

Welcome to the Teaching and Tools podcast brought to you by eLearning at Everett Community College. I'm Instructional Designer Derek Jorgenson, here to provide you a condensed version of an in-person workshop titled Beat the Cheat, part 1, Reconsidering Your Course Assessments.

Faculty frequently express a fear of students cheating on exams, and often ask me if there are technology solutions available to prevent the cheating. My short answer is generally yes, but the long answer, when I'm afforded the time to provide it, is a conversation about the nature and utility of tests as a formal assessment. This episode of the Teaching and Tools podcast explores some of the ideas related to reimagining assessment in the classroom and considering assessments other than exams.

Tests are a traditional summative assessment virtually everyone is familiar with. I sometimes have the impression that we test students simply because we were tested as students. Exams are an appropriate assessment tool in many situations, but I tend to think we rely on them out of a sense of obligation rather than as a deliberate extension of our course development.

Bloom's taxonomy can be used to identify the learning outcomes of exams. Based on the categories of the taxonomy, we most likely identify tests as a measure of a student's ability to remember or understand information. Exams are typically associated with recalling, recognizing, and understanding facts. While recalling and understanding facts is an essential part of the learning process, most course objectives and outcomes are written to identify a higher order of learning. Based on Bloom's taxonomy once again, assessments can be designed to allow students to apply concepts, analyze information, evaluate ideas, or to create a new product that synthesizes information. Thinking about course outcomes in this framework shifts the goal from identifying what we want our students to KNOW to determining what our students should be able to DO as a result of our classes.

Tests, if thoughtfully designed, can measure the students' ability to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create, but alternative assessments align with those demonstrations of understanding

more easily. Designing and developing an alternative assessment can allow your students to create and actively demonstrate their content mastery, and also reduce the likelihood of cheating.

Alternative assessments come in a wide variety of shapes, and they can be flexible to accommodate student needs and interests. Some examples include portfolios, exhibits, experiments, fliers, podcasts, interviews, and journals. That's just scratching the surface.

There are established advantages of alternative assessments, and some disadvantages.

Advantages of Alternative Assessments

- They provide a means of assessing valued skills that cannot be directly assessed with traditional tests.
- They provide a more realistic setting for student performance than traditional tests.
- They focus on student performance and the quality of work performed by students.
- They can be easily aligned with established learning outcomes.

Disadvantages of Alternative Assessments

- Process can be costly in terms of time, effort, equipment, materials, facilities, or funds.
- Rating process is sometimes more subjective than traditional exams.

If this approach appeals to you, there are five essential steps to developing an alternative assessment:

1. Define the instructional outcome you want to assess as clearly as possible
2. Distinguish between those outcomes that can validly be assessed *solely* by performance assessments and those that can be assessed just as effectively by objective measures.
3. Create tasks that elicit evidence of the student's ability to perform the targeted skill.
4. Decide what kinds of teacher guidance can be used while still allowing students the freedom to learn and do it their own way.
5. Try out the assessment and make revisions as necessary.

If you are at Everett Community College, I am available and happy to help with any step in the process.

That wraps up this installment of Teaching and Tools, brought to you by the eLearning department of Everett Community College. Thanks for listening! Check out the eLearning webpage at www.everettcc.edu/elearning for more information, including a list of upcoming

workshops. The Center for Transformative Teaching Blog also offers a wealth of information; check it out at ctt.evccblogs.com. I'm Derek Jorgenson, your Instructional Designer. Until next time – onward!