STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

3 big ideas to get you started

JENNIFER DICKINSON

Center for Teaching and Learning UVM
Lviv, Ukrainian Catholic University   03/08/2018

Today:

- Why ask students to self-assess?

- What kinds of self-assessment are most helpful?

- Three ideas you can implement:

– *Journal prompts*

– *"I can statements"*

– *Post-exam self-assessment*

Why self-assessment?

- Self-assessment promotes:
  - *Realistic expectations*
  - *Interim goal-setting and planning*
  - *Targeted requests for assistance and support*

- Self-assessment can help students:
  - *Identify specific areas for improvement as well as strengths*
  - *Understand how individual assignments or exams represent progress towards larger course goals*

Most helpful self-assessments?

- Criteria for self-assessment are clear and rely on concrete student work

- Criteria for self-assessment are linked to progress towards course goals/outcomes

- Self-assessment is linked to planning for improved knowledge and skills, and achievement of goals

Idea #1: Journals

- Periodic short assignments that require students to reflect on their experiences and learning
- Can be included as part of an assignment, or be a separate assignment
- Can be completed in a notebook, as individual assignments, or in Moodle
- Less specific and more reflective than "I can" statements or post-exam self-assessments
- Best for: all levels, but can require a lot of work from faculty in large classes

Before the course begins, decide:

- **How many "journal" entries you want students to do**
  - *How many will be helpful to them? How many do you want to look at?*
- **What format you want to use**
  - *Will this be part of a larger assignment? A separate assignment? A journal in Moodle?*
- **When self-assessment will be most valuable to students**
  - *Self assessment should be timed to help students understand the importance of key assignments and exams*
- **How much credit students will get for completing self assessments**

Types of journal prompts:

- Reflection: What did you learn? What do you understand now that you did not before (completing this assignment, having a practical experience etc.)? What are your personal reactions to this experience?

- Self-assessment: What are your strengths and weaknesses based on your performance on this assignment? Where do you need to improve the most to meet expectations for this course?

- Planning: What would you do differently next time? What resources or support can you use to improve your performance?

Some resources and ideas for journals:

- Two simple ideas for journal assignments: https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/student-self-assessment-a-sample-assignment/

- Types of reflective assignments: https://student.unsw.edu.au/examples-reflective-writing

- Examples from a language course: http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Arciniegas-LearnersJournals.html

- Ideas for journal reflection assignments for practical training/experiential learning: https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/experience/faculty/critical-reflection-and-experiential-learning/sample-reflection-questions

Idea #2: "I can" statements

- Students are given a list of specific statements describing the ability to do certain things that they have practiced/demonstrated during an assignment, homework, or in-class activity

- This approach is good for introductory or skills-based courses

- Examples:

"I can identify cell structures from a diagram/image."

"I can produce the past tense of the following list of verbs: see; fly; draw; slide; light"

"I can evaluate a problem and decide which information is relevant or necessary to solving it."

How do "I can" statements work?

- "I can" statements are goals for specific skills, stated in a positive way

- These statements clearly identify specific skills or knowledge students should have at this point if they are "on track" to meet course outcome

- Students can identify areas where they are unsure of their skills or their skills are lower than expected and focus specifically on those areas

"I can" statements tutorial

- https://www.sophia.org/tutorials/i-can-statements-2

Idea #3: Post-exam self-assessment (also called "exam wrappers")

- When students receive graded work, the professor includes a self-assessment sheet that students fill out and turn in
- The self assessment sheet asks students to review and reflect on their work and make a plan for improvement
- Often the self-assessment sheet will summarize common errors or areas for improvement across the whole class
- Best for: All levels, with more narrative components helpful at higher levels

Why use post-exam self-assessments?

- Students often focus on their grade, but do not look at their strengths and weaknesses
- Students often see an exam grade as "fate" or "luck" instead of recognizing that the grade reflects specific strengths and weaknesses
- Self-assessment requires students to review how they prepared, what results they achieved, and what their performance can tell them about their progress
- Some faculty ask students to review their exam wrapper prior to the next assignment/exam

Parts of an "exam wrapper"

Provide information on exam sections/common errors and ask the student to answer questions such as:

- How did the student prepare?

- What errors did the student make? Can they identify trends?

- Based on this reflection, what can the student do to improve? What would the student do differently on the next exam or assignment?

Some examples and resources for post-exam self-assessments:

- https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/teaching-talk/exam-wrappers

- http://www.duq.edu/about/centers-and-institutes/center-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-and-learning/exam-wrappers

- https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/teach/examwrappers/

Some other self-assessment ideas:

- Online practice tests/quizzes that are similar in format to questions students will have on an upcoming exam
- Online or physical flash cards or other practice mechanisms that help students identify strong/weak areas
- Personal-goal setting and tracking by students
- Surveys that ask students to reflect on their own performance (e.g. on a group project)
- Learning logs that help students track important ideas/knowledge/skills – can be used for group discussion and reflection as well

Summary:

- Self-assessment helps students understand how well they are doing relative to course goals and helps them identify specific areas for improvement

- Self assessments can help remind students that review materials or help from the faculty member is available

- Self-assessment trains/encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning

QUESTIONS?