



Showcasing Student Learning Gains

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**Center for
Distributed Learning**

What are Student Learning Gains?

- “an attempt to measure the improvement in knowledge, skills, work-readiness, and personal development made by students during their time spent in higher education” – HEFCE Learning Gains website
- “the ‘distance travelled’, or the difference between the skills, competencies, content knowledge, and personal development demonstrated by students at two points in time” – RAND report: McGrath et al 2015

What are Student Learning Gains?

- Enumerates actual change in performance between two points in time
 - Within semesters or larger-scale
- Identify improvement
- Inevitably discipline specific



Learning gains is a complex topic



What do Learning Gains tell us?

- How students benefit from their time in classes
 - At the individual or course-wide level
- Allows for comparative judgements
- Learning gain = effectiveness of pedagogy and quality of education



Impeding Misconceptions

1. The belief that student evaluations of teaching should suffice.
2. The belief that pretest/posttest studies, the most obvious ways to assess learning gains, have poor internal validity and therefore are not worthwhile.
3. The belief that assessing students takes too much time.

A golden statue of a knight on a horse, with a shield featuring the letters 'UCF'. The background is a solid yellow color.

Assessments of Student Learning Gains



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Step 1: Define and Design

- “Once we have determined what students *should* know, how will we know that they *know* it?”
- “How will students *show* us that they have reached or exceeded the learning goal?”
- “It’s not until you have defined and designed your assessment instrument that you have clearly spelled out what your true objective is. [Student Learning Gains]”
- **Dr. Robyn R. Jackson**, Towson University, author of “You Can Do This: Hope and Help For New Teachers”



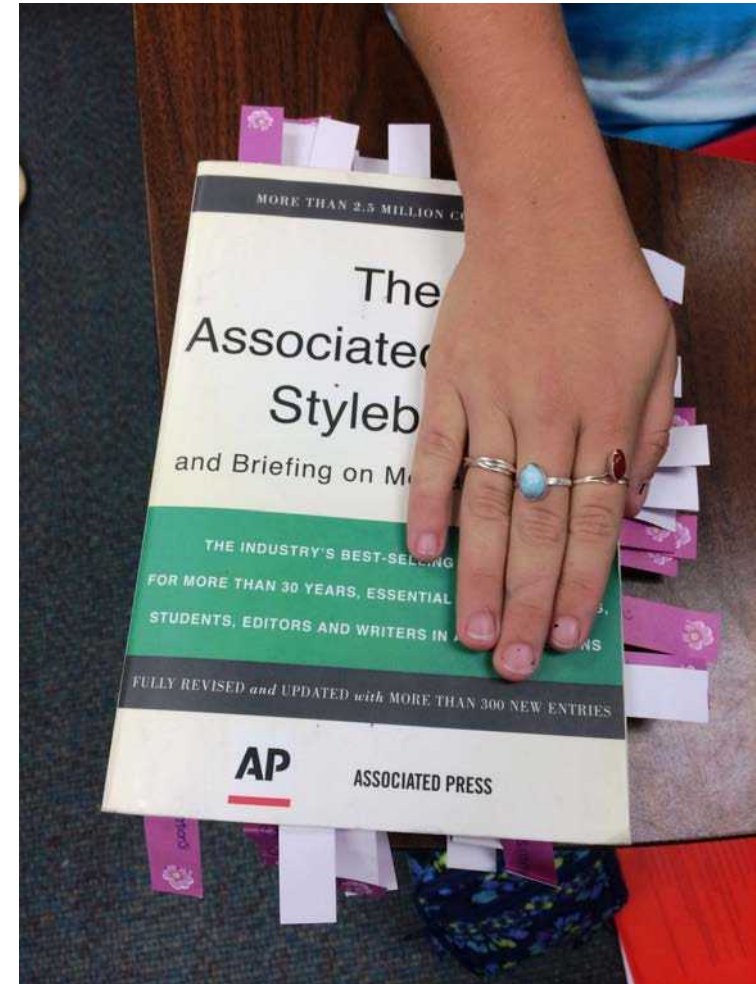
Ways to Assess and Measure

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Work readiness
- Personal development
- Keep in mind that as Amanda noted these are always discipline-specific.
- The following ideas are offered based on how we measure learning gains in the Journalism program at the Nicholson School of Communication.



Knowledge: Associated Press Style

- **Internal assessment:** Pretest and posttest in JOU 2100 News Reporting. 90 percent of students will achieve a passing score of 75 percent on the posttest.
- **External assessment:** Internship assessment survey completed by on-site editorial supervisor.
- At least 90 percent of internship supervisors will express agreement with the statement: “The intern demonstrates a good command of grammar, *punctuation*, and Associated Press style.”
- 2016-2017: We fell short. Only (81%) students met the target.



Skill: Ability to Conduct Journalistic Research

- Defined: The ability to gather original, timely information through interviews with experts and eyewitnesses, collect and analyze public records, documents and data, as well as through direct observation.
- **External assessment:** At least 90 percent of internship supervisors will rate the intern's research/reporting skills as good, very good or excellent.



Skill: Accuracy – Ability to Get the Facts Right

- **Internal assessment:** At least 90 percent of graduation portfolios will receive an average rating of “acceptable” from three or more faculty members for the following item: The published items contain few errors.
- **External assessment:** At least 90 percent of internship supervisors will rate the intern’s accuracy of work as good, very good or excellent.



Work Readiness: Ability to Meet Deadlines

- **Internal assessment:** At least 95 percent of students in JOU 2100 News Reporting will demonstrate the ability to complete a timed writing assignment under a tight deadline (25 minutes or less) by the end of the course.
- **External assessment:** At least 90 percent of internship supervisors will rate the intern's deadline responsibility as good, very good or excellent.



Work Readiness: Reflection Essays, Site Visits

- **Internal assessment:** Students interning off site are required to complete weekly reports where they reflect upon applied skills, newly acquired skills and their own professional and personal development.
- The faculty supervisor reviews the essays and provides feedback, conducts site visits as well as exit interviews with the intern to discuss results.



Personal Development: Professionalism

- **Internal assessment:** 90 percent of students in JOU 2100 News Reporting will achieve a score of 75 percent or higher on the “professional development” portion of their course grade, as defined by the quality of work, quantity of work, initiative, collegiality, creativity, attitude toward work, adaptability/flexibility and ethical behavior.
- **External assessment:** At least 90 percent of internship supervisors will rate their interns as 8 or higher on a 10-point scale on attributes that define professionalism: quality of work, quantity of work, initiative, collegiality, creativity, attitude toward work, adaptability/flexibility and ethical behavior.





Thank you!
Questions?



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