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# Testing Strategies

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## Purpose of Testing

*Diagnostic*-Evaluate Prior Learning

*Formative*-Provide Feedback to Students/Reinforce What They Should Know

*Summative*-Assign Grades/Certify Competence

## Planning for Testing

*Before The Semester Begins*

- Coordinate efforts with others teaching the course.
- List goals for course.
- Consider test types/Alternative methods of evaluation or assessment of learning.
- Consider the level of learning you hope to test (look at Bloom's "Taxonomy of Learning"\*).
- Identify test/assessment methods that meet goals of course, size of class, level of students.
- Write an explicit test policy covering excused absences during a test (make up test, opportunity to drop a low test grade, a comprehensive final that weighs the missed material double).

*Before Each Class*

- Prepare five test questions for each class period covering the most important goals for learning of that class.
- Prepare a Classroom Assessment Technique\*(ungraded) for each class to diagnose student understanding and to provide formative feedback to students on their learning.

*After Each Class*

- Review the responses to the Classroom Assessment Technique used to determine if the goals for that class were met.
- Modify and edit the five test questions to reflect the material actually covered in that class.
- Prepare for the next class in response to student understanding of the previous material.

*During The Semester*

- Provide practice with the types of test questions you will use.
- Provide review sheets of important points.
- Have students predict test questions and practice responses.
- Provide opportunities for students to form study groups and peer teach.
- Provide low stakes testing early in the semester.
- Provide students opportunities to recover from an early testing failure (opportunity to drop a low grade, comprehensive final).
- Compile a test question bank from the five questions prepared for each class and the questions students predicted.

## Creating the Test

- Construct a grid with learning goals on one side and content areas along top.
- Select different types of questions from your test bank to cover content and achieve learning goals.
- Construct a test that provides an opportunity to show what students learned.
- Consider time limitations of the test period as you create the test.
- Have an experienced colleague take and proof the test and adjust for level of student learning and time constraints.
- Confirm that the test represents the content, form and level of learning that students have practiced during the semester.

*Organizing The Test*

- Provide course name and semester, instructor name, test name or number, space for student name/id.
- Provide academic honesty statement and expectations.
- Plan for multiple versions by rearranging order of questions, putting tests on different colored paper.
- Start out with an easy question to build student confidence.
- Make tests efficient. Write clear, complete directions. Group directions and types of questions together so you don't have to repeat directions.
- Provide enough room to answer questions or have students use their own paper.
- Provide students with a point value of each section so they know where to spend their time.

## Planning for the Test Day

- Decide what your strategy will be for students who miss the test. Check for departmental policy.
- Prepare make up test versions that are equal in difficulty and objectives.
- Have clearly stated mechanisms to drop a test or a comprehensive exam that is weighted on missed material.
- Have test copies ready several days in advance to avoid last minute glitches.
- Enlist several colleagues to help pass out tests and monitor the testing environment, if the class is large.
- Discuss your testing strategy to provide a fair testing environment for all students.
- Review students' responsibility in abiding by the Honor Code.
- Explain that test versions will be randomly assigned.
- Establish a policy on student questions during the test.

## Monitoring Test Taking

- Require student IDs, if the class is large.
- Have students place all book bags at front of room or come to class with just their pen or pencil. No cell phones out.
- Remind them start and stop times will be uniform for all students.
- Remind students of academic honesty obligations.
- Pass out tests once everyone is seated.
- Monitors should move around the room and not plan to do their own work during the test.
- Suspicious behavior should be closely monitored and detailed notes taken about what the instructor observed. Other monitors should be asked to corroborate the behavior.
- Allow all students to finish the exam. Don't publicly accuse anyone of cheating.
- Post time remaining on board periodically.
- At the end of the testing period, all remaining students should stop writing and hand in the test at the same time.
- Any suspicious behavior that can be documented or corroborated should be reported to the departmental supervisor and forwarded to the Academic Honesty review panel in Academic Affairs. You should not grade the material until a decision has been made by the review panel.

## Grading the Test

- Plan your time to allow a timely return of the test.
- Try to grade when you are rested.
- Be sure grading criteria reflects your objectives for the course.
- Create a rubric, sample answers at different levels.
- Read exams without student identification.
- Grade sections together to maintain consistency in grading.
- Give constructive feed back on student learning and misunderstandings.
- Analyze the test to see if it met your learning objectives.
- Decide if any of the questions were poorly constructed and need to be dropped. Adjust grading accordingly.
- Make notes about what you would do differently the next time.

## Returning Tests

- Consider providing immediate feedback on the web with a correctly answered test.
- Test grades are confidential. You can not post grades in a public place or leave graded papers out for students to look at.
- You can post grades in WebCT where only the student has access to his or her grade.
- Return tests within one week at the end of a class period. Insist they take it home and carefully review it.
- Allow students to write their questions and concerns on note cards or e-mail you within a specific time period.
- Don't take up class time with individual test questions or concerns. Have students make an appointment with you or respond to them by e-mail. Do use class time to clarify general misunderstandings of content.
- For students who did poorly, provide strategies to learn the material and the opportunity to show they have mastered it later in the semester.
- Don't plan to reuse specific tests. Allow students to use them as practice.
- Plan to create new and a variety of testing strategies the next semester.

\*Angelo, T.A. & Cross, K.P. (1993) Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers, 2nd edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

\*Bloom, B.S. (Ed.). (1956). Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook 1. Cognitive domain. New York: McKay.