Assessing the Un-Assessable: Assessment and Art

W. Allen Richman and Sarah Wegner
All course assignments tell us about students’ skills and knowledge.

The only question is are we systematically capturing and using that information.
In the end we have students passing through a range of courses, completing assignments which are interconnected in a web of learning experiences.
What’s it look like?

- Faculty grade each student in their course
- Aggregate reports provide data on specific assignments
- Aggregate reports provide learning outcome performance across multiple assessments
How the work gets done

• Director

• Assessment Coaches

• Departmental Assessment Teams (DATs)
• It was easier to get faculty buy-in when DATs could frame the conversation as “we are all in this together”
• DATs have taught many of the courses being assessed so were able to offer their own experiences in the conversations on how to shape the assessment.
• In cases where DATs did not have experience with the course, a faculty member was asked to lead the discussion with the DAT acting as an advisor and answering questions.
Master syllabi had to be rewritten so that outcomes were assessable
Program outcomes had to be created and aligned with course outcomes
Representative courses that, together, met all program outcomes were chosen and put into a 4 year plan
Faculty meetings were arranged to include full-time and adjuncts and the assessment process was explained
Based on faculty information, the parameters of a project were set and sent out to faculty for feedback.

In some courses it was necessary to create a specific project or projects, in other courses, more open-ended parameters were set that allowed faculty to tailor an existing project to meet the requirements of the assessment.

It was decided that faculty could give their own assignment, as long as it fit the parameters set for the assessment and they used a common rubric to grade the work.

This contributed to faculty buy-in to assessment because they felt more control over the process.
The description was very specific – the parameters of the project, instructions to faculty and instructions to students.

The rubric was created based on the instructions – rubric domains were created that aligned with what students were asked to do in the project.

Attempts were always made to include adjuncts in the conversation through email and multiple meetings that accommodated their schedules.

Including the chair and having the support of the chair in all aspects of the assessment process was also very important.

DATs and faculty had to learn how to write a good rubric.
• Emphasize that knowing the politics of the department could only be done effectively by an insider

• 1010 too large and too hard to get faculty together to design assessment. Assessment project was already in place for that class and just needed modification.

• 1570 – intro to computer graphics – very complex, dense course, DAT not familiar with course, faculty input was vital in looking at the learning outcomes and designing assessments that met all the outcomes.
• Faculty generally waited until the last minute to learn the software, those who were not “on board” with the assessment tended to not respond to repeated emails
• In spite of regular emails, some faculty did not respond or ask questions until the last minute
• More face to face meetings are needed and the chair will have to get involved in requiring faculty to attend meetings to learn about using the software
• DATs ran reports to find out who had entered data for the assessment and who hadn’t then contacted the faculty who hadn’t to find out why and offer assistance
Bar graphs were used to give faculty a quick view of assessment results.
• **Emphasize that these meetings were called by you (DATs)**
• Giving faculty the opportunity to discuss solutions contributed to faculty involvement in assessment and buy-in
• Sometimes it became clear that the learning outcomes did not reflect the main focus of the course and needed to be re-written.
• Sometimes it became clear that the instructions to faculty and/or students was unclear
• Sometimes it became clear that the rubric domains were too broad or too narrow or did not address the learning outcomes
• Sometimes it became clear that faculty needed to approach the subject matter differently or stress some concepts more
• Sometimes it became clear that students needed more time to complete the work or the opportunity to receive feedback while the work was in process
Continuous improvement means revisiting the master syllabi learning outcomes and program outcomes and improving the language so that it becomes more specific to the course and the program respectively.

It also means revisiting best practices in the classroom and sharing ideas. Faculty need to be encouraged to share successful projects and practices rather than keep their most successful projects secret. Faculty need to believe it is not a competition.

Small adjustments, changing one or two things after assessment data is reviewed makes work more manageable and helps isolate actions that make a difference in student performance. If too many changes are made at once, it is hard to tell what is successful and what isn’t.

Faculty often feel more excited about their courses when they have a chance to share ideas with each other. Thus the idea that norming sessions are helpful.

Many faculty are frightened by assessment because they see how student performance is tied to faculty pay and job retention in K-12.
• Some faculty feel assessment is a great imposition and that they are being asked to change the way they teach. They view this as an infringement on academic freedom.

• If faculty feel as though they are teaching to the test and not teaching the course outcomes, this suggests the assessment needs to be re-thought.

• Assessment for each course should be no more than one or two assignments to keep from overwhelming faculty.

• Faculty are concerned they will be evaluated by data from assessment – as is happening in k-12. They do not want to participate, particularly when students are performing poorly. Faculty are worried about losing their jobs or losing pay from poor assessment results.

• Action plans look only at what faculty can do to improve student success. There is no mechanism in place for factoring student responsibility into the equation or communicating to students what their responsibilities are for improving their own success in class.
• Questions?
### Museum Paper Rubric

Plagiarism: If paper contains plagiarized material, it will receive a score of 0 points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Performances Rating</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify paragraph opener lists, ideas, and gives a thesis statement.</td>
<td>Almost fully identified</td>
<td>Thesis statement is present.</td>
<td>Almost identified</td>
<td>Thesis statement present but does not relate to the content of the paper</td>
<td>Almost not identified</td>
<td>Thesis statement not present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Describe, define interpretation, what is depicted in the above selecting any identifiable iconography.</td>
<td>No description at all</td>
<td></td>
<td>One or two descriptive statements.</td>
<td>There is a rough idea, not enough detail for the reader to envision the major aspects of the work being discussed.</td>
<td>The reader might infer the interpretation.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identify the Elements of Design: shape, line, texture, color and space present and how the elements are used in the work.</td>
<td>No analysis at all of the elements of art.</td>
<td>Fewer than 3 elements of art discussed and analysis is not clear.</td>
<td>At least 3 elements of art are addressed and analysis is clear.</td>
<td>Each statement is supported by one or more examples within the context of the artwork.</td>
<td>More than 5 elements of art are addressed and each is supported by at least one example within the context of the artwork.</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

- Exemplary: The paper demonstrates a clear and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, with a strong thesis statement and well-supported evidence. The writer effectively uses descriptive and interpretative language, and the elements of design are clearly identified and analyzed. Overall, the paper shows high-quality work that meets the criteria for excellent performance.

- Excellent: The paper shows a strong understanding of the subject matter, with a clear thesis statement and well-supported evidence. The writer effectively uses descriptive and interpretative language, and the elements of design are identified and analyzed. The paper demonstrates a high level of proficiency in writing and research.

- Good: The paper demonstrates a basic understanding of the subject matter, with a clear thesis statement and some supporting evidence. The writer uses descriptive and interpretative language, and some elements of design are identified and analyzed. The paper shows a solid level of proficiency in writing and research.

- Below Average: The paper demonstrates a limited understanding of the subject matter, with a weak thesis statement and minimal supporting evidence. The writer uses descriptive and interpretative language, and some elements of design are identified and analyzed. The paper shows a basic level of proficiency in writing and research.

- Almost Not Identified: The paper shows a lack of understanding of the subject matter, with no clear thesis statement and minimal supporting evidence. The writer uses descriptive and interpretative language, and no elements of design are identified and analyzed. The paper shows a low level of proficiency in writing and research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>% Ununsatisfactory</th>
<th>% Un satisfactory</th>
<th>% Below Average</th>
<th>% Average</th>
<th>% Good</th>
<th>% Excellent</th>
<th>% Excellent Response</th>
<th>% No Response</th>
<th>Total Response</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introductory paragraph identifies the artwork (title, artist, date, medium) and gives a thesis statement.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.28%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.40%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.59%</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Describe, without interpretation, what is depicted in the artwork, including any identifiable iconography.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.34%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28.77%</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Identify the Elements of Design: line, shape, color, texture, value, and space present and analyze how they are used in the work.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.79%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.12%</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>18.33%</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Identify the Principles of Design: unity, variety, emphasis, separation</td>
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<td>28.88%</td>
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## Student Core Competency: Communication

### Performance, Including Repeated Students

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Number of Criteria</th>
<th>Number of Assessments</th>
<th>Number of Students Assessed</th>
<th>% Excellent</th>
<th>% Goal:</th>
<th>% Average</th>
<th>% Below Average</th>
<th>% Unsatisfactory</th>
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### Performance, Without Repeated Students

<table>
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<tbody>
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<td>20.02</td>
<td>22.02</td>
<td>19.47</td>
<td>14.43</td>
<td>15.37</td>
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### Breakdown [this data will relate to the data in table 1]

- Total # Unenrolled Students: 573
- Total # of Assessments: 1,469
- Total # of Students: 571

Assessment:
- Total # of Students Measured Once: 571
- Total # of Students Measured 2 or More Times: 0

Criteria:
- Total # of Students Measured Once: 571
- Total # of Students Measured 2 or More Times: 0

Criteria Total:
- Total # of Students Measured Once: 571
- Total # of Students Measured 2 or More Times: 0