Creative Assessment Strategies

The strategies described in this guide are often used to assess passive programming outcomes in student affairs units. Please contact Student Affairs Assessment & Planning for questions or to request additional support.

# Observation

Observe students performing a specific task and use a checklist or rubric to determine the extent to which the student was able to achieve the outcome. A checklist could be a simple “Yes, able to fully perform the task” or “No, not able to fully perform the task.” A rubric can help with more nuanced understanding of student performance, including if the student was able to perform *some* of the task. Analysis would include noting any consistencies in which steps students were performing correctly and incorrectly.

 Example: Asking students to demonstrate the recovery position.

# Misconception/Preconception Check

Use this to uncover student prior knowledge or beliefs that may hinder or block further learning, growth, or development.

Start by identifying some of the most troublesome common misconceptions or preconceptions students have related to your program/topic/experience. Select a handful of these troublesome ideas and beliefs -- ones that are likely to interfere most with learning and development in your program/activity -- and focus your Misconception/Preconception Check on them. Create a simple questionnaire (paper, Qualtrics, electronic polling system, etc.) to elicit information about students’ ideas and beliefs in these areas. You may want to use multiple-choice format for ease of analysis, but you could ask open-response questions. If you need to know how strongly held the beliefs or ideas are, consider providing Likert-scale responses such as those listed in the example below:

Example: All students at CU Boulder use alcohol or other drugs.

1=I’m absolutely certain this is false
2=I’m pretty sure this is false
3=I have no idea whether this is true or false
4=I’m pretty sure this is true
5=I’m absolutely certain this is true

This can be used as a pre- and post-assessment to measure actual student learning at the program/activity/experience. When analyzing, look for consistencies in level of certainty. This can provide a foundational understanding of the type of education and knowledge correction that is necessary.

# Half-Sheet Response/Minute Papers

After participating in a program/activity/experience, students are asked to respond briefly to some variation of the following two questions:

1. What was the most important thing you learned?
2. What important question remains unanswered?

Students write their responses on half-sheets of paper or index cards. Analysis would include identifying consistent themes. The first question can be adapted to ask students to respond to a specific learning outcome. The second question can be used to identify additional programming topics and opportunities.

Example: What is one stress reduction strategy you learned about today/at this event/etc.?

# Categorizing/Pros and Cons Grid

Students are presented with a grid containing two or three important categories along with a list of scrambled terms, images, or other items that can be clearly sorted in only one of the categories. Ask students to quickly sort the items into the correct categories in the grid. You can do this on paper like a worksheet or create a board game style activity. When analyzing, look for patterns in correct/incorrect responses.

 Example: Provide students with a list of services and programs offered by two different units in

the Division of Student Affairs and ask them to sort the programs into the appropriate unit.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Health Promotion** | **Counseling & Psychiatric Services**  |
|  |   |

# Application Cards

After learning about an important theory/concept/strategy/procedure, students are asked to write down (on an index card or piece of paper) at least one real-world application for what they have just learned. Questions can be posed to students on the index card/paper, on a sign, verbally, etc. Analyzing can be done quickly by sorting the index cards into piles of similar responses/categories and recording those responses. It is also important to note those responses in which students are unable to describe how they would apply information learned.

 Example: How will you use one or more of the strategies learned today?

# Self-Confidence Surveys

These surveys are designed specifically to assess student self-confidence as it relates to specific topics and are useful when offering programs/activities/experiences designed to teach students skills or strategies they are expected to apply when they leave. Focus on skills or abilities that are important for student success and are reasonable given the amount of time they have invested in the program for learning these skills. Make up questions to assess students’ self-confidence in relation to these skills or abilities. Be as specific as possible in your questions. Create a simple survey form for gathering the data. You could also add an open question at the end that ask students to identify those factors that they feel affect their self-confidence.

Example: Now that you have learned about the Amnesty Policy, how would you rate your self-confidence in your ability to do the following? Circle one per statement.

When analyzing the responses, look for and document consistencies in areas where students report high/low levels of confidence. If asking a follow up question about the factors that contribute to the student’s reported self-confidence, disaggregating factors by confidence level may be valuable (e.g. students reporting low confidence in calling for help in an AOD related emergency report these factors).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statement** | **Your Confidence Level** |
| Calling for help (911 or university staff) in an AOD related emergency. | NoConfidence | LowConfidence | ModerateConfidence | HighConfidence |
| Staying with an intoxicated person until help arrives. | NoConfidence | LowConfidence | ModerateConfidence | HighConfidence |
| Cooperating with staff and emergency responders.  | NoConfidence | LowConfidence | ModerateConfidence | HighConfidence |

# Question of the day/Feedback

Post a question in a public space and allow students to write responses they can then display visually such as on a sticky note or whiteboard or anonymously into a basket. When analyzing, look for consistent responses that would reveal themes around the topic and record those themes and the number of sticky notes in which it was recorded (that is your *n)*.

Example: Display the question, “How do you define ‘success’ at CU Boulder?” on a poster or whiteboard. Ask students to write down their responses on a sticky note and add their sticky note to the poster/whiteboard. Collect sticky notes and record responses for analysis to identify themes.

# References

Cross, K. P., & Angelo, T. A. (2005). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.