

Center for Information Technology in Education (CITE) Newsletter

Spring 2013

<http://www.nwmissouri.edu/cite/newsletter/2013spring.htm>

Designing assignments that accomplish course goals

By: [Maryellen Weimer, PhD](#) in [Teaching Professor Blog](#)

I'm betting that many of you are in the midst of grading a large stack of papers, projects or other final assignments. Too often these end-of-course pieces of work don't live up to our expectations or students' potential. It's easy for us (especially the elders among us) to bemoan the fact that students aren't what they used to be. It's better to use our discontent to consider whether our course assignments are effectively accomplishing our course goals.

As usual, my reading is what got me thinking about this topic. In this case it's a new book by Paul Hanstedt on general education. He recommends that assignments for general education courses should achieve at least three things: 1) contain evidence that students are learning what we want them to be learning, 2) engage students in deep, long lasting learning, and 3) generate student work that doesn't make us cry when we grade them. (p. 78)

It's the example of his general education writing course focused on the social functions of art that made me see how clear the connection between assignments and course goals needs to be. He has four goals for his course. Students should be able to: 1) write an effective essay using appropriate rhetorical methods given the audience and purpose, 2) interpret individual responses to art, 3) apply abstract concepts about art to particular works, and 4) analyze the role art plays in contemporary life (p. 83). To accomplish those goals he used to have students write three papers; one that analyzed a representational piece of art, pre-1850, a second that analyzed an abstract piece of art, post-1850; and a third that explored the role art should play in society. Okay assignments, but they didn't produce work that showed students achieving the course goals all that well.

After making some changes, students are still writing three papers, but the assignments are very different. Now in the first paper, students analyze a piece of art that they like using the formal elements to explain their emotional response to it. They write this paper to a classmate as a way of introducing themselves. In the second paper, they use a quotation from the readings to justify the necessity of abstract art in contemporary society. They write this paper to a skeptical parent. For the third paper, students construct an argument justifying the use of university funds for the purchase of art, explaining the role they think art should play in academia. This final paper is addressed to the university president.

Here's why these assignments better accomplish the course goals. Designating an audience for each paper forces students to assume authority for their knowledge and take on the task of explaining relevant concept and ideas to others. They aren't writing so directly to and for the professor as when the audience wasn't designated. The fact that the audience changes with every paper mirrors what happens in professional life. Professionals must deal with multiple audiences, customizing their message accordingly. Students also need to do research to write these kinds of papers, particularly the third one. And these papers do a much better job of showing the degree to which students understand and can apply course concepts. Finally, they give students the opportunity to make choices that are more personally relevant.

Does that mean students enjoy writing these papers? That's probably a stretch, but there is a greater chance students might get engaged in the topics. And Hanstedt says these papers are definitely more interesting to read.

Right now you probably need to finish up that stack of whatever you're grading, but as you do you might think a bit about your course goals. Is this particular assignment helping students accomplish them? Are there ways you could change the design that might align it more tightly to course goals? There's great opportunity for creativity and innovation in the design of assignments and more faculty are taking advantage of that. I'd love to see a collection of interesting assignments and the goals they're being used to accomplish in the comment section. **Please share a brief description or a link where we can read about what you're having students do.**

Reference: Hanstedt, P. *General Education Essentials: A Guide for College Faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012.

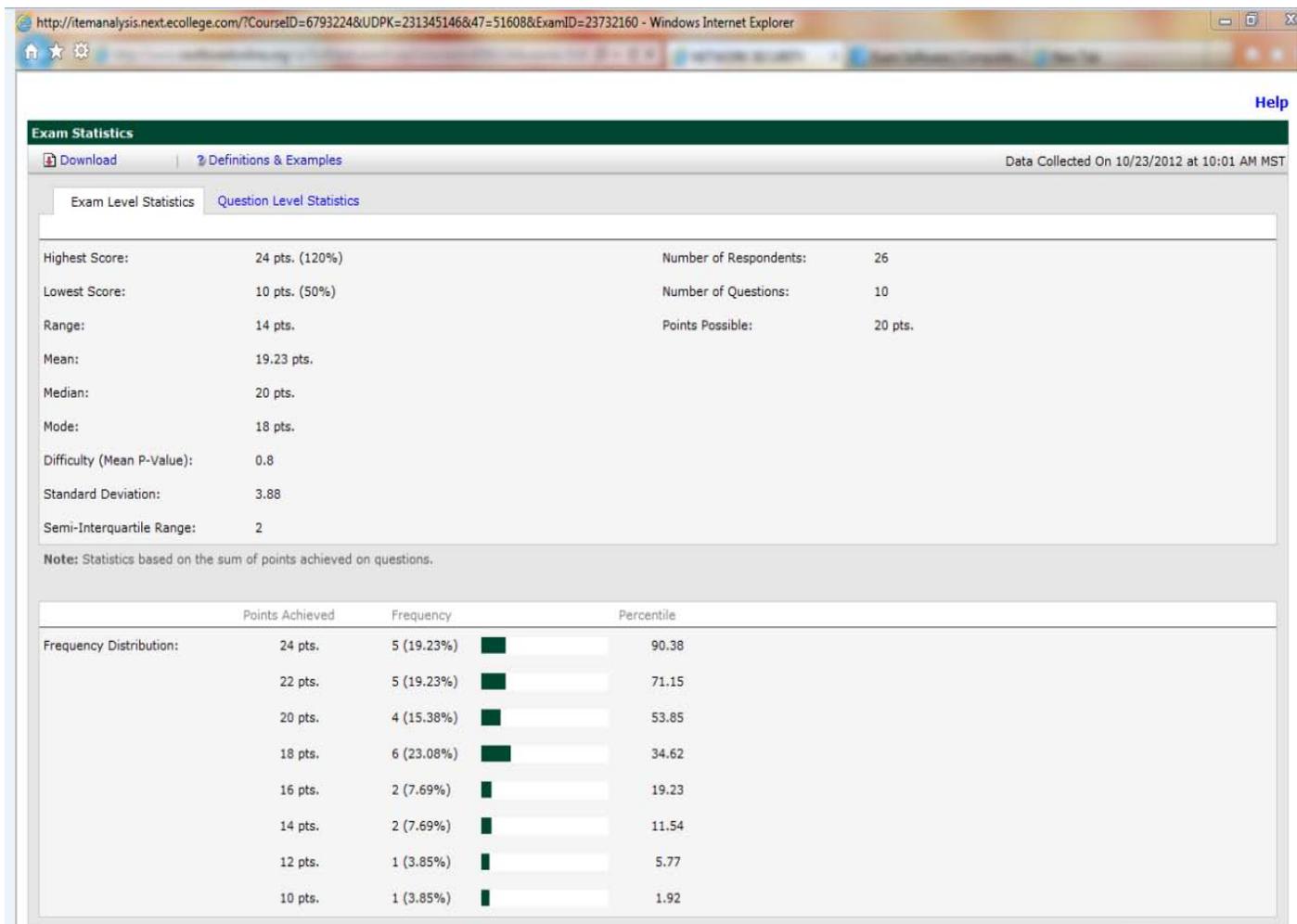
Direct Article Link: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/designing-assignments-that-accomplish-course-goals/>

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Using exam analysis in eCompanion Exam Builder

If you are building your quizzes and exams in eCompanion/eCourse, take advantage of the exam analysis feature to help improve assessment tools. Once a quiz or exam has been taken by the students, this feature can be found by clicking on the quiz or exam content item in Author mode. Next, click on the Exam Statistics link on the right-hand side of the page. A new window will open providing two tabs: Exam Level Statistics and Question Level Statistics. Either of these selections can be downloaded and saved using the Download link. The Exam Statistics feature also includes a link to the definitions of the statistics and examples. A sorting tool is provided which sorts by question difficulty.

If you have questions regarding the Exam Statistics feature, feel free to give the CITE Office a call at x-1532.



New Quality Matters self review tool available for faculty

Northwest has been integrating the Quality Matters (QM) standards for online and blended courses for several years. QM is a nationally recognized, faculty-centered, peer review process designed to certify the quality of online courses and online components.

New this fall to the QM toolset is a self-review web form for faculty. This new tool provides the QM web form of the 41 standards plus annotations to be used to self-review online and blended course sites. By self-reviewing, faculty can quickly focus in on areas of design they may wish to update.

If you are interested in using the new QM self-review tool, contact Darla Runyon at x-1532.

Lunch & Learn: Flipping the classroom video link

CITE hosted its annual fall Lunch & Learn which focused on the topic of flipping the classroom. Dr. Janet Marta, Professor in the Business Department, Dr. Nancy Zelif, Professor and Dr. Judy Clark, Assistant Professor in the Math, Computer Science & Info Systems Department presented how they have been using the flipped classroom model in some of their courses. The Shared Conference Room was packed with a large group of faculty interested in this particular method of instructional design. Since this session was so popular, a recording was made of the presentations for faculty who were unable to attend. The video recording can be viewed at:

CITE Fall 2012 Lunch & Learn Sessions: [Flipping the Classroom](#)

Flipping the classroom is essentially switching out the lecture by assigning it during homework time outside of class and using class time for clarifying information and/or interactive activities. The following two *Faculty Focus* articles, related to this topic, were sent out in advance of the session:

- [Understanding the Flipped Classroom: Part 1](#)
- [Understanding the Flipped Classroom: Part 2](#)

Include a Cornell note-taking eCompanion resource module in your course sites

If you are interested in using Cornell note-taking with your students this spring 2013, CITE has developed an eCompanion module that can be easily copied into your course site to use with students. This module provides an overview of Cornell note-taking plus examples and note templates to download. This method provides an organized way for students to take notes in order to capture key points while listening to a lecture or reading in order to better retain the information and improve grades. The key to the Cornell note-taking method is how the student sets up their notebook and uses the notes for study purposes. Give us a call or send an e-mail if you are interested in using this module.

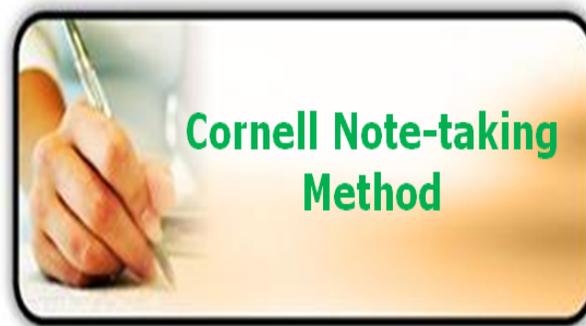
Course Home**Announcements**[Expand All](#)

Announcement

Submitter

Date/Time *

There are no active announcements in this course.



Click on the [Get Started Using Cornell Note-taking Unit](#) at left

2013 spring course sites ready

The 2013 spring course sites are ready and available for you to copy in your content and/or develop as a new site. Students will be loaded into these sites during the second week of December. If you need course sites combined or a course site removed or added, please let us know.

You can easily add your content to course sites by accessing the Faculty Course Copy Tool to copy in the content for your courses. To access the Faculty Course Copy tool, click on the Course Admin tab in your 2013 spring course site and then click on the Copy Course Content link. If you do not want to duplicate from an old course site, then you do not have to do anything but build your new site. After selecting the Copy All Content radio button, be sure to click on the additional items that you would like to copy such as the grade book setup, document sharing, webliography, syllabus, and announcements. The content will copy automatically.

Use the Copy All Content selection to duplicate over the entire course site. If you do need assistance, use the attached release notes or view the short video tutorial below or give the CITE Office a call.

Video Link for Full Content Copy functionality ONLY:

<http://epmedia.college.com/media/eteach/atctrain/fcctraining.html>

The screenshot displays the 'Faculty Course Copy' interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Course Admin', 'Gradebook', 'Email', 'Doc Sharing', 'Dropbox', 'Tech Support', and 'Help'. Below this, the 'Course Admin' section includes 'Course Information & Preferences', 'Course Enrollment', and 'Group Management'. The main content area is titled 'Faculty Course Copy' and includes a 'View Copy Status' link. The 'Copy All Content' section contains a note: 'Note: You will only be able to copy from courses and into course shells you are or have been enrolled in.' Below this, there are two dropdown menus: 'Select Source Term' (set to '2011 Fall eCompanion HE') and 'Select Source Course' (set to '44-130-60: Computers & Tech Test Site'). A table of content items is shown with checkboxes for selection:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Syllabus	<input type="checkbox"/>	Announcements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Document Sharing (Instructor only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gradebook Set-Up
<input type="checkbox"/>	Webiography (Instructor only)		

A red box highlights the 'Syllabus', 'Document Sharing (Instructor only)', and 'Webiography (Instructor only)' items. A red arrow points from this box to a text box that says: 'Select the additional items you want copied to your Spring 2012 course site in addition to the content that will copy automatically.' Below the table, a note states: 'Note: Document Sharing and Webiography will only copy instructor postings.' At the bottom, there are two dropdown menus: 'Select Destination Term' (set to '-- Select Term --') and 'Select Destination Shell' (set to '-- Select Shell --').