Assessing Student Expectations for a Course

In Tips & Strategies Volume 4, 2014 (*The Pre-Assessment and the Outcome: Ties That Bind)*, we discussed pre-assessment functions as formal or informal means of judging the needs of the learners. In fact, you were put in the role of a track coach with the mission of leading a team of runners to victory. Based on the primary outcome, "victory", a pre-assessment of team member's abilities determined the plan to achieve the desired outcome. Now, we look at pre-assessment through a different lens. Rather than using a pre-assessment of abilities to make a plan, let's discuss using a *student expectations course survey* as an additional tool to support continuous classroom improvement.

When facilitators are aware of and address students' expectations of a course, does a higher quality of learning occur? Yes, of course, this is a no brainer! So, how can facilitators utilize a survey to help identify student course expectations, and how should this survey work? Here are three recommendations.

1) Optimal Assessment/Survey Length

The tool you choose must provide data without being burdensome to students or the facilitators. Ask **precisely** *what you want to know*! Remember, this is a tool to gather information about student expectations for the course, so begin by asking basic demographics data. In addition to demographics questions, be sure to include questions that assist the facilitator in making decisions about classroom time, assignments, and student interactions. You can also ask students to rank expectations of various course components such as technology use, learning assessments, learning activities, and facilitator-student interactions.

To obtain quality responses, keep your survey questions to a minimum. The time it takes to complete this type of course assessment should not exceed 30 minutes and could be accomplished as a mail-ahead.

The ESC provides support for the uniform application of USAJFKSWCS educational processes across the Institution to include:

-Support to Curriculum & Instruction [Courses and Instructors];

-Support to Leadership & Professional Development Initiatives;

-Support to the development and implementation of program evaluation and assessment systems; and

-Support to the design and implementation of SOF Career Pathways.

For more information, contact Mr. Geoff Jones at jonesgeo@soc.mil, (910) 396-2518.

2) User Friendly

The tool must be user friendly. More than four clicks on the mouse is two clicks too many. Ideally, the survey would be implemented prior to the first day of class to allow the facilitator time to retrieve and analyze the data. If facilitators use this tool within the first week or two of classes, then they can identify and address misconceptions students may have about what will occur in the course. What if your students were given the opportunity to respond to this survey prompt, "Describe the worst class you've ever attended as a student, and recommend changes to enhance that class." What an excellent way to reveal misconceptions from the get go! This survey data can generate viable information for the facilitator.

3) Easily Modifiable

Student course assessment surveys should be constructed so that they can be copied, modified, and used multiple times per facilitator. As the curriculum changes, the survey will change as well. The ESC can assist with survey design and development. Since USASOC has a license with Vovici, a software program that creates surveys and allows the surveys to be stored, we can easily make your tool electronic. Additionally, we can copy and tailor these tools to individual facilitator's classroom needs.

Assessing student course expectations sounds very interesting, but can it be successful in continuous improvement of curriculum? Yes! Surveys are assessment tools that can be successful in supporting continual improvement within the classroom. Additionally, we can use surveys to help students better appreciate the importance of learning tools and activities. Lastly, surveys provide quantifiable data for analysis using a variety of resources that may be available to facilitators. This pre-assessment tool provides facilitators the opportunity to improve classroom learning by engaging with students about what they expect and starting a conversation to better address these expectations.

Sample Course Expectation Survey Links:

Survey Monkey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=wfWzWtnnDe2DMMb2%2FBL1Rg%3D%3D

PB Works: http://edts523.pbworks.com/w/page/18601726/Course%20Expectations

University of Kentucky: http://www.uky.edu/~dsianita/300/online/expectation.html

University of Maryland: http://www.cte.umd.edu/Resource/Surveys/Lilly%20Grads%202012%20Expectations%20Survey.pdf

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For additional assistance or to further this discussion, contact the Educational Support Group (ESC) at TLDE.