

Assessment Ideas: Gathering Informal Feedback

Instructors are always encouraged to include more assessment activities in their classes. Assessment should not take a long time to conduct and should provide fairly instant feedback for both students and instructors. These activities should not be graded or awarded marks, but rather should become part of the ongoing assessment you conduct for informing students about their learning and for them to inform you about your teaching.

Prior Knowledge Survey

This is a short survey you give students at the beginning of your course or before any new unit or topic. It alerts students to topics the course will cover and gives them a chance to share what they already know.

- Focus questions on the level of knowledge in the course (e.g., basic facts, assumptions, understandings, misconceptions)
- Ask about a dozen questions to gauge background in key concepts
- Phrase questions as multiple choice or true/false questions for easy feedback - possibly include a few open-ended questions
- Alternative: Set up an online survey in your learning management system or through a free survey website – it is a fast and easy collection of data
- Share results as soon as you can - students will appreciate knowing the results of their input

Self-Assessment Quiz

This is a short quiz you create on previously taught content. It becomes an informal report about student progress.

- Set aside five minutes in class for students to complete
- Create a few questions for students. Include a rating scale for each question, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Students rate how they are feeling about course content, about their understanding on certain topics and how comfortable they feel going into a mid-term or exam.
- Students are creating their own report card as they are really thinking about their own learning and where they need to improve
- Ask students to put their names on the self-assessment quiz and hand in for review

Question and Answer – Discussion

When you engage students in a good discussion framed with well-developed questions, you and your students gain a lot of information about what is being learned and where there is a need for further explanation.

- Post questions for students to consider (preferably before class so they can prepare) and display on overhead or slide during discussion
- The small group method is preferable for getting greater participation and makes more students feel comfortable enough to engage more – arrange into groups to discuss questions
- For large classes, have students work in smaller groups: appoint a reporter who will summarize the discussion and share with class

Operation Outline

This is a group activity where students work together to fill in the blanks found in an outline/handout you have created that focuses on key topics. It helps in determining how well students are understanding the course and gives students an idea of how to organize a study guide on key concepts.

- Organize students in groups of 4-5
- Allocate about ten minutes to complete this task
- Hand out an incomplete outline related to a recent topic
- The incomplete outline might include sub-titles, key concepts, important facts, and principles
- There has to be important content missing and the outline has to look incomplete
- The group's task is to scour their notes, text book, and possibly the Internet to fill in the outline – they should be able to use any resource to complete the task
- You can choose to take up the outline in class and share the complete version with your students or the you can collect and analyze for reporting on next class

I Am in The Fog About...

This activity gives students an opportunity to express where they feel they need help with concepts and components of the course. Students share with you where 'things are foggy'.

- Near the end of class, pass out a recipe card near and ask students to jot down anything they are 'in the fog about' or need additional help with or create a short online survey to have students complete either during or after class
- By making activity anonymous, students will feel more comfortable to share
- Collect responses and quickly sort through them to identify key ideas
- This activity will help you in reframing future classes and re-emphasizing important concepts

Concept Map

Concept maps are wonderful ways for students to organize their understandings of a topic in a visual way. Students are also able to share their conceptual learning. Either on chart paper or in one of the many free concept mapping web sites, students will enjoy working with their peers and being creative with the map.

- Share some examples of a concept map
- Arrange students into small groups of 4-5
- Students depict the major themes and ideas of the course in an organization scheme that they create together
- A representative from each group shares the concept map with the class
- Could ask students to create a rough draft on their own concept map first - this might help the groups progress faster and with more discussion
- Uploading the maps to your course web site is a great way to share with your class

Charting It Up

Having students complete a chart is an excellent way to get feedback on what they are learning about conceptual relationships. A chart activity also provides students with another way to look at the course and use as a study guide.

- Arrange your class into small groups
- Give each group a chart which includes only the titles and subtitles for rows and columns
- The chart might be a pro/con chart for a topic, a chronology of key components, a comparison chart for looking at similarities and differences between concepts etc.
- Give groups a brief time to use any resources available to complete the chart
- Charts can be posted around the room. Students get up and look at each chart or one student can summarize his/her group's chart in a presentation to the class

Ticket-Out-the-Door

A ticket out the door is simply a sheet of paper on which students respond to questions and hand in before they leave class. The tickets are anonymous and provide instructors with a quick overview of what students are learning and where there are gaps.

- Near the end of class, ask students to get out half a scrap sheet of paper or photocopy a sheet with 'blank ticket' images on them and cut the paper in half
- Post two to three questions about the class you have just conducted
- You could ask both a lower thinking question that simply asks them to show they were listening and ask a higher thinking
- question that would require a few sentences to explain based on what was taught
- You want them to spend about 2- 5 minutes answering a couple of short questions

Technology Tools for Formative Assessment

There are many tools available that can be used to create activities for formative assessment. Below are just some of the tools that you may want to use.

VIULearn

<https://learn.viu.ca>

VIULearn offers a variety of tools that you could use for formative assessment. [Quizzes](#), [Surveys](#), and [Self-Assessments](#) can all be set up to automate giving feedback to students using questions you build in the VIULearn [Question Library](#). The main difference between these three tools is whether responses are graded (marked correct, partially correct, or incorrect) and whether any information about student attempts at the activity are tracked. For more about these tools and how they can be used in creating rich formative assessment for your student, contact CIEL at learnsupport@viu.ca.

H5P

<https://h5p.org/>

H5P offers a collection of different interactive HTML5 activities which you can build through the community hub at [H5P.org](https://h5p.org/) or by using the H5P [plugin available on VIUBlogs](#). H5P is designed to be a free and open technology which means it is not a place you want to have students enter any personal data, but it can be a fantastic option for creating fun, engaging self assessments that provide your students with instant feedback to help their learning.

Poll Everywhere

<https://polleverywhere.com>

Poll Everywhere is an application that works well for live audiences using mobile devices like phones or laptops/tablets. People participate by visiting a fast mobile-friendly web page, sending text messages, or using Twitter. Instructions are displayed on-screen. The poll that is embedded within the presentation or web page will update in real time. Advanced uses include texting comments to a presentation, texting questions to a presenter, web voting, and SMS interactivity in print, radio, and TV.

Padlet

<https://padlet.com/>

Padlet is an Internet application that allows people to express their thoughts on a common topic easily—paper for the web. It works like an online sheet of paper where people can put any content (e.g. images, videos, documents, text) anywhere on the page, together with anyone, from any device. It is like a multimedia friendly, free-form, real-time wiki. You just say “create a new wall” and share the URL with others, double-click to add content—that’s all!

Socrative

<https://socrative.com>

This free web tool has lots of capability and works across all devices. Instructors can create self-paced quizzes, exit tickets, and quiz games, or deliver stand-alone multiple-choice, true/false, or short answer questions. Students respond to questions using a computer, tablet, or smartphone. A variety of devices can be used during any given assessment. Each assessment generates a detailed report automatically and instantly. Instructors can download reports or have them sent via email. Learn more and get some great ideas by visiting the “Training” tab.