Assessing Students in Higher Education Through Alternative Methods

Selected Topics

Edited by

Udith Jayasinghe, Ph.D

Ajith Jayaweera

Assessing Students in Higher Education Through Alternative Methods

Selected Topics

Editors   :   Udith Jayasinghe, Ph.D
              Ajith Jayaweera

Authors   :   N. A. D. Namalee Napagoda
              N. S. Abeysingha
              A. P. S. Fernando
              H. R. K. Nagahamulla
              U. G. A. C. Karunananda

Assessing Students in Higher Education Through Alternative Methods
Selected Topics

Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I write this foreword to the latest publication of the Staff Development Centre (SDC) under the themes of *"Effective Assessment Criteria for Students in Higher Education".* The launching of this publication is coupled with the Certificate Awarding Ceremony for the 3rd batch of the Certificate Course in Staff Development conducted by the SDC.

The SDC has impacted the teaching in higher education not only at the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka but at most of the other National Universities through the training of academic staff participating in the Certificate Course in Staff Development. Effective assessment is a very important aspect in higher education, which helps the teachers to assess the standing of the students and direct them to greater levels of achievement.

I take this opportunity to complement the SDC for their achievements since inception towards the improvement of the staff of the University system and thereby improving the undergraduate education. Thus, the SDC plays an important role in producing quality graduands to meet the needs of the country and the region.

While congratulating the Staff Development Centre for launching yet another batch of trained academic staff members to meet the challenges of higher education, I wish the participants and the Centre well for their future endeavors to reach higher levels of achievement.

Prof. A. N. F. Perera
Vice-Chancellor
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Preface and Acknowledgment

This text contains five articles written on the theme of *"student assessment"*, in general, and how the process of teaching in higher education can be improved by applying effective assessment criteria, in particular. The authors were Probationary Lecturers work in various National Universities in Sri Lanka who were trained by the Staff Development Centre (SDC) of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka (WUSL) under its "Certificate Course in Staff Development" (CCSD), which is a 150-hour course accredited by the University Grant Commission of Sri Lanka.

This is the 4th of a series of books published by the SDC, WUSL on similar topics. The response we received from various stakeholders in staff development in the national university system as well as others involved with the field of education has motivated us to publish this text at a right time it is needed. In fact, our opinion is that "assessment criteria" is one of the least addressed areas in higher education in Sri Lanka, and failure of the most well organized course structures is resulting from their inability to address proper assessment criteria.

In this shed of light, this particular book includes a number of articles written to cover a wide area in assessment, including the impacts of conventional and innovative assessments on teaching and learning environment in higher education, the ways and means a teacher can align his / her assessment criteria with the intended learning outcomes of the course, the impacts of effective assessment to enhance quality of university education, and some empirical studies such as effectiveness of continuous evaluation methods adopted in management faculties in Sri Lanka. We wish that the academics in the university systems as well as any personality involves with teaching at higher education level may use this text to enhance the process of teaching and learning.

Out of many who helped us from various points of views to come up this type of text, we would like to convey our sincere gratitude, first, to **Prof. A. N. F. Perera**, the Vice Chancellor of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka for his continuance guidance and support extended to us to come up with this type of publication. Also, the support extended by the Registrar and the Bursar of the WUSL their staff is acknowledged.

While extending our thanks to **authors of the five articles** published in this book, we do not forget the good work of **all Probationary Lecturers** who participated to the *Certificate Course in Staff Development (CCSD) – 2008/09* conducted by the Staff Development Centre (SDC) of the WUSL by submitting articles written on various topics for consideration in publishing in this book. Also, a special thank goes to all **Resource Persons to the CCSD** who taught these and many others aspects of teaching and learning to these authors.

Special thanks go to **Mr. Ikram Mohideen** (Lecturer – Temporary at the Dept. of Agribusiness Management of the WUSL) for his untiring efforts to go through the final drafts of each article edited by us for appropriate formatting. Of course, that helps us to come up with much user-friendly version of this. Also, I extend my gratitude to **Mr. Kapila Ranaraja** (Computer Application Assistant of the Dept. of Agribusiness Management of the WUSL) for designing an attractive cover page for it and for page setting and to **Mr. Tharaka Wijesooriya** (Research Associate – NSF / DABM Project) for his support to make our efforts successful.

Prof. Udith Jayasinghe (Director)
Ajith Jayaweera (Course Facilitator)
Staff Development Centre (SDC)
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
04th April 2010

Content

ASSESSING STUDENTS THROUGH ALTERNATIVE METHODS

N. A. D. Namalee Napagoda

Dept. of Mathematical Sciences
Faculty of Applied Sciences
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Kuliyapitiya

Introduction to Paradigms in Assessment

The evaluation and assessment of students is a very important feature in modern education system. Assessment is defined to measure the student's knowledge of information and judge the capability of students. Another way of assessment is evaluating the student's progress and achievement of students while teaching.

There are two major methods of assessment: Traditional and Alternative methods. These are proved beneficial and needful to improve student's feedback and to decide the next steps in the development of learning strategies.

Assessment can be used in classroom activities to examine the student achievements and to encourage involvement among students. Students can identify and be aware of what they need to improve or review. Assessments can be used to motivate students to learn and develop positive attitudes and teamwork by working together.

Features of Traditional Assessment

Traditional assessment is a general term used to deliver the knowledge as well as a technique for assessing student's progress such as multiple choice, fill in the blanks and matching questions. This is mostly used in a teacher centric education method but the traditional examination based assessments are not the effective. These are often not beneficial in assessing student's progress and integrating what they have learned.

Traditional tests merely measure the learned skills and memorize lessons. In modern education systems, which use student centric type of teaching-learning relationships non traditional methods of assessment are utilized to comprehensively measure student performance.

Traditional tests have their own advantages and disadvantages. Standardized test are very effective in measuring the strength and weakness of students and are easy to handle. Another advantage of traditional assessment is that, they are one –shot test, which can be used to understand about students. Individual project is a measurement of student learning to undertake independent study and demonstrate their proficiency.

Lack of feedback given to learners and lack of interactive performances are major disadvantages of traditional assessments. Timed exams may not be conductive to students to obtain higher grade and attain their objectives.

Features of Alternative Assessment

Alternative assessment can be broadly defined as a process of collecting information and various method of evidence that are different from traditional assessment methods. In new educational initiatives, it is important to cultivate positive attitudes in students about the new assessment methods. Teachers need to assess the student's interpretation of the use prior knowledge.

Alternative assessment involves students in real-world situations and develops skills involving critical thinking and problem solving. This kind of assessment helps to build up communication between students and teacher. They also promote creative thinking and leadership qualities.

Alternative assessment is performance based and judged over a period of time in course. It can be used to measure the growth and the progress made by student at the end of the lesson. It is very important to create equal opportunities for all students to demonstrate their abilities and to reach for achievements that motivate students to perform their best. Teachers can have more opportunities to become familiar with the learning process as well as assessment methods. However, teachers should plan alternative assessments carefully so that wrong judgments about student's ability and performance are not reached.

Students are expected to participate actively in evaluating themselves and one another. This stimulates more interaction between the teacher and students. It also paves the way for self - evaluation and self correction. Student may also be provided with feedback during the learning period.

Alternative assessment methods have the advantage of monitoring and assessing students for a prolonged time, continuously. The alternative methods seem less threatening than traditional assessment methods. Interactive performances involved in alternative assessment promote creative thinking and skills. The evaluation criteria and standards can be used to full control of grades. Students can know what they have learned according to the result; therefore they will gain the awareness of what they need to improve.

Alternative assessment methods are more suitable for learner-centered teaching which is based on the concepts and rules. Students get the opportunity to think about the development of their knowledge and learning process. Alternative methods of assessment are applied to many of the activities and allow students to exhibit their abilities.

Alternative Assessment Methods

Alternative methods are a wide variety of assessment techniques that are helped to make judgment and assure continued progress. There are two types of assessment; formative and summative assessment.

Diagnostic Assessment	→	Diagnostic Assessment	→	Diagnostic Assessment

Before Learning

During Learning

After Learning
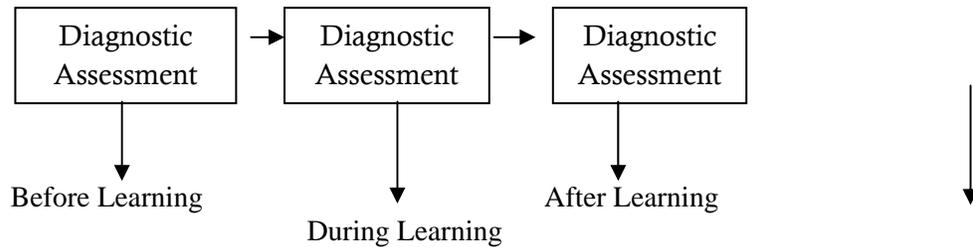
Formative methods are the continuous assessment methods used to improve student's feedback throughout the teaching and learning process. Summative assessments are used to evaluate the effectiveness of students at the end of learning time.

In summative assessments, the main objective is to measure overall performance of each and every student, course, degree, university etc. Summative results are very important in making judgments of performances. It is considered the overall level of achievement as well as student's progress.

Alternative assessment methods are generally classified into four categories. They are: (1) Performance Assessment, (2) Authentic/Project Assessment, (3) Portfolio Assessment and (4) Journal Assessment. Other forms of alternative assessment are (a) Anecdotal Records, (b) Audio and Video Recordings, (c) Checklists, Diaries, and Writing Folders, (d) Peer Conferences and Student Conferences, and (e) Self and Peer Assessment.

Performance Assessment

Performance assessment is one alternative to traditional methods of assessing student achievement. It promotes creativity and demonstrates student's knowledge and skills. Performance evaluations allow students to improve concepts and problem solving methods. Sometimes this involves the creation of products or events.

These assessments are going to be used as accountability measures, reliability and validity evaluating system. This method of assessment requires the students to perform, create and develop knowledge. Students and teachers identify the requirements in advance and the students have freedom to work on their own also.

The teacher can evaluate the student's performance within a specific time frame. For example the student's progress in familiarizing him/herself with laboratory equipments, measuring tools and safety laboratory procedure could be evaluated. Performance assessments involve a combination of knowledge and discipline.

Authentic / Project assessment

Authentic assessment or project is another important type of alternative assessment. This assessment aims to measure the student's abilities in real-world context. Another benefit is that, students can learn how to apply skills and develop right attitudes during projects carried out for authentic assessment. These projects are usually

grounded in real world situations and teachers will have to make a connection between the students to its applications.

When assessing student projects, teacher will get insight about student's understanding and ability to apply the gained knowledge in the project. Teacher can identify student's strengths and weakness that would be useful in the future. Although assignment will be changing, student can prepare themselves better in the future with the insight gained during assessment. Students have to use their knowledge to solve real problems, plan the work and present their results.

There are various activities involved in project work, including:

- Identification of the problem
- Information needed
- Planning
- Solving the problem
- Presentation and interpretation
- Recommendation for further work

It is important to adjudge student's feedback and provide them a chance to develop knowledge. Most projects are assessed by several reports rather than by only the final one. These reports could include oral examinations and methodology of assessment. Authentic assessment focuses on measuring higher order thinking skills and analytical skills, creativity, ability to work with others and written and oral expression capabilities. Student can

actively participate in working on the project and cooperative groups.

One advantage of project assessment is that they encourage students to self – reflect, on the uses of knowledge that represent meaningful instructional activities. It provides opportunities for both individual and group work. The authentic assessment provides equal chances to curriculum and instruction.

It is a concentrated form of higher education which goes beyond class room activities. High amount of time consumed and the use of subjective task are main disadvantages of the authentic assessments. Projects encourage students to work together as a team, but sometimes students may not contribute equally in them.

Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio is defined as collections of student's accomplishment and work representing a selection of best performance. It contains one or more works in progress as it is evolved through the various steps of conception, drafting and revision. A student portfolio is a flexible frame work and includes folders, videos, diskettes or other formats. Portfolios are very useful in the new instructional and approaches where the teacher's role is promoting the understanding of the concepts.

Sometimes portfolios can be a record of the activities that takes place over a period of time during product development. It is used to offer an opportunity for

students to share each other's work and to encourage peer evaluation of their work. It is classroom based performances measure and is more effective than the traditional test for measuring academic skills.

A portfolio may include homework assignments, projects, journal entries or traditional tests and quizzes. There are main characteristics in the portfolios that can be used to measure student's progress and be used in grading. Portfolio is maintained and assessed overtime and summative evaluation of the student's learning. Student portfolio has various types of assignments as mandatory, representative and best assignments. Students can select the work they prefer including pointers such as video tapes, list of books read, presentation.

Portfolio can encourage a self-directed learning in the student and motivate the student, teacher and parent to reflect on the learning experience. Portfolio based assessment is beneficial educationally because of the use of wide variety of sources. Portfolios provide a format for developing and understanding the criteria for endeavor. Students can also benefit from an awareness and strategies involved in writing, solving a problem, analyzing and interpreting their observations. Educational portfolios must have four critical features. Firstly, they should allow promotion and exposition meaning-making. Secondly, they must provide a chance for increased interaction between the student and the teacher. Next, the development procedure must take place over an extended length of time. Finally, portfolios

must be developed and presented in a relevant context. A lot of academic educators maintain the reflective ideas to development of portfolios. However, this assessment method should not be used to replace testing.

Main advantage of portfolio is that the teacher can observe the student as an individual. Portfolios have improved student achievement through evaluation feedback and self reflection. Portfolio can be easily evaluated to measure the skills and knowledge without liming creativity. They help students to improve deftness and intelligence while striving for achieving higher grades. They encourage parents also to appreciate their children's academic achievements independently rather than with chaotic tests and scores.

Portfolios may be ameliorated to focus on a writing, reading and literature in subjects. Portfolio can be paper based, computer based or combination of both and decide the material of portfolio by the student, the teacher or both. Portfolios may also be used to evaluate learning in academic and career development area. A student portfolio can include:

- Journal entries and contemplative writing
- Peer reviews
- Artwork, diagrams, charts and graphs
- Reports
- Notes and outlines

Portfolios have three drawbacks. The first one is portfolios are bulky and require a lot of spaces. The

second and third drawbacks are that the portfolios have a deal of time to assess, but interpret is very difficult. Portfolios can be used with technology as well as student may use statistical software to create graphs or charts or might use an electronic portfolio with PowerPoint.

Teachers need not only understanding ability and subject knowledge but also extra time for planning, developing strategies and materials, small groups and commenting on student work.

Journal Assessment

A journal is ongoing record of expressions, experiences, reflections on a specified topic. Journals have two general types as;

- Students can write with minimal direction according student's think and feeling.

- Student need to complete a specific written assignment and compulsory the restriction and guidelines to complete it.

Journals are the effective assessment of students in a classroom where everything that happens is written down. Students might be encouraged to write everything from their life and make daily notes summarizing their progress in a study. Personal comments are important to in keeping the journal. Student should be made aware that grading is not that important in journals as grades may come at other assessments.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Journals are very useful for monitoring student's progress and making decisions to provide clear evidence of student learning. Many teachers necessitate students to arrange a journal, as a learning log. The learning log can become a life-writing journal, a brainstorm journal, a news-tracker journal or a cooperative teacher-student log.

Teachers can get to know and understand their student's cogitation better by consulting the learning logs. Learning logs do not require much time in the class and does not consume much time for grading. Journals can be reflecting on personal values, good ideas and concepts. Journals could be used to summarize intentions, experiences before and after instruction. It is created examine relationships with others in the world. Journal assessment is useful to demonstrate academic and personal growth. As with portfolios, whether or not a journal can be used as an assessment tool depends on how it is arranged and measured.

Journals can involve different reflecting methods such as writing, drawing, painting, sculpting and role – playing. Students can express their feelings and thoughts using assignment and slicing everything in to a reflective journal. An advantage of journal assessment is that the students can review their own progress and improvement by the end of assignment. Journals can also be helpful to teachers to obtain student's feedback and measure progress students.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Teachers should try to maintain the quality of journal and decide the rates applicable to journals. Examples of journals are electronic journal (web, e-mail and internet journal), reflective journal, daily journal, reader response journal.

Other Alternative Methods

There are many alternative assessment techniques that are popular and useful similar to the four main methods we discussed. Anecdotal records, audio and video recording, checklists, diaries, writing folders, peer conferences, teacher-student conferences and conference logs , debriefing are some of the very popular other alternative assessment methods.

Anecdotal Records

Another very important assessment tool used in modern classrooms is anecdotal records. These are short accounts of incidents complied as a collection of observations by students related to their progress in learning.

Main purposes of using the anecdotal records are evaluating student learning and giving feedback to students by preparing report cards or documentation. Teacher can get to know students and make instructional decisions. Teacher can determine the idea for student's content knowledge, attitude and effort. Teachers are pointed the student's behavior, skills, comments,

understanding in the anecdotal records. The record of observations can be detailed or summarized.

It has included a factual way, the incident, context and what was done. A observed incident can be written directly in a short, concise non judgmental record.

Characteristics of Anecdotal records:

- Simple reports and context of behavior.
- Result of direct observation.
- Accurate and outstanding.
- Unusual behavior.

Teacher can modify the method in which this technique is used.

Checklists and Rating Scales

Checklists and rating scales are another important category of assessing tools. Checklists are used for assessing current characteristics of the students, teacher and the environment. They can be also used for observing performance to change track the changes over time. Checklists can be identified in a couple of different formats. They are as, simple and complicated. The simple checklists indicate whether certain factors are absent or present. These factors are behaviors, trails, ability or characteristics.

The teacher can opt to develop and manage checklists alone or in cooperation with the students. The activity

can be a presentation in a classroom such as giving an oral report in front of the members of audiences. Teacher may investigate behavior and skills which can be observed in a single period or during several observational periods and fill out the checklist during that time epoch. This information can be assessed to plan instruction in the future. Advantages of checklists are being efficient and convenient.

Checklists are useful in classroom assessment because they are simple and time-efficient. Main disadvantage of checklists can be the limiting of indicating whether characteristics are present or absent only. Their direct application is for instructional planning only, but in combination with other assessment methods, they can be used for roundup observations.

When more information is needed than simple reports of behaviors the checklists becomes more complicated. Rating scales are contributive to making judgments on the learning progress of students. Rating scales can be regarded as advance form of checklists. There are two types of rating scales; Numerical and graphic rating scales. Numerical rating scale use assigned sequential numerical values. Graphic rating scale use descriptors on a continuum such as never, sometimes, frequently, always etc. Rating scales can be used to assess once or on repeated occasions for assessing students, teachers and programs.

They facilitate the measurement of frequency of behaviors and skills. Rating scales require little time to

implement and are easy to mark. They can organize and summarize large amounts of information. Rating scales are like follow-ups to plans compared with other information. Main disadvantage of rating scales is that they are subjected to error of central tendency if an odd number of descriptors are used.

Rubrics

Rubrics are powerful tools used in both teaching and assessing methods. Heidi Goodrich defines a rubric as "A scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work or "what counts" (for example, purpose, organization, details, voice and mechanics)".

Rubrics are used to make out ideas more clearly and effectively and to provide suitable support and details. They help to judge and carry out an easy way to measure of student's quality of performance. The time spent on evaluating students by teachers can be reduced by using rubrics. Main purpose of rubrics is to provide feedback to students based on their progress and as an evaluation of students. Teachers should encourage students to become more involved in self-assessment.

A rubric is a set of assessment scales that indicate the required levels of quality and achieved learning outcomes. Rubrics are used to ensure accountability and therefore grading scales must be made known to students.

There are two main types of rubrics; (1) *Holistic rubrics* and (2) *Analytic rubrics*. Holistic rubric are created for the scoring decision based on global work and appropriate for summative assessment. They are used for higher level assessment of overall adeptness. It is less useful for classroom activities because holistic rubrics have little information about the performance of students.

Analytic rubrics, on the other hand, can be used to examine certain aspects of learning in detail and mostly appropriate for formative assessment. However, it does not list separate levels of performance and time- saving method.

Audio and Video Recordings

With the advancement of technology more useful assessment methods have become available for teachers to record knowledge. Various multimedia devices can be used such as videotapes, audiotapes, photographs and slides. They can also be used to measure the progress of students work and for self-assessments by students themselves.

Recording is a less expensive method than any of the forms and can be used easily. Its main disadvantage is that the quality of recording is frequently poor.

Conference

Conference involves the teacher meeting with the students for the purpose of evaluating their progress based on a standard work or on a project. Conferences can also be used to evaluate work-based learning and projects. Several types of conferences can take place within a learning environment.

A peer conference is the simplest type where the students help each other with feedback and ideas under minimal supervision. The teacher-student conference is provides the essential communication between the teacher and the student. Such conferences are used in research communities and can be applied in teaching methods effectively. When students gain experience and develop their abilities, they could be given more responsibility for documenting their progress and activities done at school. Conference can include all of the alternative assessment methods, such as portfolios, journals, recordings, reports etc.

Students should be encouraged to hold conference involving themselves, the teacher and their parents. Students ought to be able to describe the learning matters and area where they need improvement and areas where they have done well.

Self Assessment

Self assessment is the identification of the abilities students to apply their work and to make unbiased

judgments. Self assessment is used to encourage students to become independent learners and to improve their motivation. These forms of assessment accommodate students in developing and evaluating skills. They have been used in the class rooms to ameliorate the student's performance through active learning.

Self assessment can take many forms, including taking part in conferences, discussions, keeping reflection log, self evaluation and assessment checklists and teacher – student interviews. All these forms share a common topic; self assessment can determine what they have learned and chaotic areas.   These methods should include enough time to evaluate their progress. The advantages of self assessments are that they are relatively easy to construct and involves low-anxiety for the student. The weakness of   this method is that students cannot be expected to assess their abilities accurately.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment has a vital role to play in formative assessment, but it can also be used as an assessment method in summative assessment. It increases the ability of the students to make sound judgments of their work and others. A peer assessment can encourage development of skills, learning abilities, improve individuality and provide feedback. Peer assessment is used for summative purpose including essays and report writing, speeches and oral presentations, photography and small group activities. Peer assessment is also more

applicable to the judgment of groups and can be used to improve the quality performance of students. Advantages of peer assessment include reducing the marking load on the teacher and helping to clarify assessment criteria. It can also provide a wide range of feedback to the students and help them become more autonomous.

Disadvantages of peer assessment are that students lack the ability to evaluate each other and may not take it seriously. Peer assessment could give rise to situations where friendships among students affect the judgment of fellow students. In such cases students may not like peer marking as there is a risk being misunderstood! Students can misguide the other students when there is minimal supervision from the teacher and gain undue advantages.

Many different methods of assessment exits with their own strengths and weaknesses and each can be used to assess the students differently. Alternative methods such as curriculum-based and dynamic assessments are developed with commensurable objects and assessment tasks. This approach guides student to apply their skills and knowledge to assessment activities. It is used to make the students better prepared to judge their progress. In conclusion, alternative assessment can be used to evaluate student performances and provide progress in real world situations. These methods focus on the skills, abilities while integrating concepts and thoughts. They also help the students to work with the peers, asses themselves and their peers and to become better learners suitable for the dynamic work environment of today.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

EFFECTIVE FIELD
CLASS ASSESSMENT

Nimal S. Abeysingha

Dept. of Soils and Water Resources Management
Faculty of Agriculture
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
Puliyankulama, Anuradhapura

Introduction

In general, students need to develop world view based on a hierarchy of intellectual skills and understanding by learning. Hierarchies of skills are represented by Bloom's (1956) taxonomy or more recently in the SOLO taxonomy. High quality learning outcomes are expected to achieve resulting from the interplay between their learning efforts, curricula and the teaching methods used by lecturers.

These outcomes can be observed as improvements in the way students acquire, process and synthesize information resulting in measurable improvements in their skills and thought processes. These sorts of outcomes occur when students adopt a deep, rather than a surface approach to their learning.

How do lecturers know that students have learned what is intended or hoped student would? Whatever teaching method adopted, wherever the class conducted, lecturers must know whether their students have achieved all sort

of outcomes intended. For this purpose, there are methods which are referred to as tools/ methods of assessment. Assessment is not just the measurement of learning; it is in itself an integral part of learning. Assessment is the first step in a continual learning cycle which includes measurement, feedback, reflection, and change.

The purpose of assessment is not merely to gather information; the purpose of assessment is to promote improvement. Frequent assessment of students helps them to refine concepts and deepen their understanding; it also conveys high expectations, which further stimulate learning. Students tremendously reported that the single most important ingredient for making a course effective is getting rapid response.

Assessing the student performances defiantly increases their efforts for the education. In addition, assessments are information for selection and certification. Classes and medals are awarded generally based on assessments criteria in a degree program. This article mainly relates on assessment of students in field education/ especially when they are in the field classes.

Field Classes and Its Role in Learning

Field education can be conveniently divided into Field practical, Field trips and In-plant trainings. Field practical and In-plant trainings are fact of life for most sciences, agriculture and engineering undergraduate. Further, field education is a vital and dynamic

component of curriculum and it reflects the mission and objective of particular course.

Students undertaking field education often feel they gain more from this experience than any other element of their courses and enjoy it and find it stimulating and exciting as well. It is therefore suggested to create more opportunities for field class to all disciplines including social sciences and humanities.

Field education provides the opportunity for students to apply classroom knowledge to real life situation. It gives hands on skill of how to correctly, safely use equipments, materials and people. They also learn how to use their initiative to solve problem, value judgment, draw reasonable conclusions in practical situations (role of field education).

The field education curriculum should be structured to provide a varied, individualized, practical learning experience for each student. They learn and understand the knowledge and implications of research, policy, economics and social justice, diversity, and human behavior in the social environment.

The experience provides a unique opportunity for students to develop practice skills required in competent practice and to develop a professional identity that reflects the values and ethics of the profession. The goal of field education is to integrate micro and macro knowledge and values of the class room with the development of competency in practice.

Assessment Methods Must Relate to the Learning Outcomes

Every field class session must have leaning outcomes. The lecturer must be clear about what students to know and to be able to do at the end of the lesson. These learning out comes should relate the assessment methods. "Student learning outcomes," on the other hand, encompass a wide range of student attribute and abilities, both cognitive and affective, which are a measure of how their college experiences have supported their development as individuals.

Learning outcomes of field classes may be to improve skills as follows:

a. Basic skills such as assembling a machine, identifying a symptoms of a given diseases

b. Communication, interpersonal and group skills

c. Research, investigation and study skills

d. Thinking skills such as comparing, inferring, analyzing and interpreting

Method of field class assessments needs to be chosen in relation to the above skills and also considering facilities available, number of students etc. Listed below are some tools that will assist in assessing students in field education.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Tools for Evaluating the Students in the Field Classes

a) Student demonstrations (athletic skills, music performance,)

b) Extended written products (essays, papers, reports)

c) Brief Assignments

d) Visual products (PowerPoint, mural)

e) Informal observations of students

f) Formal observations of students using observable indicators

g) Oral performances (oral report, world language dialogue, debate)

h) Selected-response-format (multiple choice, true-false) tests and quizzes

i) Written responses to academic prompts (short-answer format)

j) Long-term authentic assessment projects (exhibit)

k) Portfolios

l) Student self-assessment

m) Peer reviews and peer response groups

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Student Demonstrations

This is one of the best methods that can be utilized in order to assess the student's performance at field classes. Students undertaking "animal husbandry training" need to know methods of healthy milking from a Cow. In this example, Students are given chances to get that skill after induction training on milking. At the end, students could be assessed considering the manner that students perform milking.

It is obvious that if students are taught how to swim, the best way of assessing them is their swimming in a real water body.

Extended Written Products
(Essays, Reports, Papers, Progress reports, Management plans, Field note books)

Students undergoing field education in Engineering, Agriculture and most Sciences, are generally evaluated through these extended written products. Instructing students to write a report after a field visit and asking them to write a research paper after a field research are common approaches in evaluating students.

Preparation of a management plan is also of good evidence of performance of students and it can be used to evaluate better hierarchy of student learning. If the students are engage in environmental studies, forestry studies, management studies etc. students could be asked

to prepare a management plan as a solution for a given issue.

At this type of work, they would look every aspect of the industry or environment and may come up with incredible solutions. Giving student greater responsibility is highly effective in these exercises. They need to know the skills which they mast master at the end of the lesson.

Progress report for a given period can be effectively used as a tool of assessment of students specially those who are at in plant training. When the assessor is at the university while students are working (in plant training) in a faraway place, this tool can be highly effective and the students are motivated by this method further. It is very useful and effective to comment on each and every progress reports so that they would adjust their program accordingly.

In field classes, students need to use a field note book. This field note book itself can be an assessment tool. If students are engage in courses such as crop and animal husbandry training, land survey and development, forest survey etc., they can be evaluated by taking their day today notes on what they have observed or leant. It is not possible to allocate all students to grow all crops in crop production practical exercise. What can be practiced is to allocate one crop for one student and ask them to study all other crops in the field. By assessing the field notes book, educator can achieve his goals in this circumstance.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Brief Assignments

There are a number of brief assignments that can be implemented during a one-shot instruction field session.

Three things learned:

At the end of the session, students can be asked to write down on an index card three things that they learned. After the session, these cards can be reviewed to find out if goals anticipated are met and thereby assessing the students.

Muddiest point:

At the end of the session, ask students to write down on a piece of paper what they found most confusing. This feedback can be used to devise new ways to discuss those confusing points and also it is one way of assessing students.

One-minute paper:

At the end of the session, one minute opportunity is given students to write what they learned. This feedback also measure how well assessor's goals are met.

Index card assignment:

When students arrive for the session, give them index cards and ask them to write down three questions they

have about the field class, practical or about research. Before starting the session, collect those index cards and at the end of the session, read the questions by observing how the students answer them. This is also a way of combining evaluation and active learning

Pre- and post-tests (quizzes):

In this method, quizzes addressing the area covering the session need to be created and copy it on both sides of a sheet of paper. At the beginning of the session, have students take the quiz. When they are through, tell them to set it aside.

At the end of the session, ask students to turn the sheets over and take the same quiz again. They will immediately be able to see what they learned. This can be used as a self assessment test. If time is not sufficient, make sure that students are given a handout or a follow-up email with the correct answers.

Visual Products
(PowerPoint, Mural, Maps)

Preparation of visual products like Power point presentation, mural and maps after a field work can be used innovatively as assessment method. However, assessment criteria need to be informed to students beforehand. Maps, Plans or Profiles prepared by students depending on the subject can be used to evaluate their performances.

Informal and Formal Observations of Students Using Observable Indicators

Students can be evaluated by observing how they are performing field work at the field itself by using observable indicators. In this method, assessor can obtain valuable information from watching how students participate in a seminar, discussion; conducting an experiment and doing other field works.

Educator can use appropriate method of observation it can either be formal or informal with the use of suitable observable indices. For example, students under farm practice course in Agriculture can be effectively evaluated by these methods.

In this course, educator could visit the field and gets the attendance of the students and he can select observable indices depending on the situation and evaluate the students. For an instance, weeds in vegetable beds, heath of the soil in a seed bed are among the observable indices.

David in his article on a generic approach to assessment in Adult and continuing education[1] pointed out that appraising the final product of art work is entirely subjective and aesthetic in nature; hence, he propose to appraise the work while it is in progress. Formal observation and getting oral information are among his suggestions.

Oral Performances
(Oral Report, World Language Dialogue, Debate)

It was elaborated that there are three types of evidence that can be used for assessment in continuing field education as

    a. Evidence which comes from examination of what students have produced

    b. Evidence which comes from watching students working

    c. Oral evidence

Oral evidence collected from students under field education is of equal importance with that of other tools. One can learn lot about students by taking to them. From this method, assessor might gain valuable insights into the thoughts, the mental and psychological process of students.

Some Tips for Planning a Successful Field Visit

If field visits, practical and in-plant training have been properly arranged, the assessment is half done. If a meaningful relationship with community resources is to be maintained and expanded, it is important that proper planning and preparation take place in advance of field visits. The agency/business or places that are visiting expects to meet with students who are experiencing an

extension of classroom learning, rather than spending a day on an excursion. In place of the word field trip, it is advisable to use the word, field visit otherwise students may not consider the educational goal of field exposure.

Listed below are some guidelines that will assist in planning the field trips, preparing the students, and evaluating the experience upon completion.

Teacher Preparation

    a. Determine if the trip is justifiable

    b. Visit the location that has selected to ensure that it meets educational goals

    c. Prepare students by providing them with lessons and classroom activities that are connected to the Field Experience. Are there site-specific or local resources available that will enhance the experience?

    d. Determine if the entire class or a selected group should go

    e. Contact the appropriate person at your field trip location

    f. Discuss the expectations and Purposes of all involved in the field trip visit

    g. Make arrangements for transportation

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

h. If appropriate, send the contact person at the field trip location information on how to speak to students

i. Secure any information or materials from the field trip location for students to review prior to the trip

Student Preparation

a. Arouse student interest associated with the projected field trip

b. Make clear to students the purpose of the field trip

c. Inform students of specific information and demonstrations to observe on the field trip. Be aware of working conditions, duties of workers, clothes they wear, number of workers, safety, workers job satisfaction, etc

d. Encourage students to prepare questions to be asked during the field trip

e. Inform students of standards of safety, behavior, and appearance expected during the field trip

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Evaluation

a. Evaluate whether or not the field trip visit accomplished the goals set

b. Consider whether or not the field trip stimulated student interest and curiosity

c. Determine if the field trip appeared to affect student attitudes

d. Where appropriate, have students evaluate the field trip

e. File assessment of the experience for future reference

AAHE Assessment Forum (1992) had identified a principle of good practice for assessing the students. Those principles are summarized below and are useful in assessing students in field classes.

- *Assessment of student learning begins with educational values.*

It is need to be measured what is most important to mission and goals stipulated.

- *Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.*

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Learning entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom.

- *Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.*

Assessment is a goal-oriented process, which pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

- *Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.*

To improve outcomes, it is required to know the curricula, teaching, and student effort that lead to particular outcomes.

- *Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.*

Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken

over time, monitoring progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement.

- *Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.*

Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility; the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

- *Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.*

To be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

- *Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.*

Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and

learning is visibly valued and worked at, where information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision-making

- *Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.*

Our deepest obligation--to ourselves, our students, and society--is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement. Since field education is the foundation for professional development, assessment of field classes are vital component of field education. Consistent standards (fair and equal) and Clear criteria (How to get a good grade) are very useful for assessment method to be effective.

In addition, educator and also students who are going to expose to field class must be clear about the objectives and leaning out comes of the field class. Further, Educator need to select or create innovative best assessment tool achieve the targets. However, no one method of assessment will successfully evaluate all aspects of students ability or achievements, what is required is a selection of assessment methods to prove fair portfolio of overall students ability.

CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE VIVA VOICE EXAMINATION TO ASSESS STUDENTS

A. P. Sanjaya Fernando

Dept. of Agricultural Systems
Faculty of Agriculture
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
Puliyankulama, Anuradhapura

Introduction

Examination is a detailed inspection or analysis of an object or person. It is a crucial part in every student's life. In the academic context, examinations are tests which aim to determine the ability of a student. Exams are usually written tests, although some may be closed book, open book, practical exams, online exams, comprehensive exams, competitive exams, design paper and oral exams/viva voce.

Structure, content and difficulty of an exam greatly depend on the subject, the age group of the tested segment and the profession. A person who passes an examination receives a certification, passing with grade, completing a course depending on the examination's objectives. The purposes of conducting examinations differ. But, in general, examinations are conducted for two main purposes. They are: (1) to test the understanding and knowledge, and (2) to complement the course work.

Among different types of examinations, viva voice examinations are becoming more common throughout degree courses, as educational practitioners increasingly appreciate that a very good measure of someone's understanding of a subject is their ability to verbally explain the subject to someone else.

Traditionally, the viva voice examination occurs after the written final exams. Viva voice examinations typically have two main purposes. Firstly, the viva voice exam allows an external examiner to ascertain the comparability of a degree grade amongst different educational institutions. Secondly, it allows the external examiner to confirm or improve the appropriate degree grade classification for a student.

There is a lot of misunderstanding and misplaced apprehension about such viva exams. Viva voice examination is not just an assessment of the student's performance. Viva voice exams are usually an opportunity for the external examiner to get feedback from the students on the performance of the department and university. Hence, the attempt of this article is to present an overview of the viva voice examination, remove some of the mystery, promote students' confidence and help them to prepare effectively.

What is a Viva?

It is an examination of an element of a program or a course involving oral means of communication and

applicable to the whole cohort of students on that program or course.

Further it can be defined as an examination which may be used to help determine a candidate's overall result in addition to the normal methods of assessment (King's College London, 2002)[1]. The viva exam is an academic interview at which the examiner(s) will be looking at students' understanding and breadth of awareness of the subject area of degree course.

Purpose of Conducting Viva

Conducting of viva has several purposes. But the list provided below gives the more important ones:

- To allow the candidate to defend the originality of their work

- To establish that the work is publishable in whole or in part

- To expand and clarify the candidate's ideas

- To establish that the work has been carried out independently by the student

- To test the authenticity

---

[1] King's College London (2002), Guidelines on viva voice examinations for undergraduate degrees, Corporate services section, King's College, London.

- To determine the student's depth of knowledge and understanding of the field of study and of the literature

- To examine the conceptual approach, research methods and techniques used

- To examine what was learnt and whether new knowledge was generated

- To consider the student's ability to communicate his or her subject and to defend the work done

- To give advice on changes, future direction and possible publication

Viva exams are usually an opportunity for the external examiner to get feedback from students on the performance of the Department and University. Depending on the examiner, you may be asked to comment on your experience during the three or four yours that you have spent at the Department and University. This gives you an opportunity to comment on issues such as the teaching quality, teaching methods and facilities, clear communication to students of the academic aims and objectives of modules, level of help and guidance during and after modules, provision of tutorials, provision of feedback, library facilities, equipment and facilities, IT courses, computer availability, printing facilities, photocopying etc.

Viva Board

Composition and Role of the Examination Board

The board will normally consist of a chairperson and more than two examiners. Some of them will be internal to the University and the others external. The chairperson will normally be a faculty member of who has supervised/ taught the student during the course of study. The examiners and the chairperson would have been nominated and approved by the faculty board.

Role of the Chairperson

The chairperson's role is to manage the viva voce examination, ensuring that the student is treated fairly, to provide guidance on the University's academic regulations and practices and communicate the outcome of the examination to the student. The chairperson will make sure that all the required documentation is completed and communicate the outcome to the appropriate parties.

Role of the External Examiner

The external examiner will be an acknowledged expert in the field of study and will usually hold a position as a senior lecturer or professor in a university, or an equivalent position in an appropriate research institution or professional body. The examiner is required to be familiar with academic standards. The external examiner will, together with internal examiner, carry out a detailed

oral examination of the student and provide a written academic assessment.

Role of the Internal Examiner

The internal examiner will have relevant expertise in the field of study. The internal examiner has an important role in the examination process both as an examiner and, if required, after the examination as an advisor to the student.

Five Kinds of Examiners

Five kinds of examiners have been identified who present problems:

1. The proof reader

2. The committee man

3. The hobby horse rider

4. The kite flyer

5. The reminiscer

Ideally, examination chair should steer the examiner away from these faults, but occasionally students may have to acknowledge the expertise of the examiner (and show knowledge of that area), whilst gently explaining exactly why his/her particular hobby horse may not be central to your own work.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Before Viva Examination

Prior to the viva voce examination the external and internal examiners should have been in contact and exchange their views. There are operational issues in allowing external examiners. Arrangements should be clarified as early as possible by the management.

As there are several legitimate reasons for asking a student to attend a viva voce examination, all of which may have a different impact on the student, students must be advised why they have been called for a viva, to enable them to prepare in an informed way. Students need to be given as much notice as possible regarding timing and arrangements for the viva voce examination. Where viva voce examination involving External Examiners is standard practice, students should be informed of this early on during the course.

All Program Boards which use vivas should state clearly, as part of their marking scheme, why they employ vivas. These statements should cover how students are selected for vivas and how individual marks and overall results may be affected by the viva. The powers of the viva panel should be made clear.

It should be specified whether a viva is being used to adjust the result of assessment or whether it is being used to adjust the overall result. If students are vivaed simply as a form of "quality control" and not with the purpose of altering their result in any way, this should be clearly

distinguished from vivas held to adjust marks or determine overall results. They should be re-designed as "Interviews" not "vivas" and the students should be told that this is not part of their assessment.

Program Boards need to have a sheet prepared for all students who are to be vivaed. This should state clearly the following:

- The purpose of vivas

- When the student will be notified and how

- Where and when the viva will be held

- A contact within the Department to whom the student can refer with any problem

- The powers of viva panels

- The constitution of viva panels

- How the viva will be conducted

- In general terms what kind of questions the students will be asked and what is expected from them. Students should be warned if they are to be asked specific questions on assessments completed

- How long the viva will last

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

- The membership of panels

- How they should proceed if they are unable to attend a viva and the consequences of non-attendance

It is recommended that all students are informed of the dates when vivas will be held by their Program Board two months in advance and that the individuals to be vivaed are informed 48 hours prior to the viva voce examination itself.

Guidelines for the conduct of vivas should be provided for the examiners. A sheet should be prepared for members of panels which should include:

- Powers of viva panels and what may be recommended to the Program Board

- Any relevant extract from Regulations or Departmental Handbooks

- Any general guidelines on interviewing (e.g. how a student should be referred to; how to proceed if the student shows signs of distress etc)

- Any guidelines on the length of vivas

- Panel members should decide in advance on their line of questioning; whether they are seeking to determine an individual mark or the overall result of a student

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

- Panel members should be provided with all relevant documentation/information in advance of the viva. This should normally include a wide sample of the student's work and, specifically, any work on which questions are going to be asked

Conduct of Viva Examination

The chair of the examiners should greet students, make sure they are comfortable and invite an initial neutral comment (weather, transport etc) to 'break the ice'. The chairperson prior to the examination and in consultation with the examiners will determine the order of questions and the overall format of the examination.

Students may be asked by the chairperson to briefly introduce their works. At the end of the viva voce the candidate will be asked to leave the room while the board deliberates on the outcome. They will normally be called back and informed by the chairperson of the outcome of the examination. Students must not contact their examiners prior to the viva voce examination.

Length

The length of the *viva voce* examination may vary in accordance with different disciplinary practices and will depend on the examiners' requirements. As a guideline it should normally be in the range of one hour and a maximum of three hours if it is a viva for thesis

evaluations. Otherwise it may last from 20 to 30 minutes.

Location

The viva will normally be conducted at the university premises or any other convenient location. In exceptional circumstances video/web conferencing may be used subject to agreement between all those involved in the examination, including the candidate.

Outcome

At the conclusion of the viva the board will decide on the outcome and determine the final recommendations. Following the board's deliberations, the chairperson will normally ask the student into the room and verbally inform the student of the outcome of the examination and the recommendation of the board, subject to agreement by the Council. Candidates may be verbally advised of any required revisions and/or corrections, or additional work.

Disagreements Among Examiners

If a disagreement arises among the examiners, the chairperson is required to clarify and, where possible, reconcile differing viewpoints.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Right of Appeal

An appeal against the examiners' decision cannot be made. If the student wishes to appeal on the grounds of process, Registrar shall seek the Academic Council's permission to withhold the name of the candidate and the examiners' report until after the hearing of the appeal.

Kinds of Questions

The viva should not be limited to a single question or topic but should cover a range of different issues – this is to avoid the results of the viva being skewed by selecting a topic which the student can answer exceptionally well or about which she/he knows nothing. However, all questions should be strictly relevant to the purpose of the viva.

Each topic should be introduced and an indication given of the general area of the questioning. E.g. "I want to ask you about X" - followed by the actual question. Do not use long preambles to questions. Examiners should talk as little as possible during the viva.

Vivas should not normally be used simply to elicit factual information; therefore questions with purely factual answers should be avoided. These seldom give a good idea of the quality of a student, as an otherwise weak candidate may well know some specific piece of factual knowledge. The chair of the examiners must remain in charge of the session and must deal appropriately with any problem candidate or difficult

situation. Indicate when the last question is being asked; allow the student to complete his/her answer and end the session formally.

Viva voce examinations should not normally exceed 30 minutes. It is recommended to give equal opportunities for each student. For example ask similar questions, or sorts of questions, to all candidates (although each student must be vivaed on work they have done and identical questions for all candidates will not, therefore, be possible).

Giving equal opportunities for all students to demonstrate their worth will be a good practice. Should not to make race/background/gender assumptions when asking questions or making comments.

Further it is necessary to beware of using patronizing language or inappropriate non-verbal body language, problems of candidates whose mother tongue language is not English, candidates who are particularly nervous or distressed. The chair should be prepared to take appropriate action which might involve suspending the viva.

Questions are not stipulated generally but should be appropriate. It can start from general questions. Better to use questions which feel student is comfortable. Questions about methodology, picky questions about accuracy etc can be put forward.

For example if it is a topical subject such as Environmental Science it can raise questions like what might be the impacts on vegetation of the removal of large herbivores. Student may be asked what your favorite modules were, and why you found these modules academically interesting and/or challenging. This may lead on to a further discussion based on students' favorite modules.

For example, if you state that Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was your favorite module and explain why, student may then be asked a variety of questions, such as: What is the legal backing for EIAs?; What are common problems in EIAs?; How could the EIA process be improved? Can you discuss different examples of where the EIA process could be considered a success and a failure?

It is good practice to make use of 'open' rather than 'closed' questions. Open questions allow the student questioned to demonstrate their knowledge of, or enthusiasm for, a subject and their ability to think and make judgments. Such questions typically begin with words like 'what', 'how', 'why'.

Closed questions are those which can be answered by 'yes' or 'no' or some other limited form of response. Such questions will often start with words like 'who', 'when', 'where'. Such questions seldom give the opportunity for an expanded answer or for a candidate to demonstrate ideas, analysis or interpretation.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Leading questions either assume or suggest a particular answer. It is unproductive to use this form of questioning as the student can always give the answer indicated in the wording of the question.

Hypothetical questions can raise issues which are not strictly covered by the syllabus studied. There may be cases where hypothetical questions are perfectly sensible but in many cases they will cause problems for a candidate who will not know to what extent they are expected to 'play the game' and respond to questions or situations which fall outside the accepted norms of what they have studied.

Practices to Avoid

It has been observed that several forms of bad practices take place during viva voice examinations. Looking in to such malpractices would help to successful conduct of viva voice examinations. In this light providing a list of common mistakes/malpractices are important. Therefore it is recommended to not practice the list given below during the course of a viva voice examination:

- Giving a dysfunctional start to the viva

- Covering the ground too fast or too slowly

- Candidates getting off the point and not answering the question

- Co-examiner talking too much

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

- Giving a dysfunctional end to the viva

- Disagreement between examiners over the grade

- Influencing academic judgment on:

    - First impressions
    - The appearance of a candidate
    - Contrasts between candidates
    - A pleasing or abrasive personality in the candidate
    - The natural articulateness or inarticulateness of a candidate

- Examiners becoming excessively critical

- Using value judgment words when trying to encourage a poor candidate, (e.g. "good") which could be interpreted as implying that the candidate was going to get a good grade

- Asking 'closed' questions, and 'leading' or 'hypothetical' questions

How Students Can Survive

Be well presentable. It may well be customary for students to wear a suit. The oral exam is not a fashion show, but you should at least be well groomed and neatly dressed.

Stay calm and pleasant Listen carefully to the questions. Don't answer simply 'yes' or 'no' to questions; on the other hand do not give a prepared speech. Try to answer the question as it is put, remembering that you are engaged in an academic conversation. If you don't understand the question, ask the examiner to repeat the question, or repeat your interpretation to the examiner. If you still don't understand the question, then it is better to admit it than to try and bluff.

Be prepared to justify your ideas and conclusions. If the examiners challenge your interpretation but you feel that your case is a good one, muster your arguments and be willing to present your case firmly but courteously. However, if the examiners have identified a genuine weakness, concede the point gracefully.

Even if you feel the examiners are unreasonably critical do not become argumentative or allow the discussion to become heated. You can agree to differ and to reconsider the point. Don't be overly worried that some parts of the exam were really difficult - it is only by pushing you to your limits that the examiner can determine your ability.

Limitations

These viva voice examinations have several weaknesses. The number of questions (subject sample) is usually small and does not cover the spectrum of the subject. The questions are usually different for each student to avoid between-student communication. All these factors make it luck dependent and lower its reliability.

Moreover, the questions are usually not structured and the marking system is difficult to standardize. The net result is a high possibility of subjectivity and bias. Many students find the stress of confrontation distracting and distressing.

e-ASSESSMENT AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Harshani R. K. Nagahamulla

Dept. of Computing and Information Systems
Faculty of Applied Sciences
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Kuliyapitiya

Assessment can be defined as the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs. Assessment can focus on the individual learner, the learning community, the institution, or the educational system as a whole. Using assessments teachers try to measure the students learning and achievement. At the same time they will reflect the teaching effectiveness of teachers.

Assessments can be categorized in several different ways. One such categorization is[2]:

- *Assessment of Learning* - Assessment for the purposes of grading and reporting generally carried out at the end of a course or project. Also known as summative assessment

- *Assessment for Learning* - assessment whose purpose is to enable students, through effective feedback, to fully understand their own learning

---

[2] Xin Liang and Kim Creasy Classroom Assessment in Web-Based Instructional Environment: Instructors' Experience

and the goals they are aiming for generally carried out throughout a course or project. Also known as formative assessment

Necessity of Assessments

Assessments play a major role in teaching and learning. They inform the students' progress and guide their learning. Using assessment results we can measure outcomes and success of the student, teacher, course or the institution. Also the outcomes of the assessments can be used to improve the teaching and learning. So we can think of teaching, learning and assessments as a loop.
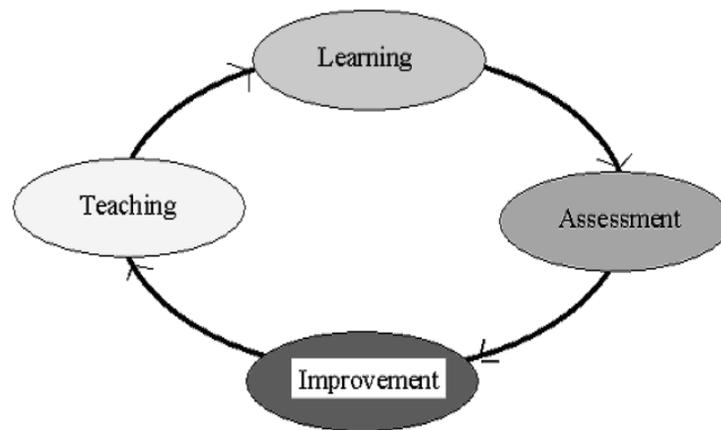

Figure 1 – The Teaching, Learning, Assessment, Loop

Classroom Assessments

Classroom assessments are used by the teachers to find out how well the students are learning. Teacher decide what to assess, how to assess and how to respond to the results of the assessment. The students are provided with early and constant feedback so that they can evaluate the quality of their own learning. This is an ongoing formative process where the teacher and students can make adjustments to improve learning.

The basic steps in the classroom assessment process are:

- Choose a learning goal to assess
- Choose an assessment technique
- Apply the technique
- Analyze the data and share the results with students
- Respond to the data

Classroom Assessment Techniques

Assessment can be integrated systematically to traditional classroom teaching and learning by classroom assessment techniques. These can be categorized as following.

1. Techniques for assessing course-related knowledge and skills

- *Assessing prior knowledge, recall, and understanding (empty outline)*

- *Assessing skill in analysis and critical thinking (pro and con grid)*

- *Assessing skill in synthesis and creative thinking (one sentence summary)*

- *Assessing skill in problem solving (problem recognition tasks)*

- *Assessing skill in application and performance (student generated test question)*

2. Techniques for assessing learner attitudes, values, and self-awareness

- *Assessing students' awareness of their attitudes and values (classroom opinion polls)*

- *Assessing students' self-awareness as learners (self assessment of ways of learning)*

- *Assessing course-related learning and study skills, strategies, and behaviors (learning*
- *logs)*

3. Techniques for assessing learner reactions to instruction

- *Assessing learner reactions to teacher and teaching (teaching designed feedback forms)*

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

- *Assessing learner reactions to class activities, assignments, and materials (group work evaluations)*

e-Learning

E-learning takes place as an interaction in the Internet environment, with different methods for retrieving class content, materials, subject related information, resources and student teacher interactions. It is time and place independent.

It can take place in any location in any time using communication technologies, World Wide Web, search engines, online resources and technical support. E-teachers teach without physically being present in virtual classrooms. Students use e-mail, chat rooms and other electronic methods to contact their teachers and classmates.

Conventional Learning and E-learning

There are several differences between conventional learning and e-learning.

As shown in the Table 1 below, we can come to the conclusion that one of the major roles of e-learning is to increase self directed learning. Online learning is fewer teachers dominated and more flexible with more autonomy and responsibility given to the student.

Table 1 – Differences between conventional learning and e-Learning:

Conventional Learning	e-Learning
Students attend a school or institute	Students participate from variety of locations (home, library, cafes etc)
Classes are held in school hours according to schedules	Students can determine the time they want to access e-learning resources
Students can work individually or in groups as directed by the teacher	Students can choose to work independently or collaboratively with other people
Teachers and students interact in real time	Teachers and students may not interact in real time
Learning objectives are set by the teacher or the institution	Students may set their own objectives and explore their own learning needs and agendas.
Student learning is influenced by the needs of other class members and the teachers planning	Students can learn at a pace that meets their individual needs at that time. The teacher is facilitating the activity

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

e-**Assessments**

Due to the development and increase of usage of technology educational practices have drastically changed. Instructional strategies and objectives of online courses are different from traditional classroom based courses. So in an online teaching and learning environment assessment needs to be approached differently than traditional classroom assessments.

To ensure the quality of online instruction assessment should be at the centre of the curriculum design because assessments make a greater impact on student learning. Educators should examine the existing assessment practices and search for guidelines to design appropriate assessments to the online environment. An assessment process should:

- Enable students to self-monitor progress.
- Give regular feedback to students.
- Support peer learning and assessment.

Some activities involved in e-assessment are as follows:

- Assessment of students backgrounds so that the teacher can understand them.
- E-testing, preparation of test items and delivery of the test.
- Evolution of students' work.
- Immediate feedback to students.
- Observation of students behavior in chat room, tutorial sessions.

Like other forms of assessment online assessment need to be valid, reliable, fair and flexible.

Why e-Assessments?

New and enhanced instructional strategies are being used at the online learning. To maximize teaching and learning new methods of assessments should be developed accordingly. And since many instructional strategies used in online learning are new, new assessment methods must also be developed.

The teacher is not always available to provide feedback to the online learner. It should be possible for the learner to get feedback and guidance at a time convenient to him. Adequate formative assessment strategies should be built into the online learning process to facilitate this.

e-Assessment Techniques

There are large number different types of e-assessment techniques. Teachers can use these techniques alone or as a combination in their courses.

Online discussion, Bulletin boards, Collaborative assignments, Self-assessment, Online exams, Peer review, Online quizzes, Computer-marked assignments, Portfolios, Role play, Simulations, Email, Web publication and Web design and development are some of the most common and widely used techniques. A

summary and some examples of their usage are given below.

- **Online discussion** – Learners can participate in discussions or online conferences taking place in chat rooms. Teachers can observe the contributions made by the learners and assess their participation. The online discussions can be used as resources for other assessments like essays.

- **Bulletin boards** – Teachers can place topics on bulletin boards as the starting point for online collaborative assignments. Learners can work on them and with prior consent their work can be posted on bulletin boards for peer assessment, review and comment. All the learners can see the problem, several solutions and the various different comments given for them.

- **Collaborative assignments** - Learners are given assignments or projects to work on collaboratively using online resources. Collaboration will help the students to develop communication and team-building skills.

- **Self-assessment** - Learners can use online quizzes to help them assess their knowledge of a certain subject area and direct them to further areas of study.

- **Online exams** – When it is necessary to complete an assessment within a certain time period it can be moderated and controlled with start and stop times

- **Peer reviews** – Post the learners' work and allow learners to review each other's work. Anonymity in the online environment will help the learners to be more honest about their reviews. This method will encourage the learners to share their work to build upon the collective skills and knowledge of the group.

- **Online quizzes** – Learners can use questionnaires and multiple choice questions and can get instant online feedback. Quizzes can be used throughout the duration of the course to make sure that sufficient skills and knowledge have been attained by the learner before attempting a final assessment.

- **Computer-marked assignments** - Multiple-choice tests can be marked automatically by the computer and provide quick feedback to the learner. Both learner and teacher can assess the progress of the learner quickly.

- **Portfolios** – A variety of online tools or computer software products are available for the learners to develop portfolios. Teachers can access the learner products and performances and can evaluate them and put comments and

feedback on them. Learners and teachers can observe the learners' gains in knowledge, competence or other outcomes by keeping track of early efforts.

- **Role play** - Learners can take on a role which they can research and gather information. They can speak and act like the character. They can express themselves more openly than they might have done in a face to face situation because of the degree of anonymity in the online situation. For a course in political science for example, students can be assigned with roles of current major stakeholders they can then research their role and debate issues and argue perspectives.

- **Simulations** – These are used when students are learning things that safety issues are involved. For example students learning to fly large jets or repair and service lifts and escalators can use a simulation program to practice on

- **Email** – Learners can submit reports, assignments and essays using e-mail. Teachers can mark the work and return them by e-mail with comments. Also learners can ask questions and get answers through e-mail.

- **Web publication** - Learners can write articles and complete assignments and publish them as web-based publications. These can be reviewed by the teachers and other students.

- **Web design and development** – In information technology courses learners can be assigned tasks that contribute to the design and development of their own website. When they complete it they can use it as a part of the learner's portfolio of work for future employers to view.

Examples of E-Assessments and Available Tools

There are some widely known examples of e-assessment in diagnostic/placement tests

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an entrance test for overseas learners who wish to enter the universities in the United States. In the computer based version responses given by the learner to previous questions will determine the next questions.

Self Test is a self-assessment package used to assess mathematical skills for learners wishing to undertake engineering courses at university level.

When developing e-assessments teachers can get the help of some e-assessment tools to create quizzes, grade them automatically, manage student interaction, view portfolios, and so on. Some examples for tools are:

- **Quiz-Please** - It consist of two programs. One runs on the Instructor's computer. Using this, instructors can create questions, assemble them to quizzes and publish them to web pages. The

other runs on a server to keep track of student scores. It will score the quizzes and mail the results to the instructor

- **Cyber-Exam** - It resides on a server. Using a web browser, teachers can create exams, assign students to take them and view the results including statistics. Using the browser on their machines students can take the exams that would reside on the server

- **Question-mark Perception** - Used to create questions in a number of different formats and place them into topics and sub-topics, deliver and report based on the score achieved for that specific topic. Available in two formats: Perception for Windows and for Web

- **Practice-Mill -** A simple program for creating MCQ tests. Using the Question Editor can create tests that can be delivered as web pages. The teacher can set the amount and type of feedback and the editor can be used to collect student performance data and analyze responses to individual questions. By assigning users passwords access to appropriate tests can be controlled

Advantages of E-Assessments

E-assessments provide a lot of advantages to the two parties directly involved, teachers and students.

Advantages for Students

- Have access to a dynamic, media rich and interactive assessment environment

- Get fast, instant and effective feedback

- Have access to multiple attempts until mastered

- Take charge of their own learning

- Track their own progress

- Can undertake assessment activity in their own time, place and when they are ready

- Flexible arrangements

- Can have self-paced learning at their convenience

- Motivating

- Can make the assessment more realistic

- Can update and modify assessment activity more easily

- Have potential for collaborating, sharing and learning

- Can work in virtual teams

- Access to authentic and valid assessment

- Build confidence by non threatening environment

- Improve communication (teacher–learner)

- Acquire time-management skills

- Choosing the design approaches

- Can identifies difficulties and weakness

- Get the opportunity to practice skills already learned

- Get acknowledgement for effort spent learning

Advantages for Teachers

- Many type of question design available including graphics and multimedia

- Reporting software and instant feedback

- Formative assessments can be repeated as frequently as desired to aid student learning

- Time saving for the teacher

- Ease of monitoring the learner progress

- Quality can be monitored by looking at the performance of questions

- Allows for flexibility

- Adaptive testing can be used to match the test to the students' ability

- Improved assessment process

- Ability to assess large numbers of learners

- Have a documented, consistent assessment process

- Support for exam/test administration, data delivery

- Personally interesting, satisfying, creative

- Have a variety of validated assessment items

- Allows for integrated teaching and learning

- Better interactions with learners

- Alternative delivery mode

- Learners can be assessed equally
- Improved pass rates

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

- Financially attractive

- Reduce the dependency of the academic on the technical staff

- Have an online database of assessment

- Tests can be scheduled automatically

- Capacity to mark short-answer questions

- Creates consistent, standardized assessment

Other than teachers and the students the institute also benefits from exercising e-assessment techniques. When there are a large number of students to be assessed using multiple choice questions have to create multiple versions of the same test to reduce copying. Automating this process will reduce the cost and time taken.

It will also reduce the time and cost associated with marking and will provide greater accuracy. 'Online assessment does not disadvantage students. There are clear economic advantages associated with online assessment'.

Issues in E-Assessments

The major differences between conventional classroom assessment and e-assessment are in the context of the assessment, the interactions between assessor and those

being assessed, and collection and administration processes. Some key issues for the online assessment context are:

- Identifying what assessment methods can effectively be transferred to or be done better or differently online.

- Identifying whether and how the medium and mode impacts upon the validity, reliability, fairness, and flexibility of assessment.

- Identifying the barriers to using online assessment.

- Understanding whether and how online changes how we select, monitor, and manage assessment activities.

The online environment provide great facilities for the students to participate in collaborative group work but students do not participate in these activities if their participation is not compulsory or if it is not assessed. So have to find ways to assess participation and contribution in a fair way.

With online technologies it is easy to track and record students work and conversations. So need to take steps carefully to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

It takes time to develop the online environment, design online assessments, particularly the select-response

methods which test knowledge such as multiple-choice and true/false and to align the assessments with the course content. However, the actual assessments are much quicker once the online assessment banks have been developed. These items are easier to maintain and administer.

There is a range of tools available for developing quizzes online and online assessment is easily tracked and recorded. In large classes, online automatically assessed multiple-choice questions offer the advantage of easy administration by the teacher and easy access by learners either off or on campus at a time convenient to them.

The significant difference for online assessment lies in the use of information and communication technologies. There is a need to ensure that these technologies enhance, rather than impede, quality in assessment practice.

Technical issues affect all forms and types of online learning and thus online assessment. These include:

- Bandwidth

- Computer hardware compatibility between education/training provider and learners

- Computer software compatibility between education/training provider and learners

- Compatibility problems with operating systems and versions of operating systems

- Equipment reliability and the need to have technical support to keep systems operating effectively

Considerable work is taking place in the development of increasingly sophisticated security systems because a major concern in online assessment is managing security and integrity. Any type of assessment is concerned with quality of the assessment. In online context it concerns quality of assessment items and effective methods to measure quality of online contributions by learners. The principles of quality online assessment are the same or similar as those principles used for assessment in any context that is that the assessment must be valid, reliable, flexible and fair.

Designing and Managing E-Assessments

When designing e-assessments it is important to examine what is to be learned and assessed to identify appropriate methods to demonstrate these skills. The choice and design of online assessment methods are influenced by some factors.

- **Learner needs** - Within a learner-centered learning paradigm, all teaching, learning and assessment should be tailored to the needs of individual learners. Special provisions should be made for assessments to support the learning of

people with specific educational needs, such as learners with disabilities and learning difficulties.

- **Level of experience with computers** – Student comfort and skills with the online environment will depend on their experience with computers.

- **Feedback** - The ability to provide feedback in an effective and rapid way is an important factor and consideration in choosing an assessment method and technology to support it. Both simple and complex assessment methods support the feedback processes, ranging from the use of computer-automated marking with feedback loops to the use of expert and peer assessment.

- **Discipline area** - This is an important consideration in the decision to go online with assessment. Areas that have traditionally used methods as short-answer and multiple-choice questions are more attracted to use online assessment methods.

- **Cost** - The cost associated with purchasing appropriate software, programs and skill was identified as a consideration

Criteria to guide the design and development of effective qualitative online assessment tasks are listed below

- **Variety**: including both quantitative and qualitative methods

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

- **Authenticity**: using open-ended tasks that simulate workplace tasks, as well as appropriate quantitative tasks

- **Collaboration**: allowing for interaction between learners and others, and using appropriate communication technologies

- **Feedback**: ensuring appropriate feedback mechanisms are possible using peer feedback and peer tutoring

- **Online resources**: making full use of available quantitative packages as well as other internet resources

- **Learner responsibility**: providing options and opportunities for accountability within assessment tasks.

However guidelines for the development of online assessment strategies alone will not be sufficient to ensure quality assessment. Teachers should be provided adequate training before delivering online courses and designing online assessments because they should have sufficient technical and management skills to deliver online training effectively. Also the institutes should consider issues such as maintaining technical support and infrastructure to allow online assessment.

To help teachers to manage or monitor student learning and assessment there is a large number of off-the-shelf and custom built systems. They provide efficiency, faster and improved turn-around of feedback to students. Teachers are in a state of confusion over system choice due to the large number of options available in these systems. So teachers are looking for guidance and time to be allocated to developing suitable assessment material. A

Another problem in some online assessment systems is that they encourage surface recall rather than deeper level learning. So the teacher has the responsibility of designing the assessment without being confined to the technologies available. Also rather than having standalone assessment systems they should be integrated with other student management systems and business processing because assessments are concerned with all aspects of teaching and learning.

Another concern in preparing online assessment tasks is that they should be written with careful attention to details because otherwise it is difficult and time-consuming for students to seek clarification or further explanation. So students should be provided with details of what the assessment task is, what references or resources may be useful or required, timelines, who to contact for assistance or clarification, what standards are expected for a given task and the criteria upon which it will be judged and suitable examples whenever possible.

In online assessment the students should be given the opportunity to rehearse wherever this can appropriately be done. Teachers can provide practice tests, past exams, additional or extension activities for students to practice.

Assessing student readiness for online learning and online assessment is another important consideration. Some learners are ready for online learning while other learners are not. Teachers should not assume that students are ready and able to cope with new forms of learning and assessment because there will be a wide variation in learner readiness within the learning community. Online learners who have excellent time-management skills, previous experience with computers and self-confidence in the learning environment are ready for online assessment.

Teachers should facilitate other learners to come to this level by assessing their computer, web literacy level, competencies like literacy, English, mathematics, communication, problem-solving, organizational skills, technology skills and specific skills required as prior knowledge to successfully completing the course to identify gaps and providing structured activities to address those gaps prior to enrolment in online courses.

Plagiarism, cheating and authentication are problems that teachers have to deal with in any method of assessment but procedures used to minimize these in the face-to-face environment cannot be used in online assessment the solution to the problem of plagiarism is

prevention and that this solution can and should come from within an institution.

To the authentication problem teachers need to adopt a risk management approach. They can use software that can facilitate management of assessment using various techniques so that they cannot be read by learners until exam time and prevent learners from opening other applications, like Internet browsers, while taking a test or use take-home, pen-book online assignments as these provide a higher quality of student learning. There is a firm belief that the online environment provides a valuable opportunity to get to know individual learners. By knowing their learners, assessors can readily determine whether learners do have the capacity to submit the assessment which has been submitted in their name.

Student Involvement in E-Assessments

There are three ways students can involve in e-assessments; Self assessment, peer assessment and group/collaborative assessment.

- **Self assessment -** Students can answer quizzes or questionnaires that provide immediate feedback and write portfolio. Learners can get an idea of their knowledge level of a certain subject and their improvement in that subject area. They can use this before enrolling for a new course to assess their needs and ability to follow that course.

- **Peer assessments -** Students are directed to participate in interactive assessments such as peer critique and feedback on portfolios, role plays and essay type assignments. It will have the added benefit of receiving multiple opinions for their work and build their ability of providing feedback to others' work.

- **Group/collaborative assessment -** Students have to work collaboratively within a group. It will build their team skills like their ability to work within a group and their ability to provide feedback and appraisal to the team members.

Future Directions in E-Assessments

New developments in information technology have made it possible to experiment with some innovative methods of assessment. Some of them are;

- Use of biometrics to security issues
- Automatic marking software to mark subjective, open-ended assessments
- Personalizing assessments to individuals using extended mark-up language (XML)
- Further developments in virtual reality simulations
- Automatic item generation
- Using more multimedia in assessments

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

IMPORTANCE OF INTERNSHIP AS A WORK-BASED ASSESSMENT

U. G. Ayoma C. Karunananda

Department of Accountancy
Faculty of Business Studies & Finance
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Kuliyapitiya

Importance of Assessment

As academic are changing their ideas about what constitutes exemplary inquiry-based learning, and recognizing that education is an active process that encourages thinking ability and problem solving ability, there is an increased need to align curriculum, instruction and assessment. So, it is clear that the objective of assessment is not only grading and understanding students learning, but also improving student learning.

Assessment can be defined as a sample taken from a larger domain of content and process skills that allow one to gather student understanding of a part of the larger domain being explored. Assessment is a continuous, ongoing process that involves examining and observing Students' behavior, listening to their ideas and developing questions to promote conceptual understanding.

Assessment can be divided into three stages: (1) Baseline assessment, (2) Formative assessment and (3)

Summative assessment. Baseline assessment establishes the 'Starting Point' of the student understanding. Asking oral and written responses based on individual experience, assessing prior knowledge can be used as Baseline assessments. Formative assessments provide information to help guide the instruction throughout the unit.

They are various methods under formative assessments such as Paper and Pencil Tests like Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ), Short Answer, Essay, Written Report, Oral Reports, Interviews and Embedded Assessments. Summative assessment informs both the student and the teacher about the level of conceptual understanding and performance capabilities that the student has achieved at the end of an academic year or at a pre-determined time.

The methods coming under summative assessment are Performing tasks relating to problem, issue, or scientific concept, Investigative Projects, Extended or Unit Projects, Portfolio, etc.

Selecting the Assessment Method

For the purpose of evaluation, a wider variety of assessment tools can be used that allows teachers to determine which strategies are effective and which need to be improved. According to Morgan (1999)[3] the primary goal is to choose a method which most

---

[3] Morgan, Chris (1999) Southern Cross University, New South Wales, Australia.

effectively assesses the objectives of the unit of study. In addition, choice of assessment method should be aligned with the overall aims of the program, and may include the development of disciplinary skills (such as problem solving) and support the development of vocational competencies (such as communication or team skills).

Hence, when choosing assessment methods, it is useful to have one eye on the immediate task of assessing student learning in a particular unit of study, and another eye on the broader aims of the program and the qualities of the graduating students. When considering assessment methods, it is particularly useful to think first about what qualities or abilities you are seeking to create in the students. Nightingale *et al.,* (1996)[4] provide eight broad categories of learning outcomes as shown in Table 1 below. Within each category some suitable methods are also suggested.

---

[4] Nightingale, P., Te Wiata, I.T., Toohey, S. Ryan, G., Hughes, C., Margin, D. (1996) Assessing Learning in Universities Professional Development Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia.

Table 1 – Eight broad categories of learning outcomes:

Category	Expected Outcomes	Suggested Methods
Thinking Critically and making judgments	Developing arguments, reflecting, evaluating, assessing, and judging	Essay, Reports, Journal, Book Review or Article, prepare a case for an interest group. Write a newspaper article for a foreign newspaper
Solving problems and developing plans	Identifying problems, posing problems, defining problems, analyzing data, reviewing, designing experiments, planning, applying information	Problem Scenario, Group Work, Work-Based problem, Prepare a committee of enquiry report, Draft a research bid to a realistic brief, analyze a case, conference paper

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Performing procedures and demonstrating techniques	Computation, taking readings, using equipment, following laboratory procedures, following protocols, carrying out instructions	Demonstration, Role Play, Make a video, produce a poster, lab report, Prepare an illustrated manual on using the equipments, for a particular audience, observation of real or simulated professional practice
Managing and Developing oneself	Working co-operatively, working independently, being self directed, managing time, managing tasks, organizing	Journal, Portfolio, Learning Contract, Group work

Accessing and managing information	Researching, investing, organizing & reviewing information, collecting data, observing and interpreting	Projects, Dissertation, Applied Task, Applied Problem, Annotated bibliography
Demonstrating knowledge and understanding	Recalling, describing, reporting, recounting, recognizing, identifying, related & interrelating	Written Examination, oral examination, essay, report, Comment on the accuracy of a set of records. Short answer question
Designing, Creating, performing	Imagining, Visualizing, designing, producing, creating, innovating, performing	Portfolio, Performance, Presentation, Hypothetical, Projects

Communicating	Communication within a group, verbal, written and non-verbal communication, arguing, describing, advocating, interviewing negotiating	Written presentation (Essay, report, reflective paper, etc…), oral presentation, group work, Discussion, Debate, Role plays, Presentation to camera

It is clear that different kinds of information must be gathered about students by using different types of assessments. The type of assessments that are used will measure a verity of aspects of student learning, conceptual development, and skill acquisition and application. The use of a diverse set of assessment methods will yield a deeper and more meaningful understanding of what students know, and are able to do; which is the primary purpose of assessment.

Internship and Its Importance

Internship is a hands-on experience of an activity. After, this kind of practical training one acquires skills and experiences. It is like learning to drive a car by sitting in the car and driving it with the guidance of a trainer.

Theoretical training on the other hand is like sitting in the classroom to learn to drive a car. Participant will know the optimum speed at which to change gears or the situations awarded a qualification after theoretical training, however this does not guarantee you the skills needed to carry tasks in the working environment.

Unemployment among university graduates is a main issue within Sri Lanka. Industrialists often complain that most of the graduates are far from reality. Qualifications are different from skills. Graduates require skills in order to perform a task, and qualifications to demonstrate the ability to understand the task. Ideally, a graduate should have both skills and qualifications.

Employers demand an employee to have skills because that is what is required for the job immediately and with as little training as possible. Training is carried out at the cost of an employer, and hence, to limit the cost to the company, the employer will choose the most skilled employee for the job. Therefore, if our graduates have a qualification without the requisite skill, they may not be able to find jobs.

The Role of University Internship

As academics in Sri Lankan university system we should encourage an academic driven internship, which promote the placement for students in private enterprises and other organizations to foster the work experiences so that students will achieve the necessary skills. While students are still at university, internship can help them to

develop their skills that are now essentially required, such as communication skills, inter-personnel skills, managerial skills, self-confidence, self-motivation, etc. Work experience through internship program, provides credible means for transition from the world of academics to the working world. As well as, internship improves job opportunities for students since it allows them to upgrade their job skills and work values.

As a result of that, students who have internship tend to find jobs more quickly upon graduation than students who did not have internship. Placements in various training organization can be arranged for undergraduates during their vacations, at the end of third year and fourth year of study.

On the other hand, training providers gain more from the student employment, since undergraduates represent flexible, high quality labor as supplementary human resources. Hence, internship can assist training opportunity providers through retaining qualified employees and enhancing their performance.

Importance of Internship in Accountancy

Among the Professional fields, Accountancy and Commerce have been identified as sectors having a high demand for professional education, in order to enter the job market. Maintaining the credibility of the accounting profession is very much important in the prevailing dynamic environment. In this globalized scenario, the expectations of the society from the accounting

profession are increasing. The trust and confidence built over decades for the accounting profession can be further improved by reinforced stronger methods, processes and systems to enhance the capabilities and competences of the professionals.

Universities and other higher educational institutions who are conducting accountancy related course units should ensure that students gain enough advanced professional accountancy knowledge to enable them to function as competent professional accountants in an increasingly complex and changing environment. Accountancy related course units should provide potential professionals with a framework of professional values, ethics, and attitudes for the best interest of society.

The education process should be such that a combination of a good formal education and sound practical training is provided so that a student following the course units gets the best knowledge, capabilities and competencies. The Sri Lankan graduates need to enter the world of work and operate in practical environment, where many public and private accounting employers prefer the students with work experience in their hiring decisions. Consequently, the right internship coupled with the right performance often leads to a full-time job offer and early promotion.

Through internship, undergraduates can receive other benefits like a supportive income, personal image, self-

esteem, change of attitudes and it provides a different life for a given time period.

Internship in Accountancy Degree Programs

All most all the accountancy special degree programs in Sri Lanka are having one year or six months compulsory internship program. This internship program intends to expose students to the corporate environment so that the undergraduate will be able to understand the interdisciplinary nature of theoretical knowledge, skills, capabilities and values acquired their course work in first three years.

This kind of practical training should promote developing professional skills, personal skills, interpersonal and communication skills, and organizational and business management skills. In addition, students will realize the importance of teamwork, exceeding expectations, personal alliances, professional behavior and appearances, mentoring and personal commitment to excellence during their training engagement.

Employers now begin recruiting efforts well in advance of graduation. They use internships to establish early contact and gain extended exposure to students. Furthermore, it is the ideal vehicle to confirm ability to function in the accounting workplace.

Here, the workplace learning and guidance given by the employer should provide an understanding of the issues,

situations and matters in proper perspective for exercising professional judgment not only from a technical angle but also from a technical dimension. Practical experience should infuse in a student a commitment for lifelong learning and considering the culture of ethical behavior.

An internship provides a relatively encouraging environment for enhancement of accounting ability of the students as well as professional experience to list on students resume.

Assessing the Internship Program

The interaction and evaluations that occur among students, employers, and department during and at completion of the internship can be invaluable in measuring outcomes of the internship program and the professional competencies required for the entry into the accounting profession. There is a need for establishing high quality assessment methods to evaluate the attainment of the capabilities and competences of the students.

Here, the assessment must be reliable and valid. Reliable assessment methods produce consistent, objective results over time. Valid assessment methods assess the desired outcomes and may use the qualitative and quantitative measures. The assessment need to be acceptable to the stakeholders and serve the public interest.

Methods of Assessing Internship

- Maintaining a Diary / Training Record Book containing list of activities they have performed during their training

- Sending monthly, quarterly, by-annual and annual progress review reports to the on-campus coordinators concerning activities and progress by the external supervisor

- Undertaking self assessment survey

- Composing a written paper / study report / dissertation concerning the internship experience and the profession

- Making oral presentation

Information gathered from the use of these tools has provided important insights from the perspectives of the student intern and the external internship supervisors. That feedback has been available for use in promoting and improving the internship program as well as the overall program for accounting majors.

One of the best assessment criteria is the Progress Review Report sent by the external supervisor. Through this the following skills & competencies can be measured by using assessment ratings.

Table 2 – Skills and competencies measured through assessment ratings:

Main Skill Category	Related skills
Ability to Learn	• Observe and/or pays attention to others. • Asks pertinent and purposeful questions • Seeks out and utilizes appropriate resources • Accepts responsibilities for mistakes and learns from experiences • Open to new experiences
Reading / Writing / Computation Skills	• Reads/comprehends/follows written materials • Communicates ideas and concepts clearly in writing • Works with mathematical procedures appropriate to the job
Oral Communication / Listening Skills	• Listens to others in an active and attentive manner • Comprehends and follows verbal instructions • Effective participates in meetings or group settings • Demonstrates effective verbal communication skills.

Creative thinking & Problem Solving Skills	• Seeks to comprehend and understand issues in their larger context • Breaks down complex tasks/problems into manageable pieces • Brainstorm/develops options and ideas • Respects input and ideas from other sources and people • Demonstrates an analytical capacity
Professional & Career Development Skills	• Seeks to understand personal strengths and weaknesses • Exhibits self-motivated approach to work • Demonstrate ability to set appropriate priorities/goals • Exhibits professional behavior and attitudes • Shows interest in determining career direction
Interpersonal & Teamwork Skills	• Relates to co-workers effectively • Managers and resolves conflicts in an effective manner • Supports and contributes to a team atmosphere • Controls emotions in a manner appropriate for work • Demonstrates assertive but appropriate behavior

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Organizational Effectiveness Skills	• Seeks to understand and support the organization's mission/goals • Works within the norms and expectations of the organization • Works within appropriate authority and decision-making channels • Demonstrate confidentiality • Interact effectively and appropriately with supervisors
Basics work Habits	• Reports to work as scheduled • Is prompt in showing up to work and meetings • Exhibits a positive and constructive attitudes • Dress and appearance are appropriate for the organization
Character Attributes	• Brings a sense of values and integrity to the job • Seeks to serve others even at the risk of personal inconvenience • Respects the privacy of other • Behavior in an ethical manner • Respects the diversity of co-workers
Industry-Specific Skills	• Are there any or competencies that university feels are important to the professional or career-field.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Issues in Internship

Although the internship in Accountancy & Finance is a vital factor to make a well qualified graduate in the field of Accountancy, certain structural limitations constrain the achievement of the expected outcomes of internship. Probably brief length of internship puts a lot of pressure on the intern and at same time discourages the corporate commitment to the particular internship.

It is revealed that training period of more than twelve months is required for one to become productive and useful to their employers. In that case their employers would have ample time to evaluate them as perspective employees.

In a developing country like Sri Lanka finding a suitable place for training is another critical issue faced by both students and universities. This problem could seriously affect the universities situated in remote areas since the link with corporate sector maintained by them is quite less compared to the universities situated in Colombo and the suburbs.

Introducing a unique assessment method for evaluating the internship program is another crucial challenge. Although all universities who are conducting accountancy degree program have introduced a module on internship, the methods using to evaluate the students who have under gone for the internship is different from each other. While certain universities offer six credits for the internship, some other universities are not offering

any credits for the internship program. In such circumstances, the students' contribution for the internship might create certain issues.

Suggestions

Different universities are assessing their internship based on their own assessment methods. Some universities still award a limited amount of academic credit for internships. As an added academic benefit, an internship with the right employer should be critically evaluated when it is applied at the university level. Therefore, to overcome this, it is essential to set standards for the internship and its assessments, at the University Grants Commission (UGC) level.

To beat the pressure and work load faced by the students during their training period, it is better to provide supervision on how to prepare and plan for an internship, how to perform a variety of tasks during the internship and how to maximize the experiences by the internal supervisors within the university.

On the other hand students should develop a working relationship with at least one of the academic members of the faculty (Internal Supervisor). Then academic members can have a network of real-world contacts and from time to time can make an internship offer materialized by merely making a telephone call.

For the purpose of finding placements, the universities in Sri Lanka can encourage students to identify and arrange

their own internship positions. It allows friends, relatives and other associates to know that how students are interested in accounting internship. Often these people will know of potential internship opportunities, or they may speak with others who can provide training opportunities.

Universities' internet sites are an excellent way to acquire a general knowledge of internship. Collectively, these university sites should provide tips on resumes, interviews, training opportunities and contain extensive information about training requirements & links to related sites. Further it is necessary to update the websites and student databases, time to time.

As academics we have to to improve the quality of the students, their attitudes, performances and discipline within the training organization. To fulfill that necessity, (i) complete a significant amount of course work prior to commencement of the internship, (ii) closely supervise the student during their training period, (iii) help to develop personal attributes such as personality, manners, professional appetence and attitudes, etc. can be performed by the academic staff.

It is essential to keep close contact with training opportunity providers and after a particular training session, send a thank you letter. It helps to express continuous interest in the organization and desires to stay in touch with the training organizations.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

In conclusion, we may stress that internships are becoming more widespread. The reasons are the growing use of internship as recruitment tools, the opportunity to validate the accountancy as a profession and opportunity to gain real world experience. It is essential to prepare for an internship by excelling in academic and extracurricular activities and by becoming knowledgeable on the details of internship program. The more successful interns set lofty development goals and are fully committed to maximize their personal and professional growth.

It is crucial that government, universities and participating companies adjust their current programs to better meet the work-based learning and career management needs of Sri Lankan undergraduates.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Assessing Students in Higher Education Through Alternative Methods
Selected Topics

Assessing Students Through
Alternative Methods
N. A. D. Namalee Napagoda

Effective Field Class Assessment
Nimal S. Abeysingha

Conducting of Effective
Viva Voice Examination
A. P. Sanjaya Fernando

e-Assessment as an Alternative
to Classroom Assessment
Harshani R. K. Nagahamulla

Importance of Internship as a
Work-Based Assessment
U. G. Ayoma C. Karunananda

Prof. Udith Jayasinghe is currently working as the Head of the Dept. of Agribusiness Management and the Director/Staff Development Centre (SDC) of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka.

He was graduated with a *B.Sc. (Agriculture)* [First Class Hons.] degree from the University of Peradeniya in 1994, followed by a *M.Sc. (Agric. Econ)* from the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA) of the same University in 1997. He obtained his *Ph.D (Agric. Econ & Business)* from the University of Guelph in Canada in 2004. Also, he possesses a *Diploma in Business Management* (Scranton, USA) and a *Diploma in Mass Media & Communication* (DES, Colombo). Besides the academic, research, and career development activities, Prof. Jayasinghe has been involved with activities related to teacher training and consultation, development of teaching technologies and methodologies, curriculum development, and quality assurance in higher education etc. He possesses a *Postgraduate Diploma in Teacher Training & Education Management* from the Indian Institute of Technology & Management. He completed the *Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education* (CTHE) course conducted by the University of Colombo, and received the United Kingdom's *Staff and Educational Development Association* (SEDA) accreditation in 1999.

Mr. Ajith Jayaweera is a Senior Lecturer attached to the Dept. of Livestock & Avian Sciences of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka. Also, he acts as the Director/Career Guidance Unit (CGU) of the same University, and Student Counselor and member of the Curriculum Revision Committee of the Faculty.

He was graduated with a *B.Sc. (Agriculture)* [Hons.] degree from the University of Peradeniya in 1993, followed by a *M.Phill (Animal Science)* from the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA) of the same University in 2003. He has obtained the *Certificate of Staff Development* of the University of Peradeniya in 1996 and the *Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education* (CTHE) of the University of Colombo in 2002 and qualified for the United Kingdom's *Staff and Educational Development Association* (SEDA) accreditation in 2002. Mr. Jayaweera has been working as the Course Facilitator of the "Certificate Course on Staff Development" conducted by the Staff Development Centre (SDC) of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka for the Probationary Lecturers in the national universities in Sri Lanka.