

Three Things!

Thematic News and Views about Distance Learning
Welch Center for Graduate and Professional Studies



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THREE THINGS! IS A NEWSLETTER FOR FACULTY IN GOUCHER COLLEGE'S ROBERT S. WELCH CENTER FOR GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES. EACH ISSUE GIVES YOU NEWS AND VIEWS THEMED AS THREE THINGS! WE AIM TO INTRIGUE, INSPIRE AND GUIDE YOU IN TEACHING AT A DISTANCE.

ASSESSMENT IN YOUR ONLINE COURSE

In this issue of THREE THINGS! we look at assessment—the process of evaluating student knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills. Assessments generally fall into one of three categories: 1) pre-assessment, 2) formative assessment and 3) summative assessment.

For each category we give you tips on how to develop baselines for assessing student knowledge, generating real-time feedback and evaluating student mastery. Goucher makes a number of tools available to help you conduct assessments in your courses. The Distance Learning team is ready to help you!



Pre-Assessment



Formative Assessment



Summative Assessment

PRE-ASSESSMENT: Creating Baselines for Comparison

PURPOSE: *Pre-assessments are a way to find out what students know, believe or can do before they come into your class. You can later use pre-assessment data to gauge what students gain in your course.*

HOW: One way to pre-assess is to ask students at the start of the term to explain a term or concept that is foundational to your course. For example, in an environmental governance course, you could ask students to describe what

environmental governance means to them. In a cultural documentation course, you could ask how and why documentation is conducted.

TOOLS: Students could submit their responses in paper form or via GoucherLearn's [Feedback tool](#) or [Choice tool](#), or even [SurveyMonkey](#).

For a creative approach, gather student responses in [VoiceThread](#). VoiceThread is a discussion forum with sound and images. It can wake up online conversations and allow students to be creative. All GoucherLearn courses incorporate VoiceThread. You could also use [WebEx](#) to have a real-time conversations with your students to get a feel for their prior knowledge.

OUTCOMES: You can revisit pre-assessment data near the end of the course. How has your instruction changed student understanding of a concept? Did student ideas about a concept broaden, deepen or stay the same? Comparing what students know, believe or can do *before and after* a course informs faculty and students alike.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: Monitoring the Process

PURPOSE: *Formative assessments help you monitor student learning throughout your course.* Your explicit feedback, coupled with student self-assessment, helps students become more aware of their immediate progress. They can quickly improve if needed.

HOW: Formative assessments are generally low-stakes. Here are some ideas:

- *Arguable Issues:* Ask students to identify an arguable issue and to develop an arguable position.
- *3 Things:* Ask students to list three things that their peers might misunderstand about a topic.
- *Project proposal:* Ask students to think strategically about a project they will embark upon.
- *Self-Assess:* After students finish a writing assignment, ask them to evaluate themselves using the same matrix you use. Discuss their self-evaluation.

OUTCOMES: Formative assessments ask students to be actively involved in all aspects of their educational experience—not only in *what* they are learning but in how they are learning. To get a better sense of how students are learning, you might ask them to give you suggestions for changes in the course. They may indicate they want to have more real-time discussions or more media-rich discussions rather than written discussions. Consider using [WebEx](#) synchronous meetings for class discussions. Consider incorporating oral/visual [VoiceThread](#) discussions. Students may appreciate that you ask for their opinions and that you encourage them to co-create the course.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: Evaluating Mastery

PURPOSE: Faculty are generally very familiar with summative assessments, which include tests, exams, papers, presentations and projects.

In conducting summative assessments, you evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit. Your goal is to measure how students have grown in the full scope of their learning. Have your long-term teaching goals been met? Have students met their own learning goals?

HOW: Consider using a grading rubric to give your students measures or benchmarks of achievement. A rubric is a set of standards describing qualities of and criteria for student work.

- Rubrics add efficiency to your grading process.
- Rubrics make your grading more consistent.
- Rubrics increase your accountability.
- Rubrics reflect rigorous expectations.
- Rubrics help students self-assess.

TOOLS: You can use GoucherLearn for rubric-based grading. You can also use [Rubistar](#) or [iRubric](#).

OUTCOMES: You can use the pre-assessment data you collected at the start of the term as benchmarks in your summative evaluations. You could even repeat at the end of the course the same pre-assessment exercise you used at the beginning. Compare the responses.

All in all, assessment is a critical and integral part of instruction. With assessment, you learn which of your teaching and learning goals have been met. You get ideas about how you can rework instruction for future terms. And students gain greater awareness of their learning progress. They gain greater knowledge.

The Distance Learning team can help you with assessing!

RESOURCES

- [Assess Teaching and Learning](#) - Carnegie Mellon University
- [Assessment Resources](#) - Cornell University
- [For Faculty: Ideas for Assignments](#) - Clark College Library
- [Effective Assessments in Online Courses](#) - Ed Tech Du Jour

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