

Assessing Students Online

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to give a review of assessing online. It points out the concept of assessment, online assessment tools, advantage and disadvantages of online assessment.

The important characteristics of online assessment are its ability to access in anywhere and anytime and also to allow students to receive the feedback and share information with their instructor and friends as classroom and also to keep their record. However, security of online assessment must be concerned.

1. Introduction

Electronic learning (eLearning) refers to the process of learning through the Internet or the Web. It is seen as a future application worldwide to promote lifelong learning by enabling anyone to learn from anywhere at any time (Iahad and et al, 2004). Online assessment can assist students to take ownership of their learning. It can provide the opportunity for integration of learning and assessment and make immediate and effective feedback to students (University of Newcastle – Australia, 1999).

2. Principle of Assessment

Assessment is usually intended to provide both instructors and students with information on progress and measure achievement of learning goals. There are two types of assessment: (1) summative

assessment is assessment used to assign value to what has been learned and (2) formative assessment is designed to assist the learning process by providing feedback to improve the learning (Kerka & Wonacott, 2000). Student assessment also contributes to the effectiveness of the course content and delivery (University of Newcastle – Australia, 1999).

3. Assessing Online

Assessment can be done more effectively online than in a traditional classroom setting (Kearsley, 2000). There are many tools for online assessment paralleled with traditional methods of assessment. Online assessment can include:

- email submission of essays, reports or other instructor marked assignments;
- peer or instructor assessment of online activities such as group decision making, participation in discussions or collaborative projects;
- self-assessment, through instant feedback questionnaires;
- computer-marked assignments, such as multiple choice questions, short answer questions;
- oral tests or discussion by videoconference;
- tracking tool to keep record of students' performance, activities, and interactions with the learning environment;

- student publication of assessment items as Web pages, for peer review and/or instructor assessment;
- all information is filed in a database; instructor may retrieve student's profiles at any time.

4. Advantages of Online Assessment

The advantages of online assessment include: (University of Newcastle – Australia, 1999; Juchnowski & Atkins, 1999; Kerka & Wonacott, 2000; Kearsley, 2000)

- it is easy to distribute to any number of students because they can access from anywhere;
- the timing can be controlled in terms of when is available and how long is available for;
- all student responses can be recorded providing a wealth of data to analyze and assess their performance;
- scores and feedback are given immediately as multiple choice tests or quizzes enable students to regulate and monitor their own learning; hyperlinks can lead students to sources that explain incorrect answers;
- the Internet allows students to share information, receive feedback and interact with others by using tools such as discussion forum, chat room, e-mail, etc;
- it is possible to track aspects of users behavior such as number of times attending to chat room, tests, online lesson, etc;
- e-mail allows for both individual and group feedback;
- synchronous activities such as Internet conference, chat room, etc. allow the instructor to monitor, assess, and give the feedback;
- online activities allow the instructor to monitor the group process and its outcomes;

- assignments submitted online can be conveniently distributed among numbers of tutors to facilitate the grades;
- students can gain confidence from increased practice and feedback, or be easily and rapidly shared with the class;
- the results of assignments and exams can be kept in a database and included in the student's record to understand their performance and improvement.

5. Disadvantages of Online Assessment

The disadvantages of online assessment include: (University of Newcastle– Australia, 1999; Juchnowski & Atkins, 1999; Kerka & Wonacott, 2000)

- students will undertake the assessment in a variety of locations, with no means of knowing whether the student is alone or surrounded by helper;
- the instructor won't know if students are actually doing their assessment though a password is used
- the instructor has no control over the resources the student can access while doing the assignment;
- students must have regular reliable access to computer hardware and the Internet; some technical problems may occur;
- students may be anxious about difficulties of technology in an assessment situation.

6. Suggestion

Security which includes security for the test material, security for the student tracking information, security for the source code, security for the student information and grades should be the priority concerning assessing online.

The assessment and examination which require strictly controlled conditions may not be suitable to online assessing. Student may

be required to take exams in a provided location where a proctor can check their identification. However, the security of online assessment such as restricted access, restricted date and time, the randomization of questions, and the using of advanced technology i.e. finger printed identify, videoconferencing can be used to make visual identification of students.

Reference

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