

# COURSE-LEVEL ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES: VARIETY, TRANSPARENCY & ALIGNMENT

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COUNCIL OF ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES  
LEARNING OUTCOMES: EVOLUTION OF ASSESSMENT  
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## GOALS FOR THE SESSION

- Share working principles of assessment
- Share other principles of transparency, variety and alignment
- Link these principles to assessments and learning outcomes
- Provide some assessment examples to provoke discussion and critique

# INSPIRING COLLABORATIVE SPACE



CENTRE FOR  
**TEACHING & LEARNING**

TRENT   
UNIVERSITY

# TRENT UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Opened in 2014
- Focus on teaching excellence and teaching scholarship
- Collegial approach
- Reputation for high quality teaching and research for primarily undergraduate university
- One of our tasks: gather data on ‘the first year academic experience’...

# OUTLINE OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR STUDY, 2014

- Participants: faculty, students, student support staff
- Focus on the *academic* experience
- 4 phases
- Data collection strategies

# PHASE 4– SYLLABUS SCAN RESULTS

Types of Assessments	% of courses that use said form of assessment
Final Exam	95.70%
Midterm Test	85.90%
Assignment or project (not research specified)	62%
Course participation/ contributions grade	51.10%
Research paper or essay	40.20%
Quizzes (in class)	37%
Online quizzes	14.10%
Group assignment/ group presentation	9%
Individual presentations	7%
Online Post/ Discussion	3.30%
Portfolio	1.10%
Reflection opportunity	1.10%

Assessment	Range	Average weight
Weight of Midterm Test(s)	10%-30%	21.2%
Weight of FINAL EXAM	20%-50%	31.4%
% of Grade due in last TWO WEEKS	2%-35%	19%
% of Grade due in last 2 weeks including exam	28%-65%	49%



# ... FURTHER EXPLORATION OF ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES



# WORKING PRINCIPLES OF FAIR ASSESSMENT

**Assessment strategies in a course should:**

- be valid
- be communicated clearly
- allow students to demonstrate their understanding
- provide opportunities for feedback
- be connected to the learning outcomes of the course and the program
- reflect and incorporate what is valued in the course
- be authentic / relevant to the student
- be flexible

# WORKING PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY

**Assessment strategies in a course should be:**

- Clearly communicated in syllabus, follow-up communications and one-to-one discussions
- Shared in advance -assessment strategy & evaluation process

**And can include:**

- Pre-submits
- Sharing of samples
- Negotiation of both the assignment and the evaluation (with care)

# WORKING PRINCIPLES OF VARIETY

**Assessment strategies in a course should:**

- Have sufficient variety to enable different student strengths and needs to be demonstrated and further developed
- Include both formative and summative opportunities
- Offer some agency to the student: Can they negotiate the
  - Content
  - Process
  - Product, or
  - Evaluation scheme?



## VARIETY EXAMPLES:

### FORMATIVE

- Ticket out the door
- Muddiest point
- Writing workshop
- Jigsaw mini summaries
- Introduction to a paper (on demand first-draft)
- Reflection
- Peer teaching

### SUMMATIVE

- Oral presentation
- Debate
- Community-based project report
- Case analysis/ case study
- Executive summary
- Performance demonstration
- Creative work-expression
- Portfolio



## WORKING PRINCIPLES OF ALIGNMENT

Assessment strategies for courses should be:

- directly aligned with course learning outcomes
- aligned with the *content and skills* of the course
- aligned to evaluation process/scheme
- should NOT be purposefully loaded with “tricks”, or veer extremely far from the content and skills of the course

# WE ARE PROPOSING INCREASE OF COURSE-EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

What do we mean by course-embedded assessment practices?

- Usually occur in class time
- Usually involve a demonstration of understanding
- Can be individual, or group-based
- Provide direct evidence that students are meeting course learning outcomes
- MAY be challenging in large classes but not necessarily

## WHY DESIGN COURSES WITH EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT?

- Supports immediate feedback loop for improvement of skills and understanding
- Positively linked to attendance and retention
- Provides an enriched learning experience for both faculty and students
- Increases student motivation

# WHY DESIGN COURSES WITH EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT?

- Can develop:
  - oral presentation skills (Kirby & Roman, 2009)
  - critical thinking (Alghalith, 2015)
  - research skills (Epps, 2013)
  - cognitive skills (Queen's BASICS)
- Realistic capturing of student understanding 'in the moment'
- Supports just-in-time learning theory and flexible teaching (Ryan & Tilbury, 2013)

## A FEW EXAMPLES OF CLASS-EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT

- Learning log
- Writing workshop
- Expert-generalist learning structure for small group case study report
- Debate
- Community-based project report (weekly)

## LET'S LOOK AT 3 EXAMPLES

- Persuasive letter from 2<sup>nd</sup> year Psychology course
- Learning logs from Math course
- Indigenized writers' workshop

<b>Math Learning Log</b>  Regular learning log entries that document views, philosophies, and experiences -includes at least 10 thoughtful responses to text readings - includes reflections of class learning each week -includes 3 printed messages from Blackboard by the end of the course	i. Small group formative  ii. 10%  iii. 30%	Total weight: 40%
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What do you think of these?

What might be the related learning outcome(s)?

# MAPPING LEARNING OUTCOMES TO ASSESSMENT PRACTICES (COURSE DESIGN) – PSYC LETTER

<b>Course learning outcome (what do we want the student to know, show, understand?)</b>	<b>Assessment (how will they demonstrate this understanding?)</b>	<b>Evaluation How will that demonstration be evaluated?</b>
Students will demonstrate understanding of how to use empirical evidence to structure and direct a persuasive letter pertaining to a social justice issue to a relevant authority.	Submission of the persuasive letter which includes: Identification of a relevant justice issue; target audience; use of research articles.	Rubric grading for: Quality of letter Appropriateness of sources Appropriateness of addressee



# ALIGNMENT OF OUTCOME – ASSESSMENT - EVALUATION

<b>Course learning outcome (what do we want the student to know, show, understand?)</b>	<b>Assessment (how will they demonstrate this understanding?)</b>	<b>Evaluation (how will that demonstration be evaluated?)</b>





# CONSIDERATIONS FOR COURSE-EMBEDDED ASSESSMENTS

- Class size
- Requires time in class
- Requires pre-planning
- Predicated on attendance