Jeanine S.M. Lee

Report of the Needs Assessment: LaFortune University

Although the fictional LaFortune University is based on the administration, faculty structure and internal and external documentation of Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, all scenarios and personas in this report are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons or actual events is purely coincidental.

BACKGROUND

PROBLEM

LaFortune University's new faculty – in particular, new lecturers and clinical professors not on the tenure track – is having trouble transitioning to university teaching. The university has had more turnover than they would like among these non-tenured faculty because the recently hired faculty feel like they are not prepared for the job. Some of these new faculty have a background of teaching in continuing education and corporate training, but almost none have prior experience in university teaching. In response, the Director of the Centre for Faculty Development has decided to develop a special year-long orientation program consisting of a series of brief, 30-minute online lessons. Faculty members who complete the program receive a certificate of completion – something that could be seen in positive light during their performance evaluation. As a faculty development specialist with the centre, I have been commissioned with designing and developing one of these lessons: "Writing essay tests."

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Documentation: I researched current teaching protocol on conducting writing essay tests, from the university library and various department literature currently available to faculty. I will note appropriate citations at various points in this report. Here are the main sources I found:

- C.M. Reiner (2002) wrote a workbook for educators, Preparing Effective Essay Questions.
- Cspace is Concordia University's intranet – "a one-stop-shop for internal documents, knowledge sharing and opportunities for community-building" for faculty and staff members. *(It is username / password locked – Ideally, I would have access to this.)*
- Concordia's Centre for Teaching and Learning has a related link to York University's Educational Developer's Cookbook which includes links to toolkits and resources for new faculty.
- Duquesne University's Strengths and Dangers of Essay Questions for Exams is a university resource for teaching and learning resources. Other universities I cite include: Ryerson University and the University of North Carolina.

Interviews: Given additional time and resources, I would speak with current faculty about their on-the-job experience. I would approach the Centre for Teaching and Learning for possible interviewees – one or two per department or faculty.

Survey: To cast a wider net, and for deeper analysis, I would conduct a Level 1 online survey with non-tenured faculty hired in the past 5 years. I would use the results to compare with current university needs, to ensure both match adequately.

RESULTS

RESTATE THE REQUEST

"The Centre for Faculty Development has decided to prepare training to support new faculty with the transition to university teaching…The university has had more turnover than they would like in these positions because the faculty feel like they are not prepared for the job. As part of a larger effort to orient new faculty, the Director of the Centre has decided to develop a special year-long orientation program. The heart of it is a series of brief, 30-minute online lessons that faculty take throughout the year." I have been commissioned by the centre director to design and develop one of these online lessons on conducting writing essay tests.

BUSINESS NEED

The business need underlying the request is to contain expenses incurred with high turnover of non-tenure track, full-time faculty who feel they are not prepared to teach at the university.

PERFORMANCE PROBLEM

In the Current Scenario

Kim is a new lecturer at the Journalism Department at LaFortune University. She will be teaching four courses in the department — Editing and Page Design, Visual Journalism, History of Journalism and Photojournalism. Along with teaching full-time, she is also expected to sit in on at least one committee in the university. Kim is still contributing as a part-time editor at The Gazette and is a recognized journalist in the Art and Design community. While she has spoken at conferences and given boardroom presentations, this is her first time teaching university courses.

During faculty orientation, Kim is guided towards some resources available to new faculty. She takes one of the university workshops on creating a course syllabus — she thinks she'll figure out the rest on her own. The courses Kim are teaching are mostly production-type courses involving lab time producing layout and visual design work. However, she wants to also incorporate more typical methods of testing in evaluating her students' work. She decides she

wants to give them essay tests since this will assess higher-level learning. After she gets back the results of the first essay exam, she is confronted with a variety of papers – but only 2 out of her 15 students handed in adequately well-written answers. Half of them didn't even answer her question correctly. A couple of them wrote too long. One didn't show up for class. She knows it's not representative of their learning – she hopes. Have her students not learned a thing? Kim knows an essay test is the right way to assess her students. Maybe it's how she's conducting the exam? Perhaps it's how she's phrasing the questions? Kim wonders if she can't even give an essay test, maybe she's not cut out for teaching.

GAP BETWEEN IDEAL AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE

In the Ideal Scenario

Kim is a new lecturer at the Journalism Department at LaFortune University. She will be teaching four courses in the department — Editing and Page Design, Visual Journalism, History of Journalism and Photojournalism. Along with teaching full-time, she is also expected to sit in on at least one committee in the university. Kim is still contributing as a part-time editor at The Gazette and is a recognized journalist in the Art and Design community. While she has spoken at conferences and given boardroom presentations, this is her first time teaching university courses.

During faculty orientation, Kim is guided towards some resources available to new faculty. She takes one of the university workshops on creating a course syllabus. She also turns to a senior professor in the department for advice on handling assessments and student evaluations. The courses Kim are teaching are mostly production-type courses involving lab time producing layout and visual design work. She feels very comfortable assessing their work in lab-work and end-of-term projects. However, Kim wants to also incorporate more typical methods of testing in evaluating her students' work. She decides to give them essay tests since this will assess higher-level learning.

To prepare to give these essay tests, Kim examines the learning objectives of each course, and gives herself ample time to construct clear essay questions with concise language. She wants to judge her students' ability to think as well as write. After she gets back the results of the first essay test, she is confronted with a variety of papers – and is happy to see 12 of the 15 students have handed in well-written and concise answers. A couple of them wrote too long. One didn't show up for class. But they are representative of their knowledge of the subject matter of the courses – they show proper learning has occurred. Kim now knows an essay test is the right way to assess her students since it complements her other methods of assessments. She feels confident she made the right career choice in moving to higher education.

Tasks in current performance

In the Current Scenario, the newest lecturer in the Journalism Department, Patricia Kim, doesn't know enough about pedagogy to write proper essay questions. She knows essay tests are good means to assess higher-level learning. However, she has never asked for help and she doesn't know enough about determining learning objectives or about writing precise and clear essay questions.

Main and Supporting Tasks

- Decide to conduct essay tests
  - Determine the need to assess high-level learning
  - State a preference to include essay tests among other means of evaluation
- Contrast own knowledge in giving essay tests with actual ability to give essay test
  - Determine there is not enough time to learn about giving essay tests
  - Choose not to ask for help
  - Choose to proceed with giving the essay test
- Write essay questions
  - Choose questions for each course
  - Determine the number of essay questions per exam
  - Choose to phrase the questions in broad terms

Tasks in ideal performance

End result

How to write an essay test

Main and Supporting Tasks

- Define what is an essay test
  - Explain that an essay test is one of two types of written evaluations: the Objective Evaluation and the Open Evaluation
    - Explain Objective Evaluation as requiring students to give finite answers
      - Describe multiple choice questions as a type of objective evaluation
      - Describe drag-and-drop questions as a type of objective evaluation
      - Describe true/false questions as a type of evaluation
      - Describe matching choices as a type of evaluation
      - Explain Objective Evaluation is used to evaluate the students' performance in remembering and comprehending
    - Explain Open Evaluation as requiring students to give free-form responses
      - Describe essay tests as a type of open evaluation
      - Describe short-answer or fill-in-the blank questions as a type of open evaluation
      - Describe skill demonstrations as a type of open evaluation

        - Explain Open Evaluation is used to evaluate the students' performance in applying, analyzing, evaluation and creating
- Define an essay test with having specific criteria
    - Explain that an essay test question requires students to compose their response
    - Explain that an essay test question requires students to respond with more than one sentence
    - Explain that an essay test question requires students to demonstrate systematic thinking that is methodical and structured
    - Explain that an essay test question requires students to demonstrate critical thinking
- Describe advantages and disadvantages of an essay test
    - Describe advantages of an essay test
        - Explain that essay tests assess critical thinking
            - Explain that critical thinking can be demonstrated by an objective analysis of facts to form judgment
            - Explain that critical thinking is self-directed
        - Explain that essay tests assess writing ability as means of communicating complex thought using proper grammar, spelling and punctuation.
    - Describe disadvantages of an essay test
        - Explain that essay tests are limited in range of content
            - Explain that lecturers or professors can only give a few essay questions per evaluation
            - Explain the time it takes for students to respond to an essay test question is longer than the time it takes to answer objective tests
            - Explain that objective tests will cover more subject matter in the same amount of evaluation time
        - Explain essay tests are difficult to write, depending on lecturer or professor's content expertise
        - Explain essay tests are time consuming to grade, depending on lecturer or professor's content expertise

❖ Determine when an essay test should be used
- Determine if students' understanding of course content and ability to reason with their knowledge of said content can only be assessed with an essay test requiring composition of response rather than an objective test requiring selection (Reiner et al., 2002)
    - Determine the intended learning outcome for students being evaluated
    - Determine the action verb based on the intended learning outcome
    - Determine if the action verb to be used is one of the "Interpretation Words" often used in essay questions (University of North Carolina, n.d.)
        - Define "action verbs" using Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model (Duquesne University, n.d.)

- Explain Bloom's Taxonomy is used as a teaching tool in assessment and evaluative questions in class, assignments and texts to ensure all orders of thinking are exercised in students' learning
- Explain that according to Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing (see diagram in Appendix), action verbs under certain domain illustrate the kinds of activities a test item might assess.
- Explain action verbs listed under "Synthesizing" and "Evaluating" in Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model requires evaluation best tested using essay questions

▪ Define "Interpretation Words" as the action verbs categorized under Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model's "Synthesizing" and "Evaluating" domains (University of North Carolina, n.d. & Duquesne University, n.d.)
  - Differentiate "Interpretation Words" from "Information Words" and "Relation words" (University of North Carolina, n.d.)
    - Define "Information Words" as words that require students to demonstrate what they know about a subject
      - Recognize that information words include these words: define, summarize, explain and illustrate
      - Determine that information words are used to evaluate the student's "Knowing" and "Comprehending" performance according to Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model (Duquesne University, n.d.)
      - Determine that information words are best used in objective tests that require selection, rather than composition
    - Define "Relation Words" as words that require students to demonstrate how things are connected
      - Recognize that relation words include these words: compare, contrast, apply and relate
      - Determine that relation words are used to evaluate the student's "Applying" and "Analyzing" performance according to Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model (Duquesne University, n.d.)
      - Determine that relation words can be used in either objective tests that require selection or essay tests that require composition
    - Define "Interpretation Words" as words that require students to defend their ideas about the subject.
      - Determine that interpretation words are used to evaluate student's "Synthesizing" and "Evaluating" performance under Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model (Duquesne University, n.d.)
      - Determine that interpretation words are best used in essay tests that require composition

    - List the Interpretation Words often used in an essay test: criticize, evaluate, support, compare, decide, discriminate, recommend, assess, defend, estimate, critique, debate, justify, persuade, design, compose, combine, formulate, invent, construct, develop, integrate, modify, adapt, devise, justify, propose, structure, support
- Compare lecturer or professor's skill in writing objective tests with writing essay tests
  - Explain difficulty in writing objective tests
  - Explain difficulty in writing essay tests
- Consider lecturer or professor's resources and grading time
  - Determine if lecturer or professor has a teacher's assistant to help with grading the essay tests
  - Determine if lecturer or professor has the time to grade the essay tests themselves

❖ Write an effective essay test question

- Define the intended learning outcome to be assessed in the essay test
  - Define "intended learning outcome" as the "observable knowledge or skills that you expect students to be able to demonstrate as a result of their work in the unit" or the student's performance or achievement at the end of the course. (Ryerson University, n.d.)
  - State the intended learning outcome to be assessed in the essay test
- Determine that an effective essay test question provides a well-defined task for students (Reiner et al., 2002)
  - Define a "task" as consisting both an action verb and an object of the verb
  - Limit the scope of the task to avoid student responses containing ideas unrelated to the essay test question
  - Study this example:
    Task: Evaluate *(action verb)* the impact of the postal strike on home delivery services in December *(object of the verb)*
- Determine that an effective essay test question includes a problem situation – a context in which students can demonstrate their performance (Reiner et al., 2002)
  - Define "problem situation" as a scenario that presents the students with an unresolved matter or an uncertain situation
  - Determine that the task and the problem are key elements of the essay test question
  - Study this example:
    Intended Learning Outcome: Evaluate the impact of a strike by a public service
    Problem: A postal strike will occur in the month before Christmas, affecting the major cities as well as rural communities of Quebec. Many northern communities are dependent on home delivery services operated by their local postal service.

Essay Test Question: Evaluate the impact of the postal strike on the northern Quebec communities in December.

- Create an effective essay test question presenting a reasonable and well-defined task in combination with a problem situation (Reiner et al., 2002)
  - Define "reasonable task" as a task that students could reasonably accomplish under the allotted time
  - Choose to write tasks as either a statement or a question
  - Determine to write short, well-defined essay test questions
  - Specify the point value for the essay test question, in relation with the entire evaluation
  - Specify the approximate time limit for each essay test, in relation with the time allotment for the entire evaluation
- Create criteria for grading
  - Write a model answer
  - Determine a rubric, if necessary
- Review the essay test questions, by asking a peer to review them

Tasks are based on works by various authors. (Reiner et al., 2002; Duquesne University, n.d.; Ryerson University, n.d.; University of North Carolina, n.d.).

TARGET LEARNERS

General Demographics

New faculty at LaFortune University are diverse in ethnic background and cultural experience. However, our learners – all new lecturers and clinical professors – share the following characteristics in general:

- Their median age is between 49 to 52
- There are proportionately slightly more women to men: 55% women vs. 45% men
- Many hold PhD degrees and almost all have at least a Master's degree or equivalent
- A few conduct some research work in their fields
- Half have an industry background
- Some have taught in continuing education and corporate training
- None have prior experience in university teaching

THREE LEARNER PERSONAS

Low maintenance learner:

Salman, 65, is a new non-tenured professor at the Economics Department at LaFortune University. He's a father of 3 children. His wife works at the CHUM as a HR administrator. He holds a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Toronto and a PhD on

Macroeconomics from Cornell University in New York. For the past 15 years, he has worked at the Royal Bank of Canada in various positions, most recently as Director - Economic and Financial Analysis. His articles have appeared in several peer-review publications. When the bank recently restructured his department, Salman decided it was time for a change and joined LaFortune's Economics Department. Salman isn't interested in pursuing a tenure track. His career at the university is merely a stepping stone. He has been hired to teach full-time but he still hopes to have time to pursue a consultancy business on the side. He feels very confident in his teaching abilities to cover the subject matter. In fact, he has been hired because of his recent career and many contacts within the banking industry, as well as his reputation within the industry. He was in the same orientation workshop as Kim, on creating curriculum syllabi, but he wasn't really paying much attention. He was busy writing notes for his next paper on post-Brexit financial stability in Europe. When the workshop instructor turns to evaluations, Salman looks up for a few minutes and jots down in his pad – "Create essay tests for students." Like Kim, he's just got no time.

Medium maintenance learner:

Kim, 48, is the lecturer at the Journalism Department at LaFortune University. She's a single mother with a 12-year-old son in LaurenHill Academy in St. Laurent. She received her bachelor's degree at Carleton University in Journalism and has a Master's degree in Visual Arts at Concordia University in Montreal. Kim has worked as designer and editor at both the Ottawa Citizen as well as The Gazette, bouncing between Ottawa and Montreal. She has decided to settle in Montreal for the foreseeable future since she lost her husband to cancer a couple of years ago, and she wants to maintain a stable home-life for her son. Plus, she always loved Montreal! Along with teaching full-time as an associate professor at LaFortune University, Kim is still contributing as a part-time editor at The Gazette and is a recognized journalist in the Art and Design community in Canada. She attends and has spoken at various conferences (SIGGRAPH and SXSW most recently). However, this is her first time teaching university courses. Kim knows her subject matter inside and out and has always had the ability to "pick things up on the job" and works quickly on deadline. But, right now, her time is limited. She attended an orientation workshop for new faculty on building curriculum syllabi. She thinks she'll be okay with giving tests and handling teacher-student feedback. She built course projects and papers in each of her courses. However, she knows she wants to incorporate a written test somewhere towards the end of the term – just to evaluate her students' performance or learning. However, she barely has time to teach her own courses, never mind attend any additional workshops of courses being offered to new faculty. She decides she'll write those evaluation tests on her own.

High maintenance learner:

Renata, 40, is the newest member of the Physics Department at LaFortune University. A recent PhD graduate from Stanford University, California, she is now keen to begin an academic career. Renata is okay with staying non-tenure and on a limited-term contract for the moment, since mother has advanced Alzheimer's and requires some care. Her research work and full-time

commitments in the near-future will have to wait. Like Kim and Salman, Renata also has a full load of courses to teach and will be expected to commit to sitting on a university committee at some point. Similarly, she's not had any teaching experience aside from the occasional Teaching Assistant position. She takes the orientation workshop on creating curriculum syllabi. She sits in front and pays careful attention. In all her many courses during her academic career, she's taken a multitude of tests and always wondered who wrote them! Sometimes, they seemed tedious and required mere regurgitation of information. Renata has already been doing some research on her own - about evaluations and writing objective and open tests. She has already noted that a combination of both is probably good for her courses. She's paying special attention to Essay Tests since she understands they are important to assessing her students' performance. When the workshop turns to evaluations, Renata interrupts the instructor a couple of times, to add her two cents, and to show him she's a keen learner. She also makes the instructor repeat himself a couple of times so she can write down all the details, even though he's told her there will be a take-away document on the way out. She makes note of the workshop coordinator's name and contact number. She's still got some questions about conducting evaluations – like an Essay Test!

Target learners and Personas are based on articles from various authors. (Chiose, S., 2017, November 12; Porac, C, n.d.; Samson, N. and Shen, A., 2018, March 20).

CONSTRAINTS IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- **Physical:** The project is a 30-minute online lesson teaching new faculty on "How to Write Essay Tests." The lesson will be offered online so learners will access it in a variety of environments – in their office, at home, or in transit perhaps. There is no guarantee it will be distraction free. It will have to be accessible on various platforms and browsers.
- **Cognitive (intellectual):** The 30-minute lesson plan will have to be quick and concise, addressing the main points about writing essay tests, regardless of subject matter.
- **Affective (emotional):** New faculty come from different walks of life, at various stages of their careers. New faculty may be new to pedagogy and to academia – but they are often professionals who have had years of work experience. There will be resistance from some who may think being taught how to write tests is a rudimentary exercise. Some learners who've held important positions in industry may be reluctant to take advice or training as well. Some resistance from learners:
    - Maybe I don't need to give essay tests in my courses
    - Essay tests are easy to write
    - I don't need to be taught how to write an essay test
    - I don't have the time for such a lesson

CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROJECT AND PRODUCT:

The project is a 30-minute online lesson teaching new faculty on "How to Write Essay Tests." Known product constraints:

- **Editorial guidelines:** Templates and style guides will have to adhere to style consistent with LaFortune University, and the Centre for Faculty Development.
- **Authoring guidelines:** It will be necessary to use an eLearning authoring software like Adobe Captivate or Articulate Storyline. The lessons may have to be SCORM-compliant and held in a Learning Management Software either onsite in the university or elsewhere, and then made available to learners through a 3rd party company.
- **Viewing guidelines:** The lessons will have to accessible on all platforms (PC and Mac laptops, tablets, mobile devices) and browsers (Chrome, Safari). Lessons should be in the most universally accepted MP4 format, and captioned.

Known project constraints:

- **Drop-dead deadline:** The entire project has to be delivered by December 11, 5pm.
- **Not-to-exceed budget:** None
- **Must-include staff:** Instructional Designer, SME

REQUIREMENTS

BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

The business objective is to contain expenses at LaFortune University, specifically by addressing the high turnover rate of non-tenured, full-time faculty. While the university provides training and orientation to its tenured-track faculty, new lecturers and clinical professors have not had similar support and have, in the past, felt unprepared for the job. This series of 30-minute online lessons – which this course, "How to Write Essay Tests," is part of – will address this business need.

CONTENT OBJECTIVES

Overall course objective is to give non-tenured, new lecturers and clinical professors a lesson in Writing Essay Tests. It is important to evaluate higher-learning among students – achieving success for them, and for the course objectives of individual courses in LaFortune University. Therefore, it is vital new faculty know how to conduct these tests successfully.

Main and Supporting Objectives

Note: unless stated otherwise, learners must perform all tasks with 100 percent accuracy, and without assistance

- Define what is an essay test
  - Explain that an essay test is one of two types of written evaluations: the Objective Evaluation and the Open Evaluation
    - Explain Objective Evaluation as requiring students to give finite answers
      - Describe multiple choice questions as a type of objective evaluation
      - Describe drag-and-drop questions as a type of objective evaluation
      - Describe true/false questions as a type of evaluation
      - Describe matching choices as a type of evaluation
      - Explain Objective Evaluation is used to evaluate the students' performance in remembering and comprehending
    - Explain Open Evaluation as requiring students to give free-form responses
      - Describe essay tests as a type of open evaluation
      - Describe short-answer or fill-in-the blank questions as a type of open evaluation
      - Describe skill demonstrations as a type of open evaluation
      - Explain Open Evaluation is used to evaluate the students' performance in applying, analyzing, evaluation and creating
  - Define an essay test with having specific criteria
    - Explain that an essay test question requires students to compose their response
    - Explain that an essay test question requires students to respond with more than one sentence
    - Explain that an essay test question requires students to demonstrate systematic thinking that is methodical and structured
    - Explain that an essay test question requires students to demonstrate critical thinking
  - Describe advantages and disadvantages of an essay test
    - Describe advantages of an essay test
      - Explain that essay tests assess critical thinking
        - Explain that critical thinking can be demonstrated by an objective analysis of facts to form judgment
        - Explain that critical thinking is self-directed
      - Explain that essay tests assess writing ability as means of communicating complex thought using proper grammar, spelling and punctuation.
    - Describe disadvantages of an essay test
      - Explain that essay tests are limited in range of content
        - Explain that lecturers or professors can only give a few essay questions per evaluation

        - Explain the time it takes for students to respond to an essay test question is longer than the time it takes to answer objective tests
        - Explain that objective tests will cover more subject matter in the same amount of evaluation time
    - Explain essay tests are difficult to write, depending on lecturer or professor's content expertise
    - Explain essay tests are time consuming to grade, depending on lecturer or professor's content expertise

❖ Determine when an essay test should be used
- Determine if students' understanding of course content and ability to reason with their knowledge of said content can only be assessed with an essay test requiring composition of response rather than an objective test requiring selection (Reiner et al., 2002)
    - Determine the intended learning outcome for students being evaluated
    - Determine the action verb based on the intended learning outcome
    - Determine if the action verb to be used is one of the "Interpretation Words" often used in essay questions (University of North Carolina, n.d.)
        - Define "action verbs" using Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model (Duquesne University, n.d.)
            - Explain Bloom's Taxonomy is used as a teaching tool in assessment and evaluative questions in class, assignments and texts to ensure all orders of thinking are exercised in students' learning
            - Explain that according to Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing (see diagram in Appendix), action verbs under certain domain illustrate the kinds of activities a test item might assess.
            - Explain action verbs listed under "Synthesizing" and "Evaluating" in Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model requires evaluation best tested using essay questions
        - Define "Interpretation Words" as the action verbs categorized under Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model's "Synthesizing" and "Evaluating" domains (University of North Carolina, n.d. & Duquesne University, n.d.)
            - Differentiate "Interpretation Words" from "Information Words" and "Relation words" (University of North Carolina, n.d.)
                - Define "Information Words" as words that require students to demonstrate what they know about a subject
                    - Recognize that information words include these words: define, summarize, explain and illustrate
                    - Determine that information words are used to evaluate the student's "Knowing" and "Comprehending" performance

according to Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model (Duquesne University, n.d.)
    - Determine that information words are best used in objective tests that require selection, rather than composition
- Define "Relation Words" as words that require students to demonstrate how things are connected
    - Recognize that relation words include these words: compare, contrast, apply and relate
    - Determine that relation words are used to evaluate the student's "Applying" and "Analyzing" performance according to Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model (Duquesne University, n.d.)
    - Determine that relation words can be used in either objective tests that require selection or essay tests that require composition
- Define "Interpretation Words" as words that require students to defend their ideas about the subject.
    - Determine that interpretation words are used to evaluate student's "Synthesizing" and "Evaluating" performance under Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model (Duquesne University, n.d.)
    - Determine that interpretation words are best used in essay tests that require composition
    - List the Interpretation Words often used in an essay test: criticize, evaluate, support, compare, decide, discriminate, recommend, assess, defend, estimate, critique, debate, justify, persuade, design, compose, combine, formulate, invent, construct, develop, integrate, modify, adapt, devise, justify, propose, structure, support

- Compare lecturer or professor's skill in writing objective tests with writing essay tests
    - Explain difficulty in writing objective tests
    - Explain difficulty in writing essay tests
- Consider lecturer or professor's resources and grading time
    - Determine if lecturer or professor has a teacher's assistant to help with grading the essay tests
    - Determine if lecturer or professor has the time to grade the essay tests themselves

❖ Write an effective essay test question
- Define the intended learning outcome to be assessed in the essay test
    - Define "intended learning outcome" as the "observable knowledge or skills that you expect students to be able to demonstrate as a result of their work in the unit" or the student's performance or achievement at the end of the course. (Ryerson University, n.d.)

    - State the intended learning outcome to be assessed in the essay test
- Determine that an effective essay test question provides a well-defined task for students (Reiner et al., 2002)
    - Define a "task" as consisting both an action verb and an object of the verb
    - Limit the scope of the task to avoid student responses containing ideas unrelated to the essay test question
    - Study this example:
      Task: Evaluate *(action verb)* the impact of the postal strike on home delivery services in December *(object of the verb)*
- Determine that an effective essay test question includes a problem situation – a context in which students can demonstrate their performance (Reiner et al., 2002)
    - Define "problem situation" as a scenario that presents the students with an unresolved matter or an uncertain situation
    - Determine that the task and the problem are key elements of the essay test question
    - Study this example:
      Intended Learning Outcome: Evaluate the impact of a strike by a public service
      Problem: A postal strike will occur in the month before Christmas, affecting the major cities as well as rural communities of Quebec. Many northern communities are dependent on home delivery services operated by their local postal service.
      Essay Test Question: Evaluate the impact of the postal strike on the northern Quebec communities in December.
- Create an effective essay test question presenting a reasonable and well-defined task in combination with a problem situation (Reiner et al., 2002)
    - Define "reasonable task" as a task that students could reasonably accomplish under the allotted time
    - Choose to write tasks as either a statement or a question
    - Determine to write short, well-defined essay test questions
    - Specify the point value for the essay test question, in relation with the entire evaluation
    - Specify the approximate time limit for each essay test, in relation with the time allotment for the entire evaluation
- Create criteria for grading
    - Write a model answer
    - Determine a rubric, if necessary
- Review the essay test questions, by asking a peer to review them

Objectives are based on works by various authors. (Reiner et al., 2002; Duquesne University, n.d.; Ryerson University, n.d.; University of North Carolina, n.d.).

LEVEL 1 EVALUATION

Sample Satisfaction Survey based on Kirkpatrick-Katzell Level 1:

Your Opinions, Please

1. In a word, how would you describe this course? _____

2. By circling a number, how would you describe this course?

1	2	3	4	5
Abysmal		Average		Outstanding

3. How effectively could you write an essay test before the course?
(Circle the number that corresponds with your answer)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Some		A lot

And after this course?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Some		A lot

4. How likely are you to use some or all of the skills taught in this course in your evaluating your students?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Some		A lot

5. The best part of the course was: _____

_____

6. The one thing that could improve this course is: _____

_____

_____

Kirkpatrick-Katzell Level 1 survey adapted from Carliner (2003).

LEVEL 2 EVALUATION

Learners will be evaluated on whether or not they meet the objectives through a quiz.

First Main Objective: Define what is an essay test

1) Which of the following statements about objective and open evaluations is correct?

A) An objective evaluation requires the student give a biased response while the open evaluation requires an unbiased response

B) An open evaluation is used expressly to evaluate the student's memory

C) Multiple-choice questions are a type of objective evaluation while an essay test is a type of open evaluation

D) An objective evaluation is used to evaluate the student's performance in analyzing

Answer:

A) Not correct. The term "objective" does not refer to "unbiased" in this context. An objective evaluation requires the student to give a finite answer.

B) Not correct. An open evaluation is used to evaluate the student's performance in applying, analyzing, evaluation and creating.

C) Correct. Multiple-choice questions are a type of objective evaluation while an essay test is a type of open evaluation.

D) Not correct. This is not the best way of evaluating performance in analyzing. An objective evaluation is used to evaluate the student's performance in remembering and comprehending.

2) Which of the following criteria does not define an essay test?

A) An essay test question requires students to compose their response

B) An essay test question requires students to respond with only one sentence

C) An essay question requires students to demonstrate systematic thinking

D) An essay question requires students to analyze facts and form judgment

Answer:

A) Not correct. An essay test question requires students to compose their response. This is one criteria that defines an essay test.

B) Correct. An essay test question requires students to respond with more than one sentence. This is one criteria that does not define an essay test.

C) Not correct. An essay question requires students to demonstrate systematic thinking, thinking that is methodical and structured. This is one criteria that defines an essay test.

D) Not correct. An essay question requires students to analyze facts and form judgment, which demonstrates critical thinking. This is one criteria that defines an essay test.

3) Which following statements are advantages or disadvantages of an essay test?

A) An essay test assesses the student's critical thinking	Advantage / Disadvantage
B) It takes students longer to respond to essay tests than quizzes	Advantage / Disadvantage
C) Communicating complex thought can be evaluated in essay tests	Advantage / Disadvantage
D) Essay tests have to be read carefully and assessed before grading	Advantage / Disadvantage

Answer:

A) Advantage. The fact that an essay test assesses the student's critical thinking and writing ability is one of the main reasons an evaluator may choose to give essay tests.

B) Disadvantage. Objective evaluations like quizzes can be answered quickly and can cover a range of content, while open evaluations require composition of a structured response and takes more time. In that sense, essay tests are limited in range of content.

C) Advantage. An essay test assesses writing ability as means of communicating complex thought using proper grammar, spelling and punctuation.

D) Disadvantage. Essay tests are time consuming to grade.

Second Main Objective: Determine when an essay test should be used

1) What is the intended learning outcome? (Circle all correct answers)

A) An observable knowledge or skills that you expect students to be able to demonstrate as a result of their work in the unit

B) The final step in writing essay tests

C) It is the result of using Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model

D) Student's performance or achievement at the end of the course

Answer:

A) Correct. Intended learning outcome refers to "an observable knowledge or skills that you expect students to be able to demonstrate as a result of their work in the unit."

B) Not correct. Writing the intended learning outcome is one of the first steps in writing essay tests.

C) Not correct. Bloom's Taxonomy is used as a teaching tool in assessment and evaluative questions in class, assignments and texts to ensure all orders of thinking are exercised in students' learning.

D) Correct. Intended learning outcome refers to the student's performance or achievement at the end of the course.

2) Match the phrases on the left with the appropriate phrases on the right.

A) Interpretation words…	…are used to evaluate "Applying" and "Analyzing"
B) Relation words…	…require students to demonstrate what they know about a subject
C) Action verbs…	… require students to defend their ideas about the subject
D) Information words…	…should also be interpretation words for them to be used in essay tests

Answer:

A) Interpretation words require students to defend their ideas about the subject.

B) Relation words are used to evaluate "Applying" and "Analyzing."

C) Action verbs should also be interpretation words for them to be used in essay tests.

D) Information words require students to demonstrate what they know about a subject.

3) Match the following action verbs on the left with the appropriate evaluation choice on the right.

A) Select, List, Locate, Classify	Assess using essay test
B) Criticize, Develop, Justify	Assess using open or objective test
C) Debate, Compose, Persuade	Assess using essay test
D) Prioritize, Calculate, Modify	Assess "knowing" & "comprehending"

Answer:

A) Assess "knowing" & "comprehending." Select, List, Locate, Classify are information words that are used to evaluate the student's "knowing" and "comprehending" performance according to Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model.

B) Assess using essay test. Criticize, Develop, Justify are interpretation words or action verbs often used in an essay test.

C) Assess using essay test. Debate, Compose, Persuade are also interpretation words or action verbs often used in an essay test.

D) Assess using open or objective test. Prioritize, Calculate, Modify are relation words that are used to evaluate the student's "Applying" and "Analyzing" performance according to Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing model. Relation words can be used in either objective tests that require selection or essay tests that require composition.

Third Main Objective: Write an effective essay test question

1) Re-order the following steps to writing effective essay test question.

A) Create a problem situation

B) Create criteria for grading

C) Define the intended learning outcome

D) Define a well-defined task in the form of a test question

Answer:

C) Define the intended learning outcome

A) Create a problem situation

D) Define a well-defined task in the form of a test question

B) Create criteria for grading

2) How do you write a well-defined task? (Circle all answers that apply)

A) Write in imprecise language referring to an obscure detail you once mentioned in a class earlier in the semester.

B) Write a task consisting of both an action verb and an object of the verb

C) You can put the intended learning outcome to the side for this exercise

D) Limit the scope of the task to avoid student responses containing ideas unrelated to the essay test question

Answer:

A) Not correct. Always write tasks as clearly and concisely as possible.

B) Correct. Write a task consisting of both an action verb and an object of the verb.

C) Not correct. Always keep the intended learning outcome in mind when writing the task and the essay test.

B) Correct. Limit the scope of the task to avoid student responses containing ideas unrelated to the essay test question.

3) Except for the Intended Learning Outcome, there are many things wrong with the following essay test question. Say what it may be for the Problem Situation and the Essay Test Question, and include a sentence or two on how you will improve them.

Intended Learning Outcome: Evaluate the impact of a strike by a public service

Problem: Your regular postman is loud and inconsiderate – he sometimes drops the wrong letters into your letter box. You've heard a postal strike will occur in the month before Christmas which is just fine. It may affect the big cities but you live in the suburb and just receive flyers. News items about how rural and northern communities of Quebec and northern communities are dependent on home delivery services operated by their local postal service. That's too bad for them!

Essay Test Question: How can the postman do this at Christmastime? What is the rural communities in northern Quebec going to do?

Problem (What's wrong? How can it be improved?)

Essay Test Question (What's wrong? How can it be improved?)

Model Answer:

What's wrong with the Problem: It is a rambling account and not a proper scenario. It can be more concise.

Improved Problem: A postal strike will occur in the month before Christmas, affecting the major cities as well as rural communities of Quebec. Many northern communities are dependent on home delivery services operated by their local postal service.

What's wrong with Essay Test Question: It's missing that well-defined task.

Improved Essay Test Question: Evaluate the impact of the postal strike on the northern Quebec communities in December.

Appendix

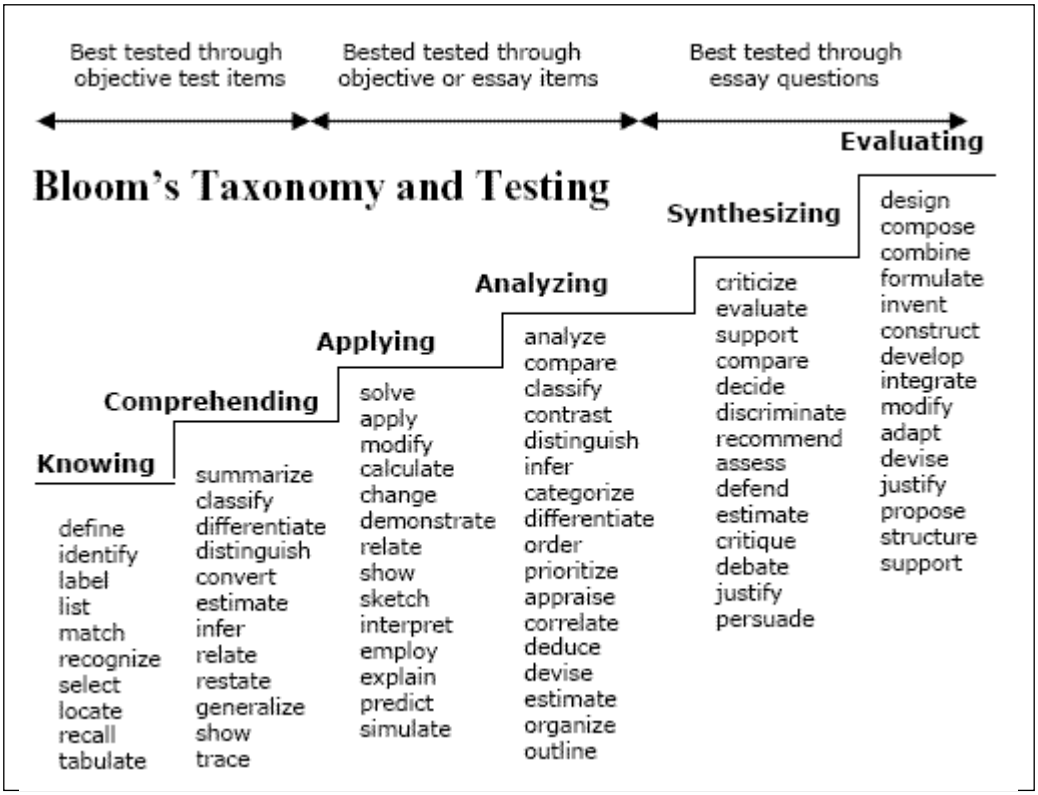

Figure 1. Bloom's Taxonomy and Testing (Duquesne University, n.d.)

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