Educational Support Cell (ESC)
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The Guiding Principles on SWCS Student Performance Data

In *ESC Tips and Strategies V6*, we discussed "*Cracking the code on Instructor Performance Data*". At that time, we focused our attention on instructor evaluations, one of the five data points that we use to make informed decisions about our courses. In this volume, we take a closer look at a second data point, one that Leaders and Instructors should consider too significant to ignore, **Student Performance Data**.

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5 Data Points

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1. Student Performance
2. Student Feedback on Instructors
3. Student Feedback on the Course
4. Instructor Performance
5. Instructor Feedback on the Course

Of course, student performance data functions as the **most important** data point when making knowledgeable decisions about our courses. Student performance data comes from a variety of sources such as the *summative* assessments listed on your Individual Student Assessment Plans (ISAPs), as well as *formative* assessments (active participation, learner reflections, discussion) and Instructor observations.

Summative Assessments
ISAP data is important as it is an indicator of how any one student is faring in your course. But used anonymously, it can also indicate trends in performance that, if addressed, can strengthen or improve upon a course offering.

If students consistently perform poorly on a summative assessment (an assessment that summarizes performance such as an exercise, exam, or paper), then maybe the performance measure isn't valid or maybe the lessons aren't providing the correct emphases or level of activity to enable the learning to really "stick". Conversely, if students consistently perform too well on an assessment, this could also indicate some sort of issue with the measure, how the measure is being applied, or that course content is too simplistic.

Formative Assessments
All lessons have Terminal Learning Objectives (TLOs) and Enabling Learning Objectives (ELOs). A TLO answers the question "what should the learner know or be able to do at the end of the lesson?" To achieve the TLOs, enabling learning objectives (ELOs) function as your available benchmarks, or gates. ELOs chart out the paths facilitators take to guide their students to that particular comprehensive learning objective.

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Each ELO can be looked at as a formative assessment, or a mini-gate to getting to the end-state. There are plenty of methods of informally taking account of if your learners are "getting it" before they are summarily measured.

So, let's put this into perspective. Suppose a student is enrolled in the Basic Officers Leadership Course and attends the *ARSOF/CF Interdependency Capabilities* session. For this session of the course, the stated outcome is to describe Army Special Operations Forces capabilities. Here are the ELOs that operate as the Instructor's available gates as progress towards the stated outcome:

- Identify Army Special Forces task organization and unit composition;
- Identify the range of operations for Special Operational Units;
- Identify Special Forces Principle activities;
- Identify MISO capabilities;
- Identify CA core tasks;
- Identify Ranger Regiment operational tasks;
- Identify SOAR responsibilities in support of ARSOF core activities;
- Identify SO Sustainment Structures/Support Relationships;
- Explain the basic ARSOF/CF Interdependence components;

Pause for a minute and think about how formative performance data will support those ELOs. What will Instructors be able to SEE that proves participants can DO each of the bullets above? How will Instructors structure the learning environment so *explanations* (written or oral?) can be observed or taken into account?

If the objectives listed were more complex thought processes like application or analysis, how would an instructor SEE *comparisons* (graphically? Written? oral?), or *analyses* (with real data? In a case study?) take place?

In order for student performance data to improve, we must clearly understand the purpose and origination of TLOs and ELOs and judge whether we are creating learning activities to achieve these. This is where a working relationship between Training Developers and Instructors comes in. With collaboration, these two entities can fine tune learning activities to best assess if the learning objectives are being consistently met.

Student performance data operates as a powerful and significant tool for making informed decisions. It can inform the validity of our assessment tools as well as enable us to pinpoint course improvements.

> *To demonstrate the significance of student performance data, check out this interesting blog post entitled* Protecting Student Data: 10 Guiding Principles *by educational entrepreneur Jose Ferreira.*

For assistance with working with student data or other instructional needs, please *contact* Mr. Geoff Jones (geojones@soc.mil) and the ESC.