Using Data to Improve Your GER Course

GER Assessment Tutorial 4
Now that you are teaching your GER course with your new assessment plan and syllabus, it’s time to think about how to use the data you collect to improve your GER course. GER assessment is what is known as formative assessment. In other words, it is designed to help you improve your course as a GER course. That is the whole point of GER assessment: by improving the GER courses that our students take we are improving general education at NC State. This tutorial is designed to help you complete the assessment cycle, moving from data you collect in your GER course to improving that course.
There are two broad purposes for GER formative assessment

- To provide faculty teaching GER courses with information they can use for improving their courses as GER courses
- To provide teachers, their departments, their colleges, and the university with information that can be used to document the continuous improvement of general education
The goals of Tutorial 4 follow the two purposes

- Goal 1: To outline an assessment process that can be used for moving from data to improvement of GER course
- Goal 2: To present a format for documenting formative GER assessment for teachers, departments, colleges, and the university
Part I: From Data to Course Improvement: An Assessment Cycle

An assessment cycle consists of four stages: collecting data, evaluating the data, appraising of the results of the evaluation, and using that appraisal to guide improvement. This cycle is illustrated on the next slide. This part of the tutorial will focus on each stage in order.
Assessment Cycle

Data

Evaluation

Appraisal

Improvement
Sources of data have been identified in the means of evaluating learning outcomes: assignments and other designated student performances that allow you to judge how well the course is meeting the outcomes.

The assessment data are the results of the student performances: homework, papers, lab reports, test scores, art work, video tapes or grades of oral presentations, etc.
Data

To assess their courses as GER courses, most teachers focus on the particular student performances they identified for each GER learning outcome. They may make copies of the results of the performances to analyze later or simply make it a point to notice how well students did as the teacher was grading. Collecting data may be formal or informal, depending on the teachers’ preferences and the kind of data.
Assessment Cycle

Data

Improvement

Evaluation

Appraisal
Evaluation

Data must be evaluated to determine the level at which students are meeting your expectations. In classrooms, evaluation typically takes the form of grading. When grading student performances related to GER assessment, it is usually a good idea to pay close attention to the particular ways the performance does or does not meet your expectations. One approach to doing that is to make your expectations clear before grading by turning those expectations into explicit criteria.
Evaluation

- All evaluation is based on criteria, or standards, by which we determine the value of something.
- Criteria are often implicit, unstated, but in the classroom, it is sometimes better to make criteria explicit, spelling out the standards for a good performance on an assignment.
- Making criteria explicit can lead to a clearer appraisal of how well the course is enabling students to meet the learning outcomes.
Evaluation: A Process for Making Criteria Explicit

1. Review learning outcome and assignment to identify general criteria (this is important because there are implicit and sometimes explicit criteria in the outcome and the particular assignment: test question, assignment sheet, etc. These criteria provide a good starting point.)
Example from COM 103, Introduction to Theater

**Outcome** To interpret a play by *analyzing* and *critiquing* the play according to the elements of theatrical performance.

**Evaluation** Write a review of a live theater performance that includes, in addition to a synopsis of the plot, an *analysis* of the acting, direction, and technical arts of the performance. Based on your analysis, *critique* the play in terms of acting, direction, and technical performance.
Making Criteria Explicit: General Criteria from Outcome, Assignment

- A good review should
  - Include both analysis and critique
  - Have a plot synopsis
  - Analyze the performance in terms of acting, direction, and technical performance
  - Critique (evaluate) the performance based on criteria for good acting, direction, and technical performance
Evaluation: A Process for Making Criteria Explicit

1. Review learning outcome and assignment to identify general criteria

2. Identify the specific criteria you bring to evaluating the assignment (in addition to the general criteria, most teachers bring other criteria to their grading. Think about what you expect to see in the student performance and put it in words)
Making Criteria Explicit: Identifying Specific Criteria for Evaluation

- A good introduction for a review should
  - Provide necessary background for the review, including title of play, author, director, where it was performed, theater group that performed it, where it was given, and when student saw it
  - Provide an overall statement of the critique, or evaluation, of the play
  - Give the reader a forecast of the structure of the review
Making Criteria Explicit: Identifying Specific Criteria for Evaluation

- A good plot synopsis should
  - Provide a brief act by act summary of the play

- A good analysis should
  - Contain clearly differentiated sections for each of the analytical elements
  - Acting: a detailed treatment of style of acting, voice, use of eyes, movement, characterization
  - Direction: blocking, pacing, and narrative movement
  - Technical performance: lighting, sound, stagecraft
Making Criteria Explicit: Identifying Specific Criteria for Evaluation

A good critique should

- Begin with a statement of the general critique of the performance
- Provide support for the general statement, citing quality of acting, direction, and technical performance
- Refer specifically to details from the analysis to back up argument for critique
Evaluation: A Process for Making Criteria Explicit

1. Review learning outcome and assignment to identify general criteria
2. Identify the specific criteria you bring to evaluating the assignment
3. Put these criteria in a form that is appropriate to how you will be using it (now that you have spelled out your criteria, determine how they are best used for yourself and your students and create a format best for that usage)
Making Criteria Explicit: Putting Criteria in Usable Form

- Appropriate form depends on how the criteria will be used
- If they are strictly for the teacher’s use, they can be written down informally and used while grading
- If they are to be used as a teaching tool, they can be incorporated in an assignment sheet and/or put in the form of a rubric
Rubrics

An evaluation or grading rubric is one way of putting your criteria in a format that is useful to students. A rubric can be holistic or analytical. A holistic rubric consists of a set of descriptions of what you expect of A work, B work, C work, etc. An analytical rubric is typically a grid that contains criteria and a scale for grading each criterion. Analytical rubrics can be used as an effective teaching tool by giving them to students before an assignment is due and going over them in class so that students know what is expected on the assignment. See example on next slide.
**Review of Theatrical Performance**  
**Writer:** _____________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>_writer...</th>
<th>poor</th>
<th>fair</th>
<th>excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• establishes the context for the review: title, author, director, company, time and place of performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• provides an overall statement of the critical judgment of the performance</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• forecasts the structure of the review</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Plot synopsis |_writer...| | | |
|---------------|----------| | | |
| • gives an act by act summary of the performance | | | | |

| Analysis |_writer...| | | |
|----------|----------| | | |
| • provides a detailed treatment of acting: style of acting, voice, use of eyes, movement, characterization | | | | |
| • provides a detailed treatment of direction: blocking, pacing, narrative movement | | | | |
| • provides a detailed treatment of technical performance: lighting, sound, stagecraft | | | | |
| • analyzes the performance in such a way that there is a clear and distinct treatment of each of the analytical elements | | | | |

| Critique |_writer...| | | |
|----------|----------| | | |
| • begins with a general statement of the critical judgment of the performance | | | | |
| • supports the general statement by addressing the quality of acting, direction, and technical performance | | | | |
| • specifically cites details from the analysis to back up discussion of quality of performance | | | | |

| Presentation | | | | |
|--------------| | | | |
| • style is clear and readable | | | | |
| • grammar is correct | | | | |
| • spelling is correct | | | | |

| Comments: | | | | |
Assessment Cycle

Data → Evaluation → Appraisal → Improvement → Data
Appraisal

- An appraisal marks the shift from evaluating student performances to appraising the effectiveness of the course as a GER course.

- An appraisal is based on an understanding of how well the course has enabled students to meet the learning outcomes.

- An appraisal typically is put into the form of a statement describing the areas in which the course has been effective and the areas for improvement.
Assessment Cycle

Data

Evaluation

Appraisal

Improvement
**Improvement**

The appraisal may identify areas for improvement; the next step is to generate ideas and a plan for improvement. There are generally two directions improvement can take:

1. **improving aspects of the course to better enable students to meet a learning outcome**
2. **improving the assessment of the course to enable you to gather more appropriate data and evaluate the data more productively**
1. Some ways of improving the course

- Better preparing students for the assignment: examples, modeling ways of doing, providing more exercises, revising lectures, etc.
- Rewriting the assignment sheet so students understand more clearly what they should do
- Using a rubric as a teaching tool
- Giving more class time to a critical topic
2. Some ways of improving the assessment of the course

- Revising a learning outcome to better reflect what students should be able to do
- Finding a more efficient way of collecting and evaluating data
- Identifying a different or additional means of evaluating the outcome
- Changing the evaluation procedure
New Assessment Cycle

Data → Evaluation → Appraisal → Improvement → Data
Data: Starting a New Assessment Cycle

- Gathering more data allows you to see how well the improvements you have implemented help students meet the learning outcomes of the course.
- A new assessment cycle provides an opportunity to gather and analyze more data for the further improvement of the course.
Part II: Documenting GER Assessment

The second purpose of GER assessment is to provide teachers, their departments, their colleges, and the university with information that can be used to document the continuous improvement of general education at NC State. The documentation of this formative assessment is to be done in the form of a guided reflection.
The guided reflection is a brief document teachers write after assessing their GER classes. The primary purpose is to act as a guide to thinking through the formative assessment of the course: a way of helping teachers make a productive link between data, evaluation, appraisal, and improvement of the course. On the following slide is a description of the five parts of a guided reflection.
GER Guided Reflection on Student Learning

1. GER category objectives, learning outcomes, and means of evaluating outcomes
2. A summary of evaluation results for each outcome
3. Appraisal of effectiveness of GER course: where the course is effective and areas for improvement
4. A description of improvements in the course since last assessment (if appropriate)
5. Any improvements planned in the course or its assessment methods as a result of latest assessment