SSCI 3005 Assessment

Credit Course Assessment: One Instructor's Pilot data from Fall 2009 SSCI 3005 course

Although several learning goals were assessed in this one class section, full program assessment would instead pick one learning goal to assess across several sections the first year. The following year a second learning goal could be assessed, and so forth. This case study may suggest measures that can be applied to all sections to achieve broader views of how the common course learning goals are being achieved.

Below are four assessments of Tim Held's course, SSCI 3005 Research and Information Literacy. An attempt is made to use a variety of measures to capture different dimensions of learning. The midterm asks students to demonstrate knowledge, and the final bibliography is a direct measure of integration of skills into their academic work. The longitudinal survey charts their perceptions of their growth. Also, the midterm and survey include questions about process, whereas the final bibliography measures skills through their end product.

A. Longitudinal survey

These are the results of a longitudinal survey on students' attitudes and perceptions of their skills and knowledge. The instrument was adapted from one developed by Warren Jacobs. 26 students filled out the same survey at the beginning and end of the course. See Appendix A for results for each of the 14 questions.

In general at the beginning of the course perceptions and attitudes about the key skills were mainly in the middle of the scale. By the end of the course they moved to mainly "yes" and "strong yes." Although this shows success, the ideal is that all students feel a "strong yes" to at least the more fundamental skills taught in the course.

These perceptions can be cross-checked against actual skills as demonstrated directly in the midterm exam and final bibliography either confirming perceptions or revealing complexities. For example, their confidence in finding books represented by survey question 3 is borne out by their knowledge of the classification system in test question 1 and their ability to include relevant resources in their final bibliography. Conversely, question 7 on the survey shows most students are confident in their ability to use databases, although on the midterm several had difficulty detailing the many aspects of this complex skill (question 5 on the midterm).

B. Analysis of correctly answered midterm questions

Most of the questions on the midterm required listing two or more short

answers, so partial credit was common. Therefore, the "total" for each question is the combined partial credit of all the students, rather than the number of students who answered the question completely correctly.

This analysis can indicate areas where too many students do not demonstrate a full grasp of course knowledge, or it can indicate a poor question. For example on question 17, most students received half credit. This question asked them to formulate a citation properly, and few of them could do it completely correctly from memory. They usually had all the elements, just not in the proper order or correctly punctuated. Yet because they are encouraged to rely on guides rather than memorize the template, the question should be changed to allow use of guides.

On the other hand, question 5 and 11 only garnered three fifths of a perfect score, which shows that many students only received partial or no credit on these multiple listing questions. A higher score here for these questions would indicate more students could answer the several aspects of the question correctly, and that instruction was effective. Therefore, these lessons should be improved. The measure could also be improved, as it generates the same score regardless of whether half students received zero credit, or all students received half credit, which is important to know.

Number of correct answers on Midterm
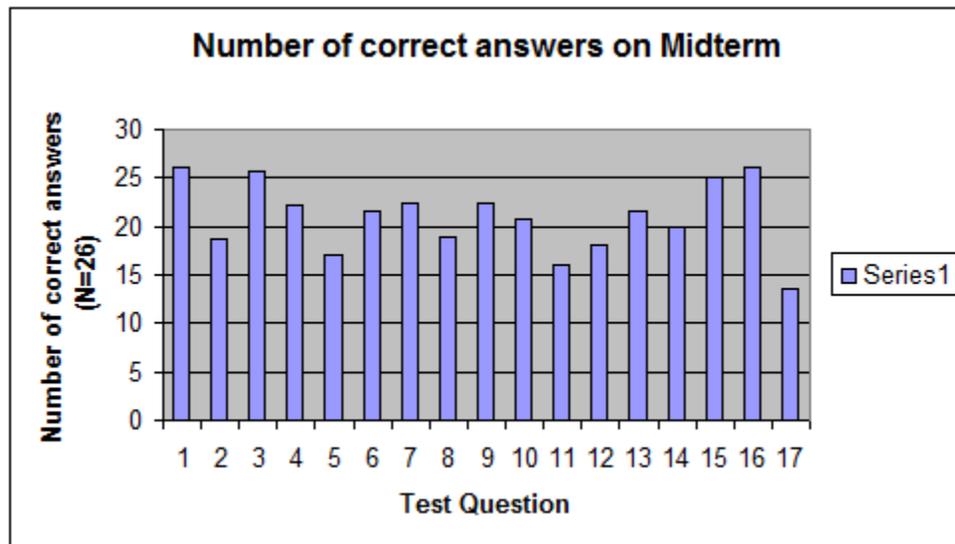
C. Analysis of key learning outcomes in final bibliography assignment

The final bibliography assignment is designed to demonstrate several key learning outcomes of the course. This is a "portfolio" type assignment, in which students review previous work and include improved versions based on instructor comments. While grading, the instructor applied a

simple rubric to each of the 26 bibliographies for assessment. As expected, citations were mostly correct. Relevance of resources as explained in annotations also was usually good. The students were less successful on the whole with the more difficult analysis of authority and credibility. These are higher level skills, and they are new to many students. Still, the mastery of them is fundamental, just as the other two outcomes are fundamental, so more focus should be placed on instruction and practice in this area, given that the other two areas are largely successful.

Assessment of Key outcomes of Final Bibliogrpahy
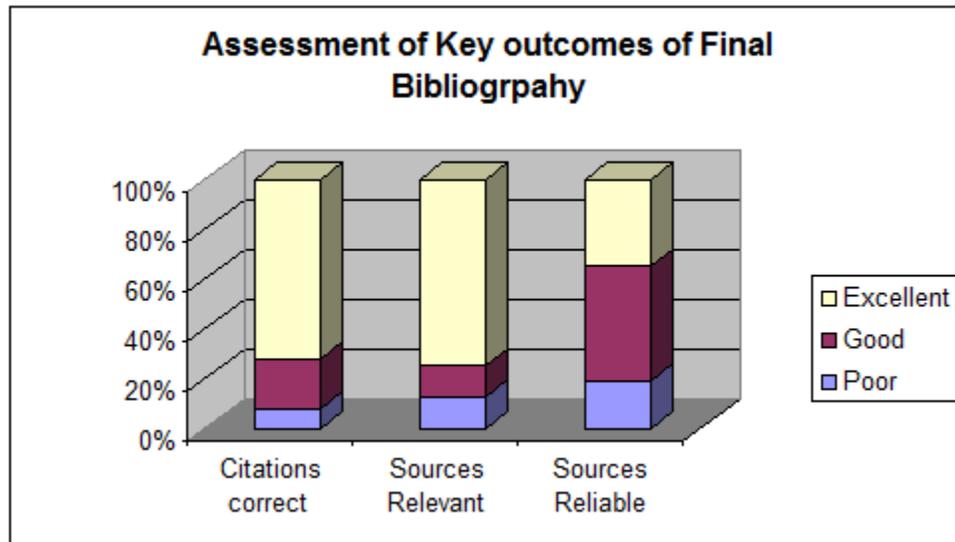
Submitted by Tim Held. Reviewed and approved by faculty 2009.