Students' Perspective on Assessment

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Assessment

Assessment is the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, *knowledge, skills, attitudes* and *beliefs.*

- Formative and summative
- Objective and subjective
- Bases of comparison
- Informal and formal
- Internal and external

Formative and Summative

Assessment **for** learning
- carried out during a course
- Diagnostic

At UBC
- PBL assessment
- Self-assessment
- (Mid-term MCQ exam 6 weeks into medical school)

Assessment **of** learning
- carried out at the end of a course
- performance based

At UBC
- End of term MCQ exams
- End of term lab. exams
- OSCEs

Objective and Subjective

- single correct answer
- MCQs as example
- well suited to computerisation

- have more than one correct answer, or
- more than one way of expressing the answer
- extended response questions, or essays

Bases of Comparison

Criterion referenced assessment
- Test results compared against established criteria

Norm-referenced assessment
- 'grading on the curve'

Ipsative assessment
- Self comparison in the same domain over time or between domains

Informal and Formal

Does not contribute to students final grade; often casual in nature
- checklists or rubrics
- portfolio assessment
- peer and self evaluation

Usually in the form of a written document and student is given a numerical score or grade.

Internal and External

Set and marked by the school (faculty)

- Get mark and feedback

Set by the governing body and marked by non-biased personnel

- Get mark only

Educating Professionals

Assessment 'clients'

- The student
- The faculty / course directors
- The institution
- Governing bodies
- Society

UBC's Assessment of the Basic Sciences

- Assessment by PBL tutor at the end of each block = 3 Ps (Preparation, Participation, Professionalism) for pass, needs improvement or fail.
- End of term exams covering 3-4 systems blocks = MCQ format
- End of term lab. exams = projected slides accompanied by MCQ.

Student Perspective on Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is based on reflection of one's behaviour, as identified by yourself, your peers and your tutors (PBL self-assessments, start of block goal setting, weekly group feedback, tutor assessments)

- reflection is not always active but reactive to the feedback received

Student Perspective

In first year, we are given a midterm in October covering the first 5 weeks of material. This was very beneficial for me, because :

- although I study after class, being a new medical student, I was unsure if what I was studying was sufficient at that time.
- The midterm allowed me not only to find out where I stood in the class, but also allowed me to figure out where my weaknesses were and thereby improve for the December exams. It was a way to check in with myself and make any changes that were necessary early on before December exams rolled in
- But also to ensure that I was covering as much as I could so that in the future I could use this knowledge base.
- Its never just for exams but having a formal assessment helps to gear my own self assessment which is key in pursuing a career in medicine.

Student Perspective

In regards to clinical exams, UBC offered the mock-OSCE in December in preparation for our real OSCE in May.

- I think having gone through the logistics of the exam really calmed our nerves for the real OSCE because we had been exposed to that type of environment.
- Although that OSCE results wasn't recorded, it was still a way to get feedback from our tutors on our progress and also make any necessary changes that needed to be dealt with early on before getting too behind.

Having this type of assessment during the school year, especially something clinical, again refreshes our minds on not just the basic sciences are important but also stresses the important of the clinical aspect of medicine and keeping up with practicing our physical exams, history taking etc.

Student Perspective

The expert assessments in PBL are helpful in a way because:

- the tutor can effectively make certain comments about your role in that specific group.
- I can take their comments and then try to improve on this in future PBL groups.
- However, there are sometimes situations in which the PBL group dynamics influence how I much I may be participating in that group.

In general the assessments help to guide what I need to improve on and also highlight some of the things that I may be good at, and provide encouragement.

"Would you study differently for different types of assessment ?"

I tend to cater my studying to best mimic what I think the end assessment will be, therefore yes.

I think throughout the year I would study the same.

- I would try to continue to put the same amount of effort into understanding the concepts regardless of what way I am being assessed at the end of the year.
- I wouldn't necessarily change the way I study for the exam because the material is all relevant and important in my future career so I wouldn't focus my attention just to pass an exam.

Student Perspective
How would you study for essay exams ?

When I had essay questions in my undergraduate degree, I would study by:

- ensuring that I knew the concepts and felt comfortable enough to apply them.
- Time permitting, I would also write practice essays, and think of possible questions that might be asked on the exams.

Student Perspective
How would you study for essay exams ?

Essay questions require students to know the material to a deeper level, such that they are able to explain it again…therefore:

- reading the material and actually being able to visualize and repeat it to yourself is important.
- more use of conceptual diagrams, flowcharts, etc.

Student Perspective
How would you study for essay exams ?

During the last few weeks leading up to the exam,

- I would spend more time memorizing specific key words/concepts so that I would be able to write more in detail about them.
- forming charts/flow diagrams would also help in essay type exams.

Student Perspective
How would you study for MCQ exams ?

When preparing for multiple choice exams, I also try

- to ensure that I understand the concepts, however
- I will also create cue cards with questions on them that I think challenge my knowledge of the material.
- A lot of the questions are also of details that I find myself having a difficult time remembering.
- That way I become accustomed to answering many questions about different aspects of a topic.

Student Perspective
How would you study for MCQ exams ?

Multiple choice exams are all about "recognition," therefore

- the goal of studying is to retain enough information to recall, identify or deduce the most correct answer from a list…
- therefore reading the material and/or creating tables/summaries for quick review work the best

Student Perspective
How would you study for MCQ exams ?

I would probably spend more time

- reviewing lectures and
- trying to get more details memorized and
- concepts cleared,
- via more repetition of the material.

I would suggest that they continue to provide MCQs because:

- It allows one to test a range of topics covered in a feasible way

I would also add a short answer/essay style section.

- In my experience I have felt like I always come away from an exam knowing more than what was tested, and that often my exam mark doesn't reflect my actual understanding because MCQ limit you to a certain degree on how you can show what you know.

I would suggest they add short answer sections that allow

Question posed:

You're walking down the hall with a couple of your former med school instructors, and they ask you for feedback on the kind of assessment you've experienced as a med student. You know that they're traditionalists; they typically give only multiple choice tests in their courses, but you also know that they really do value your opinion and will consider what you have to say.

- **What's the one or two thing things that you would tell them, especially regarding what it's like to be a student assessed only in traditional ways and why faculty need to change** (vs. the specific assessment techniques they should switch to)?

Student Perspective

I am content with having multiple choice exams, perhaps the only suggestion I would make would be to have more exams dispersed throughout the semester (only worth an incremental amount compared to the final exam) to help students stay on top of the material and to also decrease stress regarding the final exam. That way, they would still have to remember the material from the beginning of the term, without the fear that their entire semester's work will be determined over the course of a few days.

Student Perspective

All students learn differently and all students have different strengths. Not everyone does well on multiple choice exams. However, it is not feasible to test people in a multitude of ways…nor would it be feasible to have essay questions for these exams. Is there a happy medium? Try putting up a diagram, schematic or figure and ask students to label it. Put up a table and ask students to fill in the blank spots.

Student Perspective

When considering a question to add to the exam, consider what thought process you want the student to have as they answer it. Recollection? Applying a concept? Working through a sequence of events?

Student Perspective

Answers with "two of the above," "all of the above," "none of the above" etc. make even the most confident students doubt their knowledge. Consider the value of these answer choices, is there a reason they are associated with this question?

Student Perspective

At UBC we have exams at the end of each term so the quantity of material adds up during exam time. For example, this December we have 2 lab exams and 7 multiple choice exams over 3 sessions.

Even with the weekly objectives we receive, students are at a loss with respect to knowing what level of detail to study. For example, we are always told to look at the "big picture" and to develop an approach to analyzing a problem; to use the basic science as a foundation for a clinical situation. However, lecturers always present students with heavy detail, such as complex pathways, that are often irrelevant to our level of training or even to clinical practice as "generalists"

Understand our plight!

Student Perspective

Compared to undergraduate courses, the major barrier to effective studying is the large quantity of information encountered in medical courses

Student Perspective

Questions ??????

Preparing for Exams…
…throughout the year

Most of the preparation is from reading lecture notes and keeping up with PBL.

- I mainly do this by reviewing lectures notes after the lectures and looking up any information that is unclear.
- I find PBL is a good way to keep up with the lecture material and focuses on if you really understand the material that is covered within the week.
- By using online resources/books to try to understand concepts as much as possible during the year.

Preparing for Exams…
…throughout the year

- I try to highlight and consolidate the material into tables, outline notes, etc. for review closer to exam time
- I read or skim through the material so I've encountered it at least once before exam review period and I have an idea of what weeks are content or concept-heavy
- I remove material that is likely not going to be examined (e.g. statistics, rare diseases, etc.)
- I personally rarely look at objectives

Preparing for Exams…
…throughout the year

- I try to meet with a study group once a week to review the past week's objectives.
- I also try to read through the notes, and make cue cards that have questions on them regarding the material of the week.
- I will refer to textbooks for concepts that I feel I need more information on to understand.

Preparing for Exams….
….last two weeks

- Most of the preparation involves reviewing major concepts that were presented throughout the year. These concepts should come back fairly easily if I took the time to understand them in detail during the block.
- After reviewing the major concepts, I then spend the remainder of the time memorizing details that may be important to know for the block, ie.specific epidemiology percentages.
- Also, I often form study groups to go over any questions that I may need to have cleared up.

Preparing for Exams….
….last two weeks

- Panic!
- - plan a timeline of the material I need to cover and the number of days to devote to it
- - more frequent, dedicated periods of study
- - review outlines and diagrams made previously

Preparing for Exams….
….last two weeks

- I go through my cue cards which are, material from the week that I thought I would have trouble remembering and therefore rephrased in a question format with the answer on the other side of the card.
- This is easier for my attention span as opposed to reading through books of notes.
- Once I feel confident with my cue cards, I read over the notes again to make sure there isn't anything else that I missed or feel that I wouldn't be able to answer on a multiple choice exam.