

Persevering During a Pandemic

The Resilience of Assessment Professionals During Challenging Times

By Giovanna Badia

As many schools and institutions of higher learning moved instruction online due to COVID-19, assessment of student learning outcomes also followed suit in various forms. Reports of assessment activities conducted in different institutions since March 2020 have started to emerge in the literature. This special issue of *Intersection: A Journal at the Intersection of Assessment and Learning* in collaboration with AALHE's *Emerging Dialogues* publication, seeks to add to the scholarly conversation on the topic by bringing together case studies of assessment practices at different institutions during COVID-19. These assessment practices apply both to activities in the front lines, i.e., embedded in courses, and those behind the scenes, that is those involved with supporting instructors in evaluating learning outcomes.

In the Fall 2020 issue of *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, Hong Jiao and Robert Lissitz describe current and future challenges that have arisen in educational assessment due to the coronavirus. These challenges include: comparing the assessment results of students learning onsite versus those learning remotely; unenthusiastic students who resort to asking others to do coursework on their behalf; customizing assessments to reflect the progress individual students have made with online learning, especially in cases when students have reviewed more content than the required minimum; and financial concerns, if the coronavirus continues to be the reality in the long-term, that might force institutions to abandon the administration of standardized tests, such as those required for admission to and graduation from specific programs. The authors foresee customized instruction and customized assessment becoming the standard to help address these challenges. They view these challenges as opportunities that “may change the current practices of assessment and help our field to work more closely with learning and instruction” (Jiao & Lissitz, 2020, p. 48).

The articles in this issue present different ways that assessment professionals are working with faculty, course lecturers, students, and campus units to evaluate teaching and learning, often adapting assessment instruments and procedures to specific contexts. These case studies include descriptions of:

- modifying assessment in a large class to incorporate multiple assignments and a final exam that was each worth a smaller percentage of the final course grade;
- moving a university-wide, in-person day of standardized student testing to an online environment;
- using student interviews to complement standardized surveys for learning about student experiences and knowledge, and conducting faculty focus groups to facilitate departmental reporting of learning outcomes assessment for satisfying accreditation requirements;
- offering online professional development opportunities and support on assessment topics to faculty and course lecturers;
- strategies for interacting with colleagues and campus partners in a remote working environment as well as lessons learned for enabling a committee to successfully collaborate on completing assessment projects virtually;

- leveraging existing policies and practices for a course management system to move from in-person to online assessment for courses; and
- employing curriculum maps to identify gaps in students' knowledge from a previous semester that need to be addressed in current and future terms.

The variety of methods described in this issue to engage campus partners and students during the coronavirus illustrate the resilience of assessment professionals when confronted with difficult circumstances.

References

Jiao, H., & Lissitz, R. W. (2020). What Hath the Coronavirus Brought to Assessment? Unprecedented Challenges in Educational Assessment in 2020 and Years to Come. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 39(3), 45-48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12363>

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