

2025 QM Research Online Conference Notes

Assessment Strategies in Online Courses in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Perspectives of Instructional Designers

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Brief Description:

This presentation will share results from a survey-based study to examine 103 instructional designer perceptions on assessment types, assessment strategies, feedback, and the role of AI in online assessments. Instructional designers at several universities were invited to participate in the study. The findings have implications for designers, instructors, administrators and students.

Travis Hincey - Summary & Reflection:

The presenters shared the findings of their research on assessment in online courses. The sample population was smaller and mostly instructional designers who volunteered, so the data could be skewed, but I think some interesting insights can help us with course design.

Assessment types **perceived** as more effective are case analysis, portfolios, and projects. While the least effective perception goes to online asynchronous discussions and exams. This confirms my own experience as a teacher, but also some anecdotal information from working with students. Generally, work that requires more open-

ended/higher-order thinking is considered a better measure, but also more engaging to do for the learner.

They did similar research on “assessment strategies” and admitted some confusion/ambiguity vs. the “assessment types” from before. More evidence that this research needs further development. Anyway, rubrics were seen as a favorite while ungraded and auto-graded work were perceived as ineffective for learning. Again, this allows room for subjectivity in thinking, going deeper than correct/incorrect. Ungraded assignments being seen as the least effective might point to the value of feedback to give an assignment a sense of value/purpose.

Speaking of feedback, text feedback was the favorite over A/V feedback. Assignments with no or missing feedback were perceived as very ineffective. Confirming more intuitions here, but I am surprised about the text feedback. We’ve been pushing faculty to use video for feedback so students can “read” body language, inflection, etc. in the criticisms vs. potentially reading critiques as overly negative while reading sterile black/white text. Maybe our assumption needs to be challenged here, maybe the text is good enough, if not preferred?

There was a brief discussion of the use of AI in assessment. It was mostly used to reinforce the push toward higher-order thinking. We should be careful not to use AI to produce closed-ended tests, that get autoscored and produce auto-generated feedback. Students, like us, will learn to detect this and, already seeking deeper learning, might dismiss too much AI class as being disingenuous. The job of faculty and designers is to find the right balance between using AI to speed up the job, but only to spend time on more meaningful work with students, and providing thoughtful guidance for their learning.