trigonometry, which is relatively complex and different from the arithmetic and algebraic topics that students learn during the earlier years in their mathematical journey. Trigonometry is one of the most important and valuable branches of mathematics that studies relationships between side lengths and angles of triangles. Great trigonometry skills allow students to work out complex angles and dimensions in relatively little time. We see the vast applications of trigonometry in our daily life, it is used in fields such as engineering, architecture, and many sciences.

Currently, our department offers Math 141- Plane Trigonometry. It is one of the two courses (Math 140-College Algebra and Math 141-Plane Trigonometry) which are prerequisites for Math 207 Calculus I.

There are many reasons that Trigonometry plays an important role in Calculus learning, including geometric proofs by using trigonometry to transform coordinates from Cartesian to Polar. Another example is that using trigonometric substitution provides much simpler techniques of integration compared to other methods.

At the end of Fall 2020, the Mathematics Department started a new assessment process for Math 141-Plane Trigonometry around the outcome "solve trigonometric equations." The assessment is a short online survey on Google Forms containing three multiple choice questions and one open-ended math problem on the following topics: solve a trigonometric equation in specific domain interval and in general, choose a correct solving process, and solve a trigonometric equation by continuing the solving process.

During the pilot, we received a total of 29 valid responses from 12 sections. Participating students performed better than we expected in solving a trigonometric equation and choosing a correct process.

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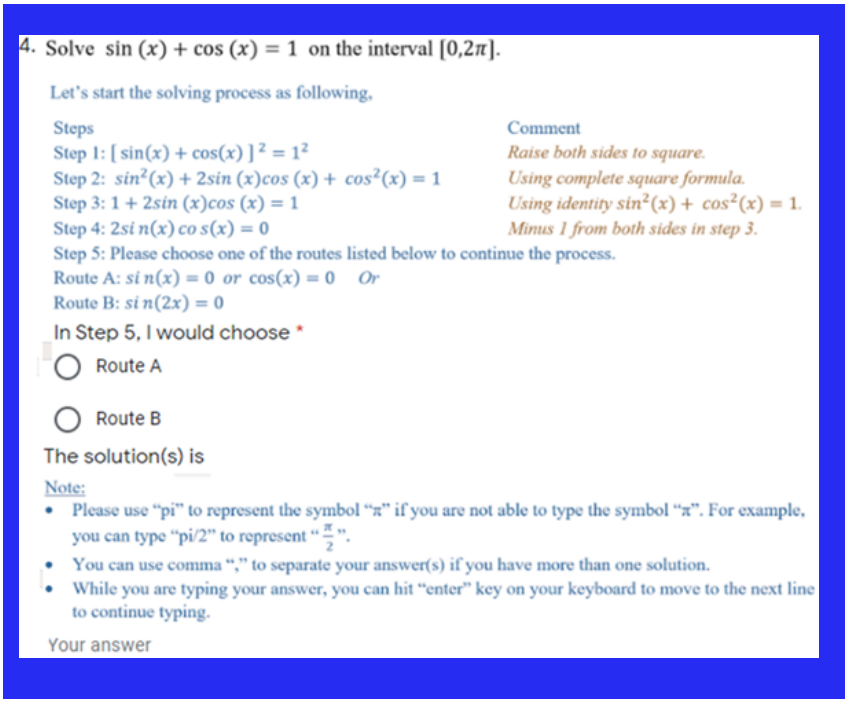
However, we also found that students had more difficulty with including all correct solutions in solving a trigonometric equation in a specific domain interval. For question #2 on solving a trigonometric equation in general, more than half of the students (17 students, 59% of the total) chose the correct solution. For question #3, more than 60% of students (19 students, 66% of the total) chose the correct solving process. For question #1 on solving a trigonometric equation in a specific domain interval, less than half of the students (12 students, 41% of the total) chose both correct solutions. This was not too surprising since this topic is challenging, and students tend to only include the solution within the most common period.

The result also showed most students (24 students, 83% of the total) tried to answer question #4, the open-ended question on solving a trigonometric equation, by continuing the solving process. The participation rate on this question is surprisingly higher than we expected.

Here are some other findings from the pilot.

- The population of the participants: This assessment was sent to pilot groups of students from Math 141, Math 207, Math 208, Math 209. Among those 29 valid responses, 14 (48%) of them are from Math 141 and 15 (52%) are from Math 207.



4. Solve $\sin(x) + \cos(x) = 1$ on the interval $[0, 2\pi]$.

Let's start the solving process as following,

Steps	Comment
Step 1: $[\sin(x) + \cos(x)]^2 = 1^2$	*Raise both sides to square.*
Step 2: $\sin^2(x) + 2\sin(x)\cos(x) + \cos^2(x) = 1$	*Using complete square formula.*
Step 3: $1 + 2\sin(x)\cos(x) = 1$	*Using identity* $\sin^2(x) + \cos^2(x) = 1$.
Step 4: $2\sin(x)\cos(x) = 0$	*Minus 1 from both sides in step 3.*

Step 5: Please choose one of the routes listed below to continue the process.

Route A: $\sin(x) = 0$ *or* $\cos(x) = 0$ *Or*

Route B: $\sin(2x) = 0$

In Step 5, I would choose *

- ◯ Route A
- ◯ Route B

The solution(s) is

Note:

- Please use "pi" to represent the symbol "π" if you are not able to type the symbol "π". For example, you can type "pi/2" to represent "$\frac{\pi}{2}$".
- You can use comma "," to separate your answer(s) if you have more than one solution.
- While you are typing your answer, you can hit "enter" key on your keyboard to move to the next line to continue typing.

Your answer

- The device students were using to take this survey: Four choices were listed including Computer (Desktop or Laptop), Tablet (iPad or Android tablet etc.), Cell Phone and Other. 26 (90%) of the students used Computer (Desktop or Laptop) and 3 (10%) of the students used Cell Phone.
- Feedback questions were asked to all participants, "Did you have any challenge or technique issue during the survey? Do you have any other suggestion(s) to help us improve the survey for the future students?" 23 of students (79%) had no challenge, 1 student (3%) had internet/Wi-Fi issue, 1 student (3%) had challenge to write the solution steps for the open-ended question on their cell phone since some of the math symbols are not available in Cell phone keyboard, and 4 students (14%) indicated the open-ended question had not provided them with enough room for solution/formatting issues.

Based on the feedback and considered grading/format challenges for the last open-ended question, we invited more math faculty members to collaborate and made some modifications to the initial assessment to improve the assessment too before full deployment. We also added a background question to identify the learning modality in which participating students were currently studying math. We rolled out the full-scale assessment this semester on week 12 to all students from Math 141-Plane Trigonometry, Math 207-Calculus I, Math 208 Calculus II and Math 209-Calculus III, a total of 17 sections. We are trying to collect more unique student responses to examine patterns and determine if the students' results are influenced by the mode of the delivery formats/class modality, specifically taught in-person, remote live, or online. All this information will help us narrow down strategies to enhance our teaching, with the goal of improving our students' learning in every course and every modality.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By Juanita Del Toro, Liaison to Social and Applied Sciences

To complete the M.A. program I attended, students could choose to take comprehensive exams or write a thesis. Our chair advised us to choose the one we least liked, the one we thought we were the weakest at. That way, we would get better at it, and maybe even like it.

When I was asked about the Assessment Committee, there was something about the word "assessment" that I was very hesitant about. "I am a historian," I said to myself, "I do qualitative work." Assessment seemed so quantitative. It just did not seem to correlate with the way I look at things. But I remembered the advice of my M.A. program chair, basically to do the thing you are hesitant about.

I recently read a comment from a new tenure track faculty member who was evaluating this fall's Tenure Orientation Seminar. They mentioned that they especially appreciated the session that focused on assessment. The faculty member said they had always thought of assessment based on what it meant to them when they were in school: exams, quizzes, reports. But after that seminar session, they realized it's not about that, it's about helping students learn. When I read that comment, I thought about how much their experience mirrored my realization about this committee.

Now that I am on the committee, I realize it should be called the Caring Committee. I know we already have a Care Team, but this group should also have the word "care" in the name somewhere.

For example, the time and care taken to make sure anything we send to students is done well, done right, with the students in mind first. Case in point, the recent survey about participation that all of us faculty have been circulating to our students this past month.

Newsflash

"While we are gathering information, what we are doing more so, is letting students know we care about their experiences. And that is ultimately why we are asking about their experiences: because we care."

As the committee finalized the survey questions and format, I realized how much more there is to assessment than, well, assessing.

This committee combed over the survey and discussed all the possible ways students might perceive the questions because while we are gathering information, what we are doing more so, is letting students know we care about their experiences. And that is ultimately why we are asking about their experiences: because we care.

The survey does not address content in their classes. It's about what they learn about themselves and about each other. It's about inclusivity: because we care.

This has certainly been an informative semester. Assessment is not the same as evaluation. Evaluating is about assigning value to students' work as a measure of what they learned in class. Assessing is to consider the process of learning; to determine, as much as we can, how students learned what they learned (or did not learn.) It is to consider more than the result, but about the path taken to get there.

Like any good history project, it's not just what they knew at the beginning and what they know at the end, but what changed for them over the course of the class, and how it changed.

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It is with this concept of change and the idea of care in mind that I am thinking about my first project. My intention is to assess the Learning Outcomes we have set for our classes that focus on Latin American and Latinx Studies. This would include Hist 215 History of Latin America, Hist 216 U.S. Latinx History, and courses such as Anth 202 Cultural Anthropology, that can be taught with an emphasis in Latin American and Latinx Studies.

It is important students consider the diversity of U.S. Latinx people as reflected in outcomes such as "Recognize, describe, and analyze… diverse populations that comprise Latinos in the U.S." and "Appreciate diversity among peoples and cultures located in the same geographic region [Latin America]."

Students also need to reflect on the impact of U.S. influence in Latin America as in the outcome, "Define and interpret the historical and current U.S.-Latin American relations and how they impact Latinos in the U.S. today."

As a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) such as ours, our demographics demand that we meet these goals. But really, even if we were not an HSI, we need to ensure that our students, no matter the number, feel included, feel seen, feel recognized, that they know we care.

And just as important, we need to ensure these classes meet their goals so that non-Latinx students taking them will learn about a large majority of the people with whom they share a history, a city, a country.

We need to meet the goals of these classes and similar outcomes throughout our institution so that in these politically charged times, maybe students understanding each other more will lead to caring about each other more. Because whether the word care is officially in our name or not, that is ultimately what we are about.

HUGE THANKS to all of the faculty who shared the Fall 2021 survey on Participation with their students. Because of your support, we were able to meet our goal!!!!

As this newsletter is being published (a few days before the survey closes and before the semester concludes), we have over 950 responses.

We will set to work analyzing the data (remember Stage 5 of the 6 Stages of Assessment?) and look forward to sharing those results with our HWC community next semester.