

Alternative Activities for Assessing Learning

FOR COURSE RELATED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Background Knowledge Probe: Fill out a pre-learning checklist indicating what is known and what is unfamiliar

Focused Listing: Give the students a main term and have them generate all the related terms they can think of

Misconception/Preconception Check: Fill out this checklist at the beginning of a unit to highlight opinions they have that could influence their learning, such as misconceptions about natural phenomena or preconceptions about social phenomena

Empty Outlines: Provide a barebones outline of the previous lecture and have the students fill in the sub-points

Memory Matrix: Similar to the outline but for information that might fit in a matrix format as shown below

	structure	functions	enzymes
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<u>Mouth</u>	_____
<u>Esophagus</u>	_____
<u>Stomach</u>	_____
<u>Small intestine</u>	_____
etc.	

Minute Paper: Take the last five minutes of class and have the students summarize the main ideas they got from the class that day

Muddiest Point: Similar to the Minute Paper, but they write about the point they had the most difficulty understanding

FOR ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL THINKING

Categorizing Grid: Give students a grid containing two or three main categories plus a scrambled list of terms and have them sort the terms into the categories

Defining Features Matrix: Give a grid containing two or three critical features across the top and important concepts down the side and have them indicate with a plus or minus if the concept has that feature

Pro and Con Grid: As the name implies have students create a grid of the pros and cons for a given decision (such as analyzing Hamlet's decision about murdering his stepfather)

What, How and Why Outline: Students are asked to analyze events or statements into what was said or done, the form it took (how) and why it happened or was said or said that particular way

Analytic Memos: Students write a one or two page analysis of a situation as if for a specific audience, such as an employer, a legislator or a other stakeholder

FOR SYNTHESIS AND CREATIVE THINKING

One-Sentence Summary: As implied students are asked to summarize a presentation or component in one sentence.

Word Journal: Students are asked to characterize a short text or presentation with one word and then explain why they chose that word.

Approximate Analogies: Students are asked to provide the second part of an analogy supplied by the instructor. This can be carried further by asking the students to explain their choices.

Concept Maps: Provide the students with a jumbled list of terms or concepts and have them diagram the relationships among the terms.

Annotated Portfolios: Students provide a sampling of their work along with brief analyses of how each demonstrates their grasp of a given concept.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem Recognition Tasks: Students are given a few examples of common problem types and are asked to identify the type of problem each represents or the principles behind them.

Documented Problem Solutions: This would be better known as "show your work" with the addition of explaining each step in a problem solution as well.

Audiotaped Protocols: Instead of writing out their thought processes, students tape while they think aloud about a problem.

APPLICATION AND PERFORMANCE

Directed Paraphrasing: Students paraphrase the content for a given audience.

Applications Cards: After learning about a principle or concept, students write an example of the application of that concept on an index card which the instructor can run through quickly.

Student-generated Test Questions: Students write questions that they think are likely to be on the test and then use those questions for inclass test preparation.

Class Modeling: Better known as role-playing, students demonstrate how a principle would be applied in a real-life situation.

Paper or Project Prospectus: This is a brief, structured first draft of a paper or project showing how the student would apply the principles learned in class.

Poster Session: Students prepare large-scale visual representations of their papers or projects, which are displayed all at once as at a professional conference, for others to stroll around the room and review.

AWARENESS OF ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Classroom Opinion Polls: Students respond to a survey or by hand-raising and quick counts to items presented by the instructor. Instructors can note who chose each alternative and ask for reasoning behind the choice.

Double-entry Journals: In taking notes on class or readings, students keep a simultaneous running commentary of questions, ideas and connections in a second column.

Profiles of Admired Individuals: Students write a brief essay about someone in the field or a related field whom they admire and why.

Course-Related Self-Confidence Surveys: Students indicate in a survey form how confident they feel about their grasp of each of a list of topics that have been covered already.

AWARENESS OF SELF AS LEARNER

Focused Autobiographical Sketches: Students reflect on themselves as learners, their preferences for content, study environment, test type and so on, to make them more aware of their habits.

Interest/Skill/Knowledge Checklist: The instructor prepares a list of course-specific skills, interests and knowledge and students assess themselves with regard to their interest or level of skill.

Goal Ranking and Matching: Students create a list of learning goals they hope to accomplish and then compare that with a similar list created by the instructor. Discussion about points of difference helps avoid problems later.

Self-Assessment of Ways of Learning: There are several learning styles inventories that students can use to assess their own preferences, such as visual vs auditory learning vs tactile learning.

COURSE-RELATED LEARNING AND STUDY SKILLS

Productive Study-Time Logs: Students keep a log of when they study and assess for each study time how productive it was. Later they can identify constants that make for productive or unproductive study.

Punctuated Lectures: Periodically during the lecture, the lecturer pauses to allow students to reflect and write on their own attention and behavior during the class in order to identify how actively they are listening or participating.

Process Analysis: Students keep records of the steps they take to carry out an assignment. These can then be analyzed for effectiveness and efficiency.

Diagnostic Learning Logs: Students keep records about assignments they have done and the kind of errors or successes they experienced. At regular intervals they go back over these logs and reflect on their learning strategies.

OTHER

Class newsletter: In large classes student questions and announcements can be communicated in the form of a newsletter, thus saving time. Students can even be recruited to produce the newsletter.

Class email discussion: With increased access to email, students can be given the instructor's email address for private question asking, or the instructor could set up a class bulletin board for general discussion.

The above ideas are suggestive rather than exhaustive.