



## Multi-Faculty Collaboration to Design Online General Studies Courses

Our mid-sized state university decided to institute a blended synchronous delivery model this year. A facilitated online workshop was offered over the summer to assist faculty in designing classes for the new learning environment, where almost 600 faculty registered. One area we explored included alternative assessments. We, as educators, are aware of the benefits of alternative assessments; they are less stressful for learners, can be low tech, are often scaffolded to provide formative assessment, and can increase academic honesty, student motivation, and learning. The following are ideas from faculty who were tasked with creating alternative assessments to implement in a blended synchronous learning environment.

### 1. Bucket of fun

In this assessment, athletic training skills are written on a piece of paper and put into a cup. A skill is drawn for each student and immediately, the student demonstrates/performs the skill in front of the class. If they are stumped, they may ask questions. Remote students can describe their actions if they cannot perform the skill. An alternative could be scenario-based questions that require students to explain how they would handle the scenario (what questions they would ask, what tests they would perform, etc.). This assessment can be used across disciplines, for example, math instructors could provide equations, chemistry instructors could provide problems, ideas, and terms, and history instructors could provide dates or events based on unit materials and ask students to explain what happened on those dates.

*-Glenn Edgerton, Program in Athletic Training*

## **2. Three-minute message (3MM)**

As a closing technique for class, students create a 3MM to synthesize the material and explain it to their partner. 3MM are posted online and students vote for the most effective message. The top five are shown during the next class, and students complete a reflective assignment that answers these questions: How does the explanation help us understand the topic in a broader societal way? How does this material relate to you and society in a relevant way?

*-Corina Kellner, Department of Anthropology*

## **3. Replace midterms with bi-weekly, low-stake quizzes**

Re-arranging information by week instead of topic enables more frequent, low-stakes quizzing. The overall value of quizzes can be equal to the previously given midterm. The quizzes provide ongoing information about student understanding and can improve memory retrieval.

*-Ana Araya Anchetta, Biology*

## **4. Zine and contemporary issues**

Students create zines, translating ideas from readings and discussions into digestible information to share with the public. The zine is combined with contemporary issues so the zine also engages directly and explicitly with world events.

*-Nora Timmerman, Department of Sustainable Communities*

## **5. Poster variation: Look book**

Students learn how theater action and film action are staged differently. The basis for visual composition includes identifying the guiding items in the frame. Students find and post a series of images to demonstrate how the eye moves first to the most dominant element in the frame and then to subsequent images.

*-Paul Helford, School of Communication*

## **6. Comprehensive factors list: Circle map**

Students compose a circle map with State Standards in the middle. From memory, students add everything they remember about the standards and work in pairs to determine what was missed, included, and what each part means.

After, State ELA Standards are posted on the screen during the class discussion. Students identify the components and why standards are important.

*-Norma Zink, College of Education*

## **7. Scaffolded peer review**

To incorporate scaffolding into larger assignments and to allow peers to benchmark themselves, students submit work digitally to their partner. Peer reviewers complete a commenting form which provides clear guidelines to help structure their feedback. Students then edit their peer-reviewed work and submit a draft to the instructor. Commenting forms are submitted to the instructor by the peer reviewer.

*-Paulina Swiatkowski, School of Communication*

## **8. Single-blind peer review**

Rather than write individual critique letters, students team up and draft collaborative, single-blind peer reviews. The outcome is a collaborative conversation about craft, aesthetics, and narrative logic. Authors are matched in peer review groups and collaborate via Google Docs. A checklist provides examples of useful feedback. After peer reviewers contribute to the documents, each student is responsible for editing and polishing one of the documents. The review is submitted and graded, and is anonymously available to the author.

*-Lawrence Lenhart, Department of English*

## **9. Problem solving videos**

Given a set of scientific principles and mathematical and computational tools, how do students go about answering a question, creating a design, and troubleshooting an issue? Students record and watch themselves teaching a lesson and evaluate their own performance using a detailed rubric (provided in advance). Students set goals, based on the rubric results, to improve their own teaching skills. Being able to articulate and verbally explain a problem's solution is an effective learning exercise, as well as an effective assessment technique.

*-Tom Acker, Department of Mechanical Engineering*

## **10. Systems level drawings**

Throughout the semester, students sketch out drawings for several systems and include factors that are important for controlling the behavior of the system.

A tutorial, rubric, and examples are provided to describe the drawings and how they are used. Through video feedback, particularly great examples are shared along with an explanation of why they were chosen.

*-Deborah Huntzinger, School of Earth and Sustainability*

## **11. Annotated timeline**

Students engage in the process of planning, researching, and choosing important items to include in a timeline. Submissions can be a Word doc, slide, short video, or hand drawn picture.

Students include at least 10 annotated items and additional non-annotated items. Content can include a mix of key individuals, political events, conflicts, ideas, movements, etc., or they can focus on a theme or a category. Students are expected to answer the who, what, where, why, and how in their annotation of the item but also the “so what?” question that justifies its presence on their timeline. Students write one paragraph per item.

*-Diana Coleman, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies*

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