Assessing Experiential Learning

National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning

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Princeton, NJ

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SUNY Empire State College
What is learning?
“There is one simple principle that governs how the brain works: it evolved”

“Learning is a by-product of the brain”

“Learning is not the function that those systems originally were designed to perform... learning (synaptic plasticity) is just a feature that helps them do their job better.”

Neuroplasticity

- Neuro-sensory experiences create chemical changes at the synapses
- Potency and value of the neurotransmission increases chemical changes
- Re-stimulation of neuro-pathways increases chemical changes
- Combining creates permanent durable memory traces = learning
- Neuro-pathways are cooperative and form networks
Neurons that fire together, wire together
Old + New = Even Newer

Prior Learning + Emergent Learning = Convergent Learning
Consciousness

- Reflection
- Assessment
- Judgment
- Decisions
- Predictions

- Emotions
- Values
- Beliefs
Assessing Learning
Assessing Learning

Classical Assessment Measures

- Pre-set constructs
- Focus on reliability & validity measures
- Limits the *nomological network* (Chronbach & Meehl, 1955)
- Better at measuring what IS NOT than what IS
Nomological Network
A pre-conceived assessment only targets a small portion of the nomological network

http://cmap.ihmc.us
Integrated Learning & Assessment

Learning
- Demonstrate what is known
  - Based on learning outcomes
  - Provide evidence of learning
  - Demonstrates relationships
  - Not dependent on seat-time – all learning can be used

Assessment
- Evaluate what is known
  - Evaluates learning outcomes
  - Evaluates evidence
  - Examines learning regardless of its origin
  - Maps to credentialing criteria
Learning Oriented & Evidence-Based

Uses Learning from all Sources

- Workplace Learning
- OER learning
- Experiential Learning
- Untethered, Self-authored Learning

Promotes Lifelong & Life-wide learning

- Self-assessment
- Evidence-based
- Goal-oriented
- Integrated

Assessing Learning from Anywhere, Anytime or Anyway
Where do we see learning-oriented evidence-based assessments already?

- Institutional and program accreditation
- Academic program reviews
- Faculty tenure process
- Some academic programs (e.g., teaching certification)
Evolving Assessments

- ePortfolios
- Prior Learning Assessment
- Micro-credentialing (e.g., Badges)
- Competency-based assessments

Learning Assessment
Common Student Assessment Issues

- Reflective thinking
- Engaging self-assessment
- Compare learning to criteria/standards
- Providing good evidence
- Knowing what is college/university level learning
- Articulating learning
Common Institutional Assessment Issues

- Recognize learning
  - Understanding criteria/standards/learning outcomes
  - Knowing learning when we see it & talk about it
  - Knowing what is good evidence
  - Knowing what is college/university level learning
  - Understanding how learning integrates with lifelong/life-wide learning
  - Different models of credentials

- Validate learning

- Credential learning
What is needed ..... 

- Definition of College/University Level Learning
- Recognize and assess college/university-level learning as primary assessment
- Assessment tool:
  - Captures learning as it develops
  - Can be used by all constituents
  - Integrative
  - Scalable/ Easy to Use
To develop a framework that assesses college/university-level learning gained through open educational resources

Year 1: Fall 2012 – 2013

- Academic Team:
  - Researched international policies and practices
  - Drafted framework

- Expert Panel
  - Reviewed framework and recommended revisions
Year 2 – Pilot Framework

- SUNY Empire State College students – Prior Learning Assessment ePortfolios
- Saylor OERs students:
  - Four OERs: 2 Humanities and 2 STEM
  - Additional OERs: 1 IT and 1 Social Science through UPCEA sub-grant
- Openly share framework and research
- Fall 2014 – seeking additional pilots
Principles

- Learning can be $>$, $<$, $=$ or $\neq$ concepts
- Recognize knowledge from any context/content
- Different Audiences: meet needs, be usable, be accessible
  - Students
  - Academics
- Captures learning story through a multiple-media, interactive platform - ePortfolios
Supporting Research

- Lumina’s Degree Qualifications Profile
- AAC&U’s LEAP Essential Outcomes & VALUE Rubrics
- 90 (+) countries’ policies, practices & qualifications frameworks
  - National, Regional, International, or Transnational
  - Organizational (Labor, Non-profit)
  - High school equivalencies, Vocational certifications, Graduate level learning

- Related research studies, policies, practices in outcomes assessment, competency-based learning, PLA and college/university-level learning.

- PLA practices across US and other countries
Clustered, themed, and defined learning constructs and descriptors
Students

- Needed a different approach
- Flipped model

Use Prompts, Worksheet & Examples of Evidence
Descriptors, Prompts & Evidence

- **Descriptors** characterize learning outcomes— they describe the learning that would be expected
  - Introductory Level
  - Advanced Level

- **Evidence** is a distinct behavior or product that can be directly observed and/or measured. Evidence is an indicator that the learning outcomes (descriptors) exists.
  - Introductory Level
  - Advanced Level

- **Descriptor Prompts** are questions that ask learners to address particular descriptors. Learners will pick to which prompts they respond.

- **Evidence Prompts** are questions and/or suggestions to guide learners to provide appropriate evidence of their learning.
Global Learning Qualifications Framework
Learning Oriented / Evidence-Based

Student Prompts  Evidence  Learning Descriptors
www.esc.edu/suny-real

How it works.....
Ethical Responsibility

Definition: Ethical responsibility is the ability to recognize, interpret and act upon multiple principles and values according to the standards within a given field and/or context.

Students explore various complexities, dynamics and issues surrounding behavior and ethical practices in order to understand best ways to make decisions and resolve issues at personal, group and societal levels.

Expand the headings to view the content.

- Questions to Consider About Ethical Responsibility
- Examples of Evidence of Ethical Responsibility
- Lower-level ethical responsibility ...
  - demonstrates an understanding of a range of principles, standards and values involved in making ethical decisions and the application of knowledge
  - engages in decision-making according to the standards of practice and ethics of the field
  - communicates situations, information and outcomes to others accurately and based on ethical standards of the field
  - reflects upon one’s own actions and implications in situations and takes responsibility for actions while working with others and/or solving problems

- Upper-level ethical responsibility ...
Sociocultural and Civic Engagement

**Definition:** Sociocultural and civic engagement expands viewpoints and provides awareness of and appreciation for diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Students collaborate and engage in reflective interactions with others and the public community, which mutually examines assumptions and expectations.

Expand the headings to view the content.

- **Questions to Consider About Sociocultural and Civic Engagement**
- **Examples of Evidence of Sociocultural and Civic Engagement**
- **Lower-level sociocultural and civic engagement ...**
- **Upper-level sociocultural and civic engagement ...**

  - gains new perspectives on one’s identity and biases based on experiences and interactions with others and the community
  - analyzes critical factors impacting cohesion while working with individuals and groups to facilitate effective and respectful interactions
  - predicts and determines the impact of one’s own behaviors and actions and their implications in different social/community groupings and audiences
  - provides leadership to encourage acceptance for and willingness to learn from others with diverse perspectives and backgrounds
  - provides leadership and encourages others to engage in respectful discourse and collaboration with individuals and in groups with varying viewpoints
  - analyzes political/non-political, public/private, and local/global policies, practices and decisions to draw conclusions or take action
Learning Engagement

**Definition:** Learning engagement is the ability to motivationally and behaviorally engage in an effective learning process.

Students take responsibility for choices, utilizing feedback, assessing personal behavior and analyzing appropriate responses to engage with learning opportunities and take action for improvement autonomously.

Expand the headings to view the content.

**Questions to Consider About Learning Engagement**

- In what ways do I figure out how I learn and use that information to improve my learning or performance in this topic?
- How have I grown in my learning over time? How do I continue to grow? Do I set goals to learn more about this topic? What are my goals?
- How do I use feedback from others to improve my knowledge or performance?
- What are different approaches or viewpoints in this area? Am I open to different approaches and viewpoints?
- How do I use different perspectives to improve my own understanding of the topic?
- In what ways have I become more creative in or more informed about my work?

**Examples of Evidence of Learning Engagement**

- Lower-level learning engagement...
- Upper-level learning engagement...
Integrated Knowledge

**Definition:** Integrated knowledge connects, relates and unifies concepts in various situations. Students integrate their knowledge by exploring, identifying, organizing and synthesizing ideas and information to assess experiences and solve problems.

Expand the headings to view the content.

- **Questions to Consider About Integrated Knowledge**
- **Examples of Evidence of Integrated Knowledge**
  - work samples
  - flowcharts, mind maps, concept maps
  - designs, drawing, schematics, blueprints, layouts
  - models, prototypes
  - multi-media examples: videos, images, audio
  - research analyses and reports
  - new ideas, innovations, inventions, creative products
  - applications in unique ways
  - grants
  - partnerships
  - awards
  - event planning
- **Lower-level integrated knowledge ...**
Moodle as informational space
PLA Exploration

What will you be doing in this activity?

Eventually, we want to get to what you know, but first we are going to start with what you have done.

Please explore the questions below, this may take a little time. You may need to consider your skills and experiences before we get to your learning as you may have additional learning that is considered college-level.

Let’s Begin!

Let’s begin with your work or volunteer experience, hobbies, and/or other experiences. If you have a resume or CV, you can pull from these documents, otherwise, you can make a list below.

Work Experience

The content of this box is given below. Please press the edit button on the right (after choosing “Edit this Page” and answer this question in the text box that appears.

1. Provide information about your current and/or prior work experience.

Typical Day

2. Describe what you do on a typical day. What activities do you do? What skills do you use? What problems do you solve?
Student Prompts are Embedded Describing Projects or Activities

For the following section, think about your topic. This process requires some reflection, and there is no right or wrong answer. You may want to return to some of the questions later. You may find that as you are exploring this topic, you will want to change its name or add or remove some of the associated topics. Keep notes on your thinking in the notes sections, because you might want to use these notes later.

For the area that you chose, complete each section below:

- **Explore situations** that you may have encountered.
- **Describe some of your learning** that you have acquired through these experiences.
- **Keep notes** as you go along to help you remember your ideas.

### PLA Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Projects and activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describing Projects or Activities</td>
<td>Describe a project/activity and how you engaged in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing a Challenge</td>
<td>Describe three things you have learned from this project/activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging Deeper</td>
<td>Challenges or Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Steps</td>
<td>What parts of this project/activity were challenging? What made it challenging?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other Notes

Use this box for any extra notes you may have.
Now that you've described some projects or activities connected with your topic, let's take a look at a challenge you've faced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLA Template</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Please describe a challenge you have faced. (Note the questions below will expand on this challenge.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing Projects or Activities</td>
<td>Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing a Challenge</td>
<td>Why was this a challenge?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging Deeper</td>
<td>Steps Taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Steps</td>
<td>What were some steps you took to address the challenge? How well did they work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Notes</td>
<td>How well did they work?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use this box for any extra notes you may have.

| The Evidence | What types of evidence can you provide to demonstrate your learning? |
In this section, we will look at some ways that you have taken what you learned in this area and applied it to new situations. Don't feel compelled to complete all sections—blanks are okay and you can always return to a section as you come up with ideas.

**PLA Template**

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<tr>
<td>Next Steps</td>
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</table>

**Other Notes**

Use this box for any extra notes you may have.

**Interests**

What are some things that interest you in this area?

**Apply what you have learned**

Describe how you have applied or would apply your learning in this area to other/new situations.

**New Ideas**

What are some new ideas that you have had or tried in this area.

**Questions to Explore**

What are some of the questions you would like to explore more?

**Demonstrate Learning**

What types of evidence can you provide to demonstrate your learning?
Finding a Topic for PLA

This workbook will help you identify a topic for having your learning assessed for college-level credit.

In this activity, you will complete sections about your learning. Each section has prompts to guide you and help you document your learning. You are encouraged to share your answers with a mentor or advisor before formally submitting this application.

Eventually, we want to get to what you know, but first we are going to start with what you have done.

Please explore the questions below, this may take a little time. You may need to consider your skills and experiences before we get to your learning as you may have additional learning that is considered college-level.

Let's begin with your work or volunteer experience, hobbies, and/or other experiences. If you have a resume or CV, you can pull from these documents; otherwise, you can make a list below.

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1. Provide information about your current and/or prior work experience.

   [Text box]

Typical Day

2. Describe what you do on a typical day. What activities do you do? What skills do you use? What problems do you solve?
Your GLQF Learning Assessment Workbook

The Global Learning Qualifications Framework (GLQF)

Welcome

Now that you've described some projects or activities connected with your topic, let's take a look at a challenge you've faced. You may want to refer back to Describing Projects/Activities and discuss a challenge you described.

Description

Please describe a challenge you have faced. (Note the questions below will expand on this challenge.)

Why?

Why was this a challenge?

Additional Questions

Here are some additional questions that can help you add more information or evidence to your
What is a problem I solved?

What did I know about the situation?

Specialized Knowledge

How did I use the information?

Applied Knowledge

How did I go about solving the problem?

Integrated Knowledge

How did I share the results?

Communication

What information did I collect to solve the problem?

Information Literacy

What resources did I use?

What goals did I have to solve the problem?

Self-Regulated Learning

Who were impacted by the situation? How did I work with others to solve the problem?

Socio-Cultural Engagement

What were some issue that I had to consider?

Ethical Responsibility
Example – Information Literacy

Prompts:

- What resources did I use to solve a problem?
- What information did I collect to solve the problem?
Example – Information Literacy

Evidence:

- Has examples of resources
  - Internet sites
  - Blogs/Discussions
  - People: Peers/Supervisors/Experts
  - Books/written materials

- Has examples of research projects
  - Problem to solve or question to answer
  - Strategy plan to conduct research
  - Research process (e.g., survey, interview, reading)
  - Types of data collected
  - Analysis of data
  - Application of results
Example – Information Literacy

Descriptors:

增至 Lower Level:
增至 Researched information and relevant data appropriate to solve problems or answer questions
增至 Collects, aggregates and retrieves information from a wide range of resources to reflect learning goals or address problems

增至 Upper Level:
增至 Evaluates information sources for validity, accuracy, bias and authorial strength
增至 Collaborates in gathering, developing and sharing information to solve problems
Ways GLQF is Unique

- Comprehensive study with global perspective
- Student and Academic Side
- Prompts student through process
- Open ePortfolio development
- Student choose where to have the ePortfolio assessed, SUNY REAL is one option
- Adaptable for multi-use
  - Different institutions
  - Can modify for different purposes
Next Steps

- Using the GLQF at your institution
- Proof of Concept projects
Questions?
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