

Assessments Both Faculty and Margaret Spellings Can Love

Assessment Institute

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Collaborative Online Assessments

The Plan

- Definitions and delimitations
- “You be the judge”
- Description of method
- Theoretical framework
- Inter-institutional comparisons
- Your analysis: possibilities and problems in your own institution or context

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What kind of outcomes?

- No content of its own - just a method
- Can be used in any discipline, program, course
- Anything that can be digitized
 - Text files
 - Multimedia files
- Single works or portfolios
- “Higher” cognitive skills

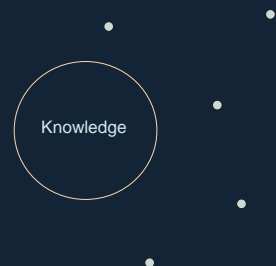
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Three types of outcomes

- Content knowledge in the disciplines
- Convergent skills
- Divergent skills

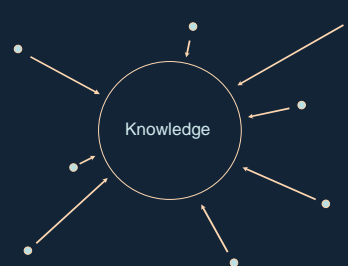
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Content & Convergent



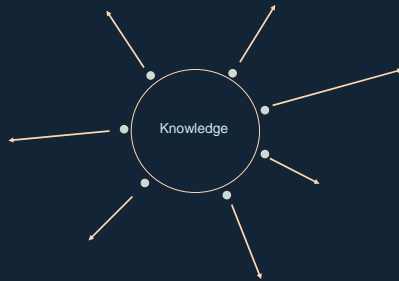
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Content & Convergent



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Divergent



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Divergent Skills: “Dicogs”

- Most complex, difficult levels of
 - Writing
 - Oral communication
 - Problem solving
 - Critical thinking

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Assessment

- Content knowledge & convergent skills
 - Quantitative measures appropriate
- Dicogs
 - No single right or best answer
 - Unpredictable universe of possible answers
 - Can't quantify
 - Some responses better than others

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Judgments

- Criteria are qualitative, not quantitative
- Experts typically disagree
- “Knowledge” is socially constructed
- Standards vary with time and place
- Criteria difficult to articulate meaningfully

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Typical Benchmarks

- “Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.”
– AAC&U VALUE rubric on critical thinking
- “...to determine whether an argument relies on false or doubtful assumptions or presuppositions and then to determine how crucially these affect its strength.”
– American Philosophical Association statement on critical thinking

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- “Select and use language that is appropriate (e.g., formal, informal, literary, or technical) for the purpose, audience, and context of the text, speech, or visual representation”
– Michigan Department of Education Content Standards

- “Use appropriate words and phrases to signal organizational patterns, and incorporate multiple patterns when appropriate”
– Achieve Diploma Project Benchmarks

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What do these words mean?

Clearly Effectively Appropriately Relevant
Evident Consistent Few Accurate
Logical Interesting Multiple Insightful
In-depth Cohesive Coherent Elaborated
Vivid Explicit Expressive Distinctive

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Criteria/Benchmarks must be operationalized

- Student-produced work
 - illustrates concept
 - illustrates degree of achievement
- Commentary
 - explains how criteria apply
 - distinguishes among scorepoints

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The Twist

- Real student work produced during courses, not controlled prompts
- Advance-degreed faculty instead of part-time scorers
- Analysis is far more complex, in-depth
- Extensive discussion and learning among scorers

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LINC: Learning In Networked Communities

- Lead group chooses rangefinder papers and develops commentary
- Faculty participants read papers, practice scoring, develop their own commentary, interact with each other; listen to lead group commentary
- When inter-rater reliability reaches 0.80, faculty are normed to assess student work

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LINC: Learning In Networked Communities

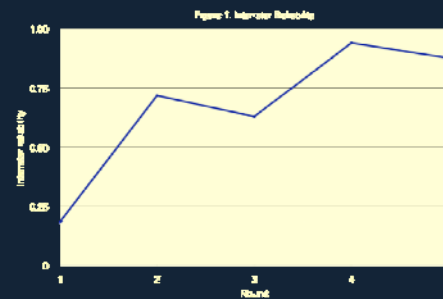
- Whole exercise is conducted online
- Discussion is asynchronous
- Flexible schedules; work from home

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Challenges to Reliability

- No control of “prompt”
- Highly diverse faculty
- Nine-point scale
- No rubric
- No request for consensus

Results



Explanation?

- Professional commitment of faculty
- Extensive, in-depth analysis and commentary

Results: RR's comments

Paper 1.1

I liked the attention-getting title and opening; I would like to see the thesis appear in the opening paragraph; a thesis does emerge and the conclusion works for me.

Paper 5.4

The title, introductory paragraph, and conclusion all coincide. I think I have a clear vision of this author's purpose. I am less sure whether or not the author approves of the new trend of teenage pregnancy. Merely pointing something out does not satisfy my notion of a controlling idea, of some judgment the author has made that justifies writing the paper in the first place.

I notice in the second paragraph a need to make the distinction between *typical* and "normal." By using "normal" instead of typical, the author tacitly gives credence to teens' having babies. I am not sure at this point if this is the author's intent. I am not sure if the author knows she is writing about typical behavior that is not normal, but I suspect she does not know.

The sentence "When one has a baby it is thought of to be bad but when a lot of teens are having babies, it becomes normal" is an abomination, but I do get the point, so communication occurs. That the taboo against having babies has been lifted is clear enough; nearly all the accompanying fears, shames, and excommunication from polite society have been deflated. I am still not sure whether the author approves of this or not. I appreciate the author's attempt to justify her position with evidence (outside sources). The author's attempt to imbue voice by means of relating her personal experience is the closest she has come in revealing her judgment about teen pregnancies—I infer she is mostly supportive, but perhaps she feels compelled to agree to lend an overall credence to her argument.

The fact that she overstates her argument on page two continues my belief she is supportive: "Nobody is waiting until..." The rest of the paragraph supports teen pregnancy. The second paragraph on page two attempts to show the other side: that the movies really are heavily one-sided; again, the author uses her voice of experience—her best friend saga—to validate herself as someone who knows of what she speaks. However, this effort is feeble, since it ends with "happy grandparents."

The outcome of this paragraph is that parents would rather prevent teen pregnancies and are willing to make certain concessions; the author does not interpret this information so I am not clear what she thinks. I got the impression this paragraph was thrown in to meet the research paper aspect of the assignment. Students often get lost in their zeal to satisfy what they view as research paper requirements.

We get more of the same in the next paragraph on page three, finishing with the lifeless, irrelevant "Kristin A. Moore and Barbara W. Sugarland are writers for a journal."

Page four continues research that is not clearly connected. (Perhaps the author feels she is really just fulfilling the research aspect of the assignment right now). The trite remark "This could happen to anyone" and overstatement "Having a baby doesn't really matter..." uses persuasion, not convincing, to support her point--teen pregnancy are on the rise--a point perhaps she feels compelled to agree with in order for her paper to wash?

The paper ends with a hearty endorsement that "pregnancy is now cool and exciting at any age." At least I finally get my long-awaited judgment.

My biggest complaint is that the paper is built around a faulty premise: the support for teens can end at any time; hence, one cannot predict the trend will continue. To suggest this may even be a positive social trend is naive; in fact, teen pregnancies presently are having devastating consequences for many, in spite of the present support systems. The other side just doesn't get a fair shake.

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Learning!

- Collaboration
 - Focuses on criteria
 - Clarifies meanings
 - Challenges hidden biases, assumptions
 - Develops new perspectives
 - Causes self-reflection
- Community
 - Allows practice from novice to adept
 - Builds knowledge of standards
 - Maintains standards through peer review

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Theoretical framework

- Lave & Wenger's "situated learning"
- Wenger's "communities of practice"
- Mintzberg's "professional practice"
- Fish's "interpretative community"
- Bruffee's "collaborative learning"
- Lit on design for online learning

Sign up for lit review via email

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Bonus!

- No meetings!
- Low cost!
- Teachers like it!
- Students too!

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Negatives

- Time-consuming
 - 20 - 25 hours for norming
 - Additional time to score student work
- Some risk of uncollegial online behavior
- Faculty need fluent typing skills
- High-speed Internet service required
- Investment to build and maintain system
- Needs further testing!

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Ideal Technology

- Online system with massive storage
- Each course or program has separate space
- Students submit all work online
- Editing, comment, track changes functions
- Feedback from teacher to student
- Student peer review groups
- View of single work from inception to final draft
- Grading

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Program assessment

- Student work is randomly sampled
- Faculty group assesses work
- Almost impossible for students or teachers to cheat

Inter-Institutional Comparison

- Each program begins with its own assessment
- Schools identify “peer programs”
- Open sites to each other for viewing
- Faculty re-norm themselves
- Begin mutual assessments
- Small networks join into larger ones

Inter-Institutional Comparisons

- No single standard for all schools/programs
- Variety of standards to match missions/students
- Standards can be transparent and accessible to everyone
 - Faculty
 - Students
 - Policymakers

Stay in touch!

Please sign up for listserv on COA's
or to receive slide show or lit review

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