Classroom Assessment of Student Learning

Classroom assessment techniques are brief activities designed to elicit feedback that shows the instructor how effectively students are learning. This feedback assists the instructor in improving teaching methods and helps the instructor target learning so as to build on student strengths and bridge or complete gaps in student knowledge. Shared feedback allows students to better understand their learning processes and helps them become more effective, reflective learners. Classroom assessment may also provide the basis for classroom research.

The Aims of Classroom Assessment:

- Inform the instructor about student learning
- Meet course objectives
- Promote learner-centered classroom environment
- Encourage reflection in both teaching and learning
- Ensure quality education
- Evaluate the effectiveness of learning tools and identify ways to improve their use

Figure 2: Classroom Assessment

Figure 2 illustrates the cycle of continuous improvement made possible through classroom assessment of student learning. Classroom Assessment Activities, along with information the instructor gathers from sources outside the classroom, including program review, the institution’s ability assessment, and faculty development resources, provide information for instructor reflection to improve the learning environment.

Reflection on this information leads to revision and planning, both short term decisions about a particular class or teaching approach, and long term revisions of the entire course and its relationship to the program curriculum. Implementation of the changes leads the instructor back to classroom assessment activities, to determine the effectiveness of the changes and the continued effectiveness of student learning in the classroom.

The Abilities and Classroom Assessment

With few exceptions, every course offered at VCSU includes a project in its syllabus designed to help the student demonstrate one of the eight Abilities. These courses and their projects are mapped on program maps, to assist both students and faculty in understanding how the Abilities are developed throughout a student’s four year experience at VCSU. Faculty are encouraged to develop a rubric and reflective element for their Ability projects to assist students in understanding and improvement. The best of these upper level projects are placed in the Senior Portfolio, and may be used by the Assessment teams for Senior Ability Assessment.

Suggestions for Classroom Assessment Activities:

- A reflective journal, or reflective activities, which may tie to the Ability Project, or simply allow both faculty and students to monitor comprehension and growth over the semester.
• Short term “one-minute” lesson responses. These measures can be used to check comprehension, identify knowledge gaps, and locate student learning needs. A number of these activities are described in Angelo and Cross’s text, Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers, (1993). Three copies of this resource book are available for overnight checkout at the VCSU Library Reserve desk.

• Holistic “how’s the class going” activities, are also described in Classroom Assessment Techniques. These measures help students and faculty identify effective learning activities, understand and work with student concerns, and solve human communication problems which may interfere with active student learning.

• It is important that assessment activities are not linked to accountability. Therefore, grades on tests, quizzes, and projects should not be considered classroom assessment data, because they focus on the final product rather than the learning that preceded the activity. For the same reason, the faculty evaluation report, used for tenure and promotion, should not be used as a tool to assess the effectiveness of student learning in the classroom.