FACULTY AND ASSIGNMENTS: THE HEART OF ASSESSMENT

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Who We Are

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The Plan

• About NILOA
• Why focus on assignments
• The Assignment Library Initiative
• ....and a tour of the site
• Simulating work on assignments on your campus
  • Models and strategies
  • A plan to take home
NILOA

NILOA’s mission is to discover and disseminate effective use of assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education and support institutions in their assessment efforts.

- Surveys
- Web Scans
- Case Studies
- Focus Groups
- Occasional Papers
- Website
- Resources
- Newsletter
- Presentations
- Transparency Framework
- Featured Websites
- Accreditation Resources
- Assessment Event Calendar
- Assessment News
- Measuring Quality Inventory
- Policy Analysis
- Environmental Scan
- Degree Qualifications Profile
- Tuning

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
Important links

NILOA: www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) and Tuning: www.degreeprofile.org
Assignment Library: www.assignmentlibrary.org
NILOA Occasional paper #16:

The DQP: Implications for Assessment

http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/occasionalpapersixteen.htm
Assessment must be embedded in the work that faculty members assign – not an “add on” measure, or an “exo-skeletal” approach.
Assessment and the DQP

Assessment of a sample of students does not suffice to demonstrate the levels of mastery outlined in the DQP

Slide courtesy of J. Kinzie
Assignments as the Heart of Assessment

- Faculty bring critical expertise to the task of evaluating student learning.

- Faculty-made assignments provide much more information for improvement than other, more distant, forms of assessment.

- But to yield these benefits, assignments must be carefully thought through and designed.

- DQP work demands well-crafted assignments, but the principles of sound assignment design are applicable to any context.
The NILOA Assignment Library Initiative

• An **online library** of high-quality course-embedded assignments linked to DQP outcomes....designed and used by faculty.

• To provide models, examples, and templates that others can learn from, adapt, or borrow.

• Reflecting a conception of assessment as integral to teaching and learning (vs “exoskeleton”).

• Building on campus efforts already underway and in response to requests from those wanting to move in this direction.
What We Did

• Invited faculty applications (with draft assignment)
• Brought the group together for a day-long meeting
• Worked in 5-6 person, facilitated “charrettes”
What’s a “charrette”?

"Charrette" (Fr.) means a small cart. Because architecture students once deposited their assignments in it as the cart was rolled through the studio, architects now use the word to refer to an intense creative effort in a limited time period.
The Charrette Protocol

Introduce your assignment to the group, setting up discussion—5 minutes
Facilitated Q&A, feedback—15 minutes
Written feedback—5 minutes

Later “user testing” and revision
Submission of revised assignment and framing memo to NILOA Assignment Library
Productive Questions

- How is the assignment related to course goals?
- How is it related to larger program goals?
- Is the assignment clear to students? How might they misconstrue it and what can be done to raise the likelihood of a successful response?
- What do students learn from doing the assignment?
- Is the assignment pitched at the right level, given students’ preparation and experience?
- How could the assignment more effectively motivate students to do their best work?
- Are the criteria used for assessing student performance clear and explicit?
- What does a good student response look like?
- Are there aspects of the assignment you’d like to reconsider or redesign?
- What kind of feedback (from whom) would help you strengthen this assignment?
Guiding Principles: Action Verbs

• Assignment design begins with looking at what students must do to demonstrate mastery of a proficiency
  • Example from one of the six cross cutting themes in the DQP - Analytic Inquiry - in the area of Intellectual Skills
    • Associate’s Level – identify and frame a problem or question in a field of study and distinguish elements of ideas, concepts...
    • Bachelor’s Level – differentiate and evaluate theories and approaches ... within chosen field and one other
    • Master’s Level – disaggregate, reformulate and adapt, principal ideas, techniques... in a project
More Guiding Principles

- Alignment with critical outcomes
- Scaffolding
- Engagement and Motivation

J. Bean’s “Task as intriguing Problem”--(TIP), 2011.
Participant Feedback

• The assignment design focus is so obviously needed ... but that need doesn't become visible and obvious, it seems, until it's brought to conscious attention, as in the charrette.

• 76% of participants said “it helped me more clearly see my assignment through my students’ eyes.

• 59%: I’m more aware of aligning my assignments with desired institutional outcomes.
The DQP Assignment Library

• 40-some assignments
• Wide variety of institutional types, fields and proficiencies
• Indexed and searchable
• A work in progress
  • Adding further features
  • Taking applications for next charrette, March 9th
Stimulating Assignment Design Activity on Your Campus
Diverse Entry Points

1. Start a conversation
2. Focus on student work
3. Approach assignments through curricular mapping
4. Align existing assignments with shared learning outcomes
5. Create assignments de novo
6. Organize by discipline or related fields
7. Build attention to assignments into campus culture and processes
Strategies for Success and Sustainability

• Build on faculty interests and goals
• Define “faculty” broadly
• Take advantage of existing structures for support and coordination
• Create mechanisms for making good work visible, and for recognition and reward
• Visit and contribute to the NILOA Assignment Library
An Idea You Could Use on Your Campus?
Questions, Comments, Ideas....

Website: http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/
Further Resources

On the assignment library resource page you can find:

• Compilation of existing links and research
• NILOA report on assignment design activity on campus
• Questions to guide collaboration around assignments
• Call for applications to the March 9th Charrette: due January 12

http://www.assignmentlibrary.org/resources