Use Exam Wrappers to Enhance Student Learning

What is an Exam Wrapper?

Exams administered early in the semester (such as in the third week) can assess students' current performance and offer insightful feedback on their comprehension and study techniques. To help students analyze their performance and reflect on their study habits, instructors can use an exam wrapper. Exam wrappers are based on the principles of metacognition and self-regulation, which typically prompt students to:

- Analyze their exam results and identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- Reflect on the effectiveness of their study strategies/habits.
- Make an action plan for future study or exam preparation based on their self-reflection.

How to Create Exam Wrappers?

There is no one right way to design exam wrappers. Consider the following guidelines:

- Use open-ended questions that elicit relevant and critical reflection from students.
- Include questions that address both the content (e.g., misunderstood topic) and the process of learning (e.g., exam preparation strategies).
- Provide clear and specific instructions on how to complete and submit the exam wrapper.

Instructors can use the Brightspace Assignments tool to create exam wrappers. Visit the CELT Brightspace page to find specific guidance on Assignments creation.

How to Use Exam Wrappers?

Making the exam wrappers available does not guarantee improved student learning. However, here are some general tips to consider:

- Explain to students the benefits of the exam wrapper and encourage critical reflection.
- Give students enough time and space to complete the exam wrapper, preferably right after the exam is returned to students.

- Encourage students to revisit their exam wrapper responses and monitor their progress and improvement.
- Encourage student completion by offering bonus points.

Instructors can use the exam wrapper responses and provide feedback to struggling students on their reflections and action plans. In addition, the data collected can also inform instructors' teaching and assessment practices.

Example Exam Wrapper Questions

The following are some examples of exam wrapper questions that instructors can adapt or modify for their own courses. Instructors can also create their own questions based on their specific goals and needs.

- **Exam Preparation**
    - How did you prepare for this exam? What study strategies did you use?
    - Approximately how much time did you spend studying?
    - Approximately how much time did you spend in each of the following activities in your exam preparation.
        - Review the homework solutions (Time:_____)
        - Review your own class notes (Time:_____)
        - Reread the relevant chapters in the textbook (Time:_____)
        - Take the practice exam (Time:_____)
        - Other (Please specify: _____) (Time:_____)
- **Expectation Gap**: How do you feel about your performance on this exam?
- **Error Categorization**:
    - What were the most common types of errors or mistakes that you made on the exam? What caused them?
    - Now that you have looked over your graded exam, calculate the points you lost due to the following:
        - Did Not Complete (Points: _____)
        - Carelessness (Points: _____)
        - Unfamiliar Material (Points: _____) [List the specific topic]
        - Misinterpreted (Points: _____) [List the specific topic]
- **Strength and Weakness**
    - What did you learn from this exam? What did it reveal about your strengths and weaknesses as a learner?
    - What were the most challenging parts of the exam for you? Why?
- **Action Plan**

- What are your goals for improvement for the next exam? How will you achieve them? What specific actions will you take?
- How will you use the feedback from this exam wrapper to prepare for future exams and other learning tasks?

Check the course progress reflection example [link the other document attached]. This activity encourages students to do a self-assessment of their overall study habits and their performance in an exam. Instructors can change the questions that are more relevant to their course design and exam setup. It should take the students 20 to 30 minutes to complete this activity.

Reference

Lovett, M. C. (2013). Make exams worth more than the grade: Using exam wrappers to promote metacognition. In M. Kaplan, N. Silver, D. LaVaque-Manty, & D. Meizlish (Eds.), *Using reflection and metacognition to improve student learning: Across the disciplines, across the academy* (pp. 18–52). San Francisco: Stylus Publishing.