Gen Ed News

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GE Policy Reminder:
Policy Regarding Who Can Teach University-wide General Education Courses

Approved by the UWGEC on April 19, 2000
[Revised by the Policy Subcommittee meeting September 12, 2001]
Approved by UWGEC January 23, 2002

Philosophy:

One of the guiding principles of the original Faculty-Senate approved plan for the new University-Wide General Education program was that experienced faculty have an increased role in the education of lower-division students. Early contact with such faculty is a hallmark of the new University-wide General Education program and is critical to providing students the enriched educational experience implied in the guidelines for Tier One and Tier Two course proposals. Based on this principle, the following policy establishes who can teach approved Tier One and Tier Two courses.

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Tier One courses (INDV, NATS, TRAD) are constructed so that a number of faculty members can teach them in different semesters.

Tier Two courses (Individuals & Societies, Natural Sciences, Humanities, Arts) are constructed so that one or more faculty members can teach them.

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D2L
Did you know?

You can release the current midterm grade to students by using these steps:

1. Set your grades to release the final calculated grade and to drop ungraded items in grade settings.

2. Verify, before releasing grades, that any student who deserves a 0 for a particular assignment has a 0 entered.

3. Release the Final calculated grade to students.

Heads up!

We will update D2L to 10.7.6 at 1:00 am on October 26, 2017. There will be no downtime during this upgrade.

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During World War II more than 11,000 men trained at the University for services on land, at sea and in the air. The largest group (10,000) were those in the Naval Training School. Five hundred bunk beds took over Bear Down gym. The basketball hardwood floor was covered with masonite. Note Navy flags hung from the rafters, and the indoctrinees’ personal luggage stored on the balcony seats.

Writing Tip of the Month: Reading like a writer

Assigned reading can be used for more than sharing content. Reading can also be used to help students identify and examine the choices other writers make so that they can make more informed choices in their own writing. Mike Bunn (2012) calls this kind of reading “Reading Like a Writer.” The questions below, adapted from Bunn’s work, might be a good starting point to help your students read in this way, but feel free to revise the questions to focus on a particular section of a text (i.e., introductions) or even a specific word or phrase. Remember, the point is to help students reflect on the writing itself so they can make more informed decisions in their own writing.

Questions to ask before you read:

- Do you know the writer’s purpose for writing this text?
- Do you know who the intended audience is?
- What is the genre? (An essay? An article? What would you call it?)
- How does considering the genre influence your reading expectations?
- Are you going to be asked to write something like this yourself?

Questions to ask during or after the reading:

- What techniques does the writer use to introduce the text?
- How effective is the language the writer uses? Is it too formal? Too informal? Perfectly appropriate? What makes it so?
- What kinds of evidence does the writer use to support his/her claims? Do they use statistics? Quotes from famous people? Personal stories? Do they cite other articles? Why do you think they made these choices?
- How appropriate is this evidence? Would a different type of evidence, or combination of evidence, be more effective?
- Are there places in the writing that you find confusing? What about the writing in those places makes it confusing?
- How does the writer move from one idea to another? Are the transitions they use effective? What other transitions might they have used instead?

Reference

Testing That Promotes Learning

The posting below looks at approaches to testing that enhance learning. It is by Maryellen Weimer and is from the October 2015, Vol. 29, No. 8 issue of The Teaching Professor. Published by Magna Publications [http://www.magnapubs.com] 2718 Dryden Drive, Madison, WI 53704,

Testing has a prominent role in most college courses. It’s the method most often used to determine the extent to which students have mastered the material in the course. Say “tests” and thoughts jump immediately to evaluation and grades, with students thinking “stressful” simultaneously or shortly thereafter. What rarely crosses the minds of students and teachers is the power of testing to promote learning. Cynthia J. Brame, Ph.D., and Rachel Biel, Center for Teaching in their article, Test-enhanced learning: The potential for testing to promote greater learning in undergraduate science courses, noted that “One of the most consistent findings in cognitive psychology is that testing leads to increased retention more than studying alone does.” (p. 1)

Testing, as it’s understood by teachers and students, “does not reflect the setting in which the benefits of ‘test-enhanced learning’ have been experienced. In the experiments done in cognitive science laboratories, the ‘testing’ was simply a learning activity for students.” (p. 9) It was “no stakes” (as in it didn’t count in grade calculation) or “low stakes” (as in it counted very little). Brame and Biel think “retrieval practice” might be a more accurate description of the activity involved here.

The article highlights research that documents six positive benefits achieved by this kind of testing. They are derived from studies that involved undergraduates “learning educationally relevant materials (e.g., text passages as opposed to word pairs).” (p.1) Here’s a brief synopsis of each effect. They are described in much greater detail in the article with highlights from individual studies and an elaborate table.

Repeated retrieval enhances long-term retention in a laboratory setting. When you learn something new, the more times you retrieve the information, the better you remember it. Studies here document that repeated testing (which is all about retrieval) facilitated long-term retention better than studying did. In other words, testing oneself with questions is more effective than just going over the material.

Various testing formats can enhance learning. The questions can be multiple choice; they can be short answer, cued recall, even free recall. Various questions types have been shown to provide significant benefit over study alone.

Feedback enhances the benefits of testing. Simply answering questions did improve performance, but feedback, as in finding out the correct answer, provided an added benefit.

Learning is not limited to rote memory. To some faculty, test-enhanced learning may seem like the kind of testing that encourages students to just memorize material. The authors discuss research here that identifies benefits beyond simple recall, such as being able to transfer knowledge to different domains.

Testing potentiates further study. The case in point here is pretesting and research documenting that it improves students’ studying, perhaps by cuing them to focus on key ideas.

The benefits of testing appear to extend to the classroom. All of the research highlighted in support of the previous five benefits was conducted in laboratories. However, there are studies suggesting “the benefits of testing may also extend to the classroom.” (p. 8)

The authors conclude with a section that suggests some ways faculty might consider implementing what is known about test-enhanced learning.

More and frequent quizzing. “The studies summarized earlier suggest that providing students the opportunity for retrieval practice—and ideally, providing feedback for the responses—will increase learning of targeted and related material.” (p. 10)

Providing “summary points” during a class. This approach encourages retrieval practice by asking students to use their words to recall key or main points at various intervals during a class period and/or at its conclusion. Their summaries could be written in their notes, shared with those nearby, or spoken in class.

Use of pretesting. Testing students’ prior knowledge of a subject appears to “prime” them for learning. These tests could be administered at the beginning of a unit or class session or online with a question set that students could be told they will need to be able to answer after learning the material.

Sharing what is known about test-enhanced learning. The recommendation here is to talk with students about this kind of testing, explaining how it has been shown to enhance learning. It will be a new way for students to think about testing, but it’s certainly a more positive and less stressful take on the value of test questions and testing experiences.

Kudos to the authors for undertaking this review and putting together an article that makes the findings understandable and useful to practitioners. It’s one of those pieces of scholarship prepared for faculty in one discipline that can be used to make teaching more evidence-based in any field.

Reference:

Professional Development Opportunity!

Teaching Professor Conference 2018

Since 2003, college faculty have found the Teaching Professor Conference to be one of the best investments they’ve ever made in their professional development. Come to the 2018 Teaching Professor Conference, which is happening from June 1–3, 2018, in Atlanta, and you’ll see why.

The three days you’ll spend at the conference will provide you with knowledge and insights you’ll return to again and again throughout your teaching career. You’ll gain invaluable perspectives on current instructional best practices, hear about the latest research on pedagogy, discover the ways that technology is transforming the classroom, and so much more.

Unlike conferences that leave you with a shrug of the shoulders and a big “So what?” the Teaching Professor Conference delivers practical, actionable tools and techniques that you can put to work immediately in your classroom. Topics range far and wide across every facet of teaching and learning, including:

⇒ course design
⇒ student engagement
⇒ critical thinking
⇒ grading and feedback
⇒ instructional technology
⇒ blended and flipped learning
⇒ learning climate

Speaking of learning climates, you’ll find an exceptional one at the conference! Each year the conference brings together more than 1,000 educators who are eager to participate in a robust, collegial exchange of ideas, strategies, and approaches for improving student learning.

Secure your place now before early-bird pricing expires in two weeks.
For More Information click here

INSIDE HIGHER ED: AAU REPORTS ON EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SCIENCE TEACHING AT RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

Submitted by Colleen Flaherty on October 2, 2017

Science instructors increasingly are moving beyond the lecture to more innovative -- and effective -- teaching methods. But professors with a taste for change often enact it alone, as their colleagues continue to lecture.

The Association of American Universities wants to change that. In 2011, it launched its Undergraduate STEM Initiative to encourage systemic reforms to science education to improve teaching and learning, especially in first- and second-year courses.

Early feedback was promising, and AAU is this week releasing a formal five-year status report detailing progress at eight project sites: Brown University; Michigan State University; the University of Arizona; the University of California, Davis; the University of Colorado at Boulder; the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the University of Pennsylvania and Washington University in St. Louis.

To read the rest of the story click here