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11-2019

ACUE Effective Teaching Practices: Module Reflections

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Recommended Citation

Keys, Jenni, "ACUE Effective Teaching Practices: Module Reflections" (2019). *Q2S Enhancing Pedagogy*. 60.

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In lesson 1B we were asked to evaluate whether the types of assessments in our courses are aligned to the cognitive levels of our student learning outcomes (SLOs) and to consider monitoring and adjusting the “weight” given to each SLO. I chose to I am currently scheduled to teach this summer – ESE 170. After the last lesson, I have revised the SLOs to make them more transparent to students, and this was an opportunity to further evaluate the efficacy of the assignments in light of those revisions.

I chose to complete an activity to evaluate the types of assignments/activities I planned on having students complete in the course. Using ACUE course materials, I completed a two-step process to determine the cognitive levels of the SLOs and the types of assignments by cognitive level. After completing these steps, I evaluated whether the types of assignments/activities in this course met the criteria. I determined that they did match the desired cognitive levels for an introductory course (remember, understand, and analyze) with a goal towards developing evaluate and create. As a result of this lesson, I became more mindful of providing students with appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of course SLOs. This will help me better articulate why students are being asked to complete certain activities/assignments, and in turn, they will be better motivated to do the work.

In Lesson 1D, we were asked to prepare an effective syllabus. I decided to use a checklist to verify all essential items for classroom and/or online course expectations are included. At CSUSB, we have a very specific template provided by TRC for instructors to use. I was curious to see if what I’ve been doing is in keeping with the techniques outlined in this lesson in the ACUE course and ways that I might make my syllabi more effective as a learning tool.

I evaluated a syllabus from one of the courses I taught in S19. I used the syllabus checklist from the ACUE lesson to identify whether it contained all of the essential items. My syllabus met all the criteria for “providing complete course information.” In the “information about myself” criteria, I did provide information on office hours, but the syllabus did not include the options of using Zoom or Skype as a means for students who are not on campus on those days. I do tell students this is an option, and I have now added this information in subsequent syllabi. In the “course materials, descriptions, and outcomes,” I did provide a basic organization for the course and major topics, but I didn’t

include a rationale for those choices. In a previous lesson in the ACUE course, I learned that I needed to be more clear in my SLOs. In F19 syllabi, I modified the SLOs to incorporate which assignments/activities demonstrated students' work on them. The "course policies and expectations for student responsibilities," suggest providing the criteria for evaluating each assignment in the syllabus. I've included this in the past; however, the document was 10 pages long. I do provide these rubrics for assignments on Blackboard at the beginning of the quarter, and I attach scored rubrics to students' graded assignments.

My hope is that these revisions will help students be able to "see" the course in a more complete way. By providing a rationale and even more specific details Day 1, they can see that there is a purpose for all the work they do in the course and that it is clearly connected to the course. This should also help motivate them to become more active learners.

In Lesson 1E, we were asked to plan an effective class session. I chose to do this in my ENG 110 (World Literature I) course. I created a lecture that included 4 parts.

1. Connecting session to SLOs: to understand/recognize the genre of epic literature and further develop close reading skills
2. Mini-lesson: to apply the cycle of the epic poem to *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and identify characteristics of the "epic hero" to characters
3. Provide fill-in-the-blank guided summaries: to be completed by students individually during the mini-lesson and then workshopped in pairs
4. Close with a summarizing activity: students complete a group summary of what they learned in class and upload to Blackboard.

Overall, this plan went well. At the time I was not yet convinced that students were as interested in the SLOs as I am. I have continued to use this plan and other suggestions for effective lessons in the ACUE course in my F19 courses. With my increased integration of the relevance of SLOs (see 1B and 1D above) throughout the quarter, I have seen a difference in students' interest. Referencing the SLOs does make the assignments/activities relevant and students are more motivated – sometimes even eager – to do the work.

The mini-lessons combined with fill-in-the-blank summaries had (and continue to

have) the most impact. Depending on the course, students use these as study guides for midterms/finals and references for higher-stakes essay assignments. I was most surprised that the participation in my large-classes (70+ students) discussions increased. All too often, maybe a dozen students drive most of these conversations. Students appear to be more confident in their observations and analyses after workshopping them with peers, and they are more willing to share them when we finish group work and return to the larger class lecture discussion.

The group summarizing activity provided useful feedback from students. I identified patterns in their responses and was able to adjust the next class session in order to address misconceptions and emphasize key points before moving on to the new material.

While I found all of the lessons in the ACUE course extremely valuable, the material in 1E had the most immediate impact on my classes during S19. This quarter, I incentivized students to complete the fill-in-the-blank summaries (and similar low-stakes group activities) by making these a part of the participation points they earn in the course. This may also explain the increased levels of participation in class discussions as students now see clear connections between what they do in each class session and how that impacts their overall grade in the course.