This document presents detailed examples of four courses studied at Gordon College and Beit Berl College that employ alternative methods for assessing the achievements of the students enrolled. After describing the four courses, we will present additional examples of alternative student assessment used in other courses at these colleges.

Example #1: Formative assessment in the course “Diagnosis and Teaching of Arithmetic in Elementary Schools” (in the Special Education Department)

**Course description**

This course enables students to learn and gain experience in diagnosing and teaching arithmetic for school students with special education needs. During the course, the students participate in frontal instruction in classroom, while at the same time gaining experience by teaching special education pupils who come to the college once a week for an hour and a half. The students assist the school students with problems they encounter in arithmetic, in coordination with the class teacher, parents, the consultant, and the principal. In addition to the class lecturer, the students are supervised by two instructors from the college, one in the field of arithmetic the other in reading.

**Goal of the course**

The goal of the course is to develop the following fields of knowledge and skills: identifying different types of diagnoses; using the concept of the number as the basis for developing arithmetical knowledge in early childhood; developing the ability to diagnose using whole numbers; organizing arithmetical themes with reference to the curriculum; becoming familiar with mathematics learning strategies; becoming familiar with ways to conduct a diagnosis (dynamic and static); and gaining the ability to analyze findings and write recommendations for a work plan.

**Method of assessing students**

In order to assess the knowledge and expertise acquired by the students during the course, a table was prepared to enable the lecturers instructing the students (including in the workshops) to assess cumulative knowledge. Students are required to complete the table by themselves, with the goal of nurturing independent learning skills. The course lecturer assesses the students immediately after the completion of each assignment included in the table, awarding a numerical grade and giving textual feedback. The students are required to complete the following table:

In this table, the students record which assignments they worked on in each lesson, according to the required subjects:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Subject | Date submitted | Weighting in final grade | Grade and feedback |
| 1 | Writing an extensive background about the child |  | 5 pts. |  |
| 2 | Diagnosis + writing findings |  | 10 pts. |  |
| 3 | Writing a work plan |  | 20 pts. |  |
| 4 | Cumulative knowledge table  Impression of progress in writing plans (acc. to parameters determined by the individual instructors).  Reflective summary – by an individual or in pairs |  | 15 pts.  10 pts.  10 pts. |  |
| 5 | General impression of the student’s conduct: Attendance of all sessions with the child and training sessions; proactive request for instruction/guidance when needed; implementing guidance and material studied in lesson in practice itself; compliance with deadlines for submission of plans and reports; observing rules of behavior during practice; bringing relevant materials to lesson; ability to work in a team. |  | 30 pts. |  |

Example #2: Concluding evaluation of the project based learning (PBL) process in the course “Self-Awareness in Learning Processes” (in the Early Childhood Department)

**Description of the course and the PBL method**

This course was developed on the basis of the problem (or project) based learning method (PBL). This method is based on active and participatory study, including the completion of an inquiry process related to an outcome-oriented project or problem, serving to motivate the students’ activities. Participation in the course requires the completion of complex tasks by submitting a tangible deliverable such as a model, policy document, presentation, and so forth. The students introduce their deliverable to an audience (presentation), explain it, defend it, and engage in reflection on the learning process (Zohar, 2014). This method requires several basic conditions entailing a change in the teacher’s status: An autonomous teacher who shapes curricula according to their interest and that of the students; active and thoughtful learning by students, whereby the teacher’s role changes from a source of information to a guide; new and relevant assessment methods that encourage a complex deliverable (project); and processes of investigative learning, and personal and group cooperation.

**The goal of the course**

The goal of the course is to expose students to learning in the context of problems and dilemmas; to provide familiarity with the developmental process of the learner and the complexity of the various factors that influence learning; an understanding of the process necessary for the purpose of learning comprehension; the implementation of processes that influence learning; and experience using the active learning method. At the end of the course the students will be capable of composing a productive question; raising problems that require solution in the field; proposing a project that provides a response to their questions; presenting to the class both the process and the finished deliverable; and documenting learning in an academic report.

**Method of student assessment**

During the course the students are required to engage in regular reading of relevant materials; to cooperate in developing a project; and to present a rationale and project based on the models and the theoretical background they have studied. Student assessment is divided into two key components:

1. Cooperation in class and developing the project: 50%.

2. Submitting and presenting a rationale and project based on the models studied and on reading material: 50%.

The first component is based on the assessment of the cooperative process and the student’s ability to work in a team and to assist their group (and other groups) to make progress. This process is examined by the instructor on an ongoing basis in each lesson and recorded in the table of attendance and social performance. The evaluated parameters relate to involvement and cooperativeness, positive and progress-oriented communication with peers in the group; the ability to work in a team and impart knowledge to others, and so forth.

The second component is based on the evaluation of the project submitted by each group. The project includes a review of the literature, assessment indices for the project, a detailed description of the work process, collective and individual reflection on the process, etc. The submitted project is evaluated as follows:

Since the grade is individual, every student receives the grade awarded to their group for the project, with the addition of 50% relating to their personal performance, based on the aforementioned criteria, such as cooperation, participation, attentiveness, and helping their group and other groups over the course of the semester.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Subject | Date submitted | Weighting in final grade |
| 1 | Selection of criterion (overall goal) from two models learned in the course (the self-awareness of learning processes model and the self-direction in learning model) and defining the subject of the project. |  | 5 pts. |
| 2 | Writing a rationale based on articles (summaries according to APA rules). |  | 25 pts. |
| 3 | Describing the stages of the process according to the selected process, including writing detailed goals for each stage. |  | 30 pts. |
| 4 | Reflection on the learning process according to rubrics, addressing the six “A” questions for shaping a successful project. Recommendation: integrative writing including the components of self-directed learning (cognition, metacognition, motivation, behavioral-motivational factors) and the personal process undergone during the course. |  | 10 pts. |
| 5 | List of bibliographical sources according to APA rules. |  | 5 pts. |
| 6 | Discussion of the way the presentation will be conducted and criteria for evaluating the project and the deliverable for the community. |  | 20 pts. |
| 7 | General impression of the work process in the spirit of cooperative and participatory self-learning. |  | 5 pts. |

Example #3: Assessment rubrics (for video clip deliverables) developed jointly with the learners in the course “Evaluating Teaching Processes” (an in-service training course for teachers)

**Course description**

This course discusses teaching processes in the classroom using video clips recorded by the participating teachers in their classes. The course is intended for elementary school teachers. It is conducted using a distance-learning method (synchronic online course) using video lectures (Blackboard) together with video clips that the teachers record in their classes, upload to the lesson, and analyze together. Learning in the course is characterized by joint action and by discourse and analysis relating to the participants’ own deliverables and those of others. The teachers in the course learn through participatory and self-investigative learning, developing diverse skills, such as initiative, creative thinking, investigation, asking questions, self-directed learning, and participatory dialogue.

**The goals of the course**

This course has four key goals: 1) To expose the teachers to the essence of meaningful learning processes for teachers and school students, such as: the importance of the order of processes conveyed in the classroom, conditions for cognitive processes that develop metacognition, processes that reinforce motivation to learning, etc. 2) To develop self-awareness as a factor promoting meaningful learning. 3) To nurture profound thought in learning and teaching, and to provide experience in evaluating authentic teaching processes. 4) To promote and deepen the practical analysis of learning processes.

**Method of student assessment** The students in the course are required to upload video clips and to participate in analyzing them (50%); to prepare rubrics for assessment (used in evaluating the clips uploaded by the teachers, implementing peer assessment, and thereby also improving the assessment rubrics, which are a secondary deliverable of the course) (40%); and to participate actively in the sessions (10%). The teaching deliverables (the video clips) are subjected to peer evaluation, using criteria to assess their performance and to self-assess the performance of students and teachers in the class. The assessment criteria are as follows:

• Information was transmitted

• Several fields of knowledge were integrated into the class

• The lessons clearly reflect cognitive flexibility in teaching and learning – demonstrating one’s ability to use ancillary materials, such as books, computers, and professionals, while exercising discretion

• A creative approach to the subject

• Illustration

• Developing self-direction in learning – the teacher functions as a guide (allowing children to ask / think / answer by themselves)

• Dividing work among the pupils for the purposes of cooperation – the teacher’s role as a facilitator

• Active and cooperative dialogue – asking questions to stimulate thought

• Directing thinking through exploration (leading the children to think rather than thinking for them)

• Leaving space for trial and error

• Meeting timetables – proper and efficient management of time, including weekly progress toward the outcome

• Reviewing the literature according to the project content, conveying the message to the community, developing a project with added value

• Ability to write and integrate texts; punctuation, separation into paragraphs, citing references

• Experience in producing a deliverable. Experience in the process, including reflection and drawing conclusions about the process

• Ability to assess over the course of the assignment, addressing what was said to me, my actions, and the assignment at hand

• Ability to self-reflect upon completing the assignment

• Empowerment from the students

Example #4: Assessment using an alternative task set in the course “Evaluation of Educational Programs and Projects” (in the MA track in Planning and Evaluation of Studies)

**Course description**

The course addresses basic concepts relating to the evaluation of educational projects and programs, exposing the students to key components of the evaluation process and of the work of the evaluator. The course employs a hybrid method combining frontal lessons and distance learning lessons (using the Moodle system). Instruction in the course is accomplished through lectures; distributing articles and chapters for reading; uploading final presentations; undertaking assignments that support learning (including group discussions) and so forth.

**The goals of the course**

The goals of the course are: 1) To raise awareness among the learners about the importance of evaluating educational programs and projects within the education system; 2) To provide theoretical and methodological knowledge in planning and executing the evaluation of curricula and educational projects; 3) To develop basic evaluation skills relating to the performance of the evaluator; 4) To raise awareness of the standards to be met by an evaluator.

**Method of student assessment**

During the course the students are required to complete various tasks relating to different aspects of their learning, in an effort to connect the theoretical knowledge they have acquired to practical aspects of the evaluator’s work in the field. Some of the assessment tasks are undertaken as individuals, others as a group. The students are required to complete assignments during the course, keep them in an individual folder, and submit the folder at the end of the course. At the beginning of the course the students are given a file including the list of tasks comprising the folder and the relative weight of each assignment in the final grade. The assignments are alternative assessment tasks, some having an authentic character relevant to practice, others based on the learner’s personal connection to various themes and cognitive tasks on a higher level (such as preparing a concept map). One of the tasks requires peer assessment: at the end of the course each student is required to submit a written personal reflection on the learning process in the course. Assessment rubrics are attached to course tasks, helping the students to understand what is expected of them and enabling the lecturer and students to implement assessment on the basis of clear criteria.

**The rationale behind presenting a number of “small” tasks, undertaken during the course, rather than a single “large” project at the end, is based on several considerations:**

1) Creating an ongoing learning process throughout the course, leading to the inculcation of the content under study and serving as a foundation for content to come.

2) Enabling the use of diverse assessment tools with different characteristics, reflecting the variance among the learners and the adaptation of different tools for different goals. This approach also enables the assessment of a wider range of content and skills.

3) Students enjoy several opportunities to demonstrate their achievements and abilities, since the grade is not based on a single assignment (even if they are less successful in one assignment, this does not significantly damage their grade).

4) Assessment with a formative influence on teaching enabling the lecturer to receive feedback during the course itself. The students’ comments and difficulties may help the lecturer to identify difficulties in understanding the material and to adjust teaching accordingly (whether by providing additional explanations and examples for the class as a whole, making various changes to the assignment itself, or providing individual assistance to students who have encountered difficulties).

5) Meeting a minimum set of criteria. The students must gain a “pass” grade in each of their assignments, thereby controlling the quality of learning in the course in components that the lecturer has defined as vital and essential in the area.

**Course task details (and the weight of each task in the final grade):**

⭘ Task #1 – developing a **concept map (10%)**

In this assignment the students were asked to read a chapter from a book discussing the social and historical context of the concept of evaluation. The chapter includes a large number of concepts relating to different periods, figures, perceptions, and approaches. The students were required to develop a concept map including 20 concepts (10 of which were given to them as “compulsory concepts” and 10 additional concepts they were asked to extract from the chapter). They were given the rubrics for evaluating the concept map (see appendix) together with the instructions for the task.

The students developed a hierarchical concept map, including key concepts, secondary concepts, arrows linking the different concepts, and connecting words/phrases on the arrows. This process required the students to acquire a profound understanding of the various concepts, particularly the relationships between them. The students must also conduct analysis in order to locate both key concepts and the derived secondary concepts, and finally formulate a synthesis in order to present all the concepts as a single coherent system. The students are also required to distinguish between principal and secondary details and to show a high level of conceptualization regarding the connections between concepts.

The process of preparing the map often leads the student to “self-discussion,” prevarications, doubts, re-readings of the chapter, deletions, and numerous attempts to produce a product that meets requirements. The students’ reports show that while the assignment requires a considerable cognitive effort, after developing the map they gain a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment, due to their success in meeting the challenge. They feel that they have a much deeper understanding of the chapter than they would have had they not prepared the map.

⭘ Task #2 (individual) – **composing a focused question (5%) and answering a peer’s question (10%)**

In this task the students were asked to read an article and compose an open question focusing on higher order thinking, the answer to which is around half a page of text. The questions were posted on the forum of the course website, so that they were available to all the students. A week later, the students were asked to choose and answer one of the questions composed by their peers.

This task is based on the perception that in order to ask a question (and particularly in the case of questions on a level of higher-order thinking), you must understand what you are asking. To this end, the students were required to read the article and understand it thoroughly. However, the approach in which the students raise the questions, rather than the lecturer, shifts the responsibility to the learners, allowing them to connect to relevant issues that interest them. The basic difference between a passive learner (the subject and recipient of assessment) and an active learner (who plays an active role in shaping assessment) motivates more meaningful and relevant learning, enhancing motivation among the learners, and making learning more accessible and more responsive to the high level of variance in the class.

The **element of choice** granted to the students, both in composing their question and in answering a question raised by a peer in the course, is an important and meaningful component in the students’ experience of performing assessment tasks. Students who are given an opportunity to choose feel that they bear responsibility, are trusted, and are recognized as committed to making an informed choice. In most cases this succeeds in improving motivation, satisfaction, and desire to complete the evaluation assignment to a high standard.

⭘ Task #3 + #4 (group) – **authentic tasks (25%).**

These two tasks were given as group assignments, with the goal of stimulating discussion and multidimensional thought, and of raising diverse proposals for solutions. In the first task the students were asked to analyze an evaluation report according to conceptual dimensions. In the second, they were required to compose evaluation questions based on the CIPP model studied in the course. These two tasks give students a chance to experience the work of an evaluator in practice, complementing their study of the theories that underlie this work. The connection to the daily work of evaluators makes these assignments authentic, relevant, and practical. The transition from theory to practice cannot be taken for granted, and must be experienced in order to provide the learner with a first opportunity to bridge these two dimensions.

⭘ Task #5 (individual) – **developing a “program theory” (10%) + peer evaluation (5%).**

In this task the students were first asked to sketch a “program theory” – a concept they studied in one of the lessons. This term basically refers to a type of flowchart presenting the things as they are and showing those components of the program which are expected to influence the creation of desired results. The students are required to show a thorough understanding of existing circumstances versus desired reality, and of the possible theoretical components that could lead to change. Naturally, no single diagram is correct. However, any diagram must show a solid rationale. All the diagrams are uploaded onto the forum on the website, and each student is asked to assess the deliverable of one of the other students, applying criteria determined jointly by the lecturer and the students.

The grade for this task is based on the lecturer’s assessment and peer assessment.

⭘ Task #6 (individual) – 10% - **writing a personal reflection.**

In this task the students were asked to write a reflection relating to the learning process in the course. In order to help the students understand the concept of reflection, they were given a number of reflective questions relating to the following topics: personal insights; the distance between where they were at the beginning of the course versus its end; changed perceptions or attitudes; an assessment of team work and their personal performance within the team; things they would have done differently with hindsight; difficulties, challenges, successes, and disappointments they experienced during the learning process and so on. They were required to address at least five of the ten questions presented to them. The students’ reflections enable them to engage in introspection regarding the processes they underwent during their learning in the course. Moreover, and just as important, they provide the lecturer with meaningful feedback facilitating the informed development and planning of future courses.

We will now present some selected additional examples of alternative assessment in academic courses. We begin with several possibilities for alternative exams, followed by discussion of the possible use of class presentations.

**Alternative exams**

The concept “alternative exams” refers to exams in which the conditions and format differ from those of traditional exams, the latter characterized by a high level of standardization (uniform time allocation, venue, exam conditions and environment, and exam paper). In most standard exams, students are not permitted to bring ancillary materials with them. In addition, the exam questions are often synthetic, requiring learning by rote, memorizing of extensive study material, and providing a single “correct” answer (particularly in multiple choice tests). However, due to the disadvantages of traditional testing – both in terms of the cognitive skills examined and in terms of the impact of emotional and psychological aspects (such as anxiety, pressure, high expectations, etc.) on learners’ achievements – different formats have been developed over the years for administering exams. We will give three examples here of alternative exams used in various courses:

A. Take-home test. In the “Educational Evaluation” course, which introduces theories, issues, and basic concepts in the field of educational measurement and evaluation, the students were assessed at the end of the course with a take-home test. This exam was conducted on a uniform date with a fixed time allocation (four hours), but the students were allowed to choose the venue where they wished to complete the exam, provided they had a computer with internet access. The exam paper was sent to the students as a file on the course website, and solutions were sent to the lecturer by each student after completing the exam.

The rationale for allocating time in a manner similar to standard exams is to prevent a situation where the “exam” becomes a “final paper.” In other words, the idea is to maintain the format of an exam in terms of focus on questions, a relatively limited scope of the answers, number of questions adapted to the allocated time, and so forth.

The students are allowed to use any material at their disposal, but are not permitted to contact other students during the exam. It is important to note that the problem of copying, which is encountered in the submission of projects, also exists in this form of exam.

The exam questions were designed to implement study material in different contexts, such as: comparison between a model studied by the students and a new model presented to them; analyzing a video clip using the concepts they learned; questions relating to sections to which the students had not yet been exposed (from an academic or journalistic article, book, etc.) but which were related to the ideas studied in the course. The exam required profound understanding and application of the material; accordingly, in most cases, the fact that the exam was open and took place “at home,” did not help students who lacked a command of the themes studied.

The students who participated and were tested in this course reported that the possibility to choose the exam setting, shape it to meet their needs, and use the study material freely significantly reduced the pressure and anxiety they faced during the exam.

B. An exam comprised mainly of questions composed by the students. The course “Evaluation: Toward Effective Educational Leadership” (MA in Educational Policy and Administration) exposed the students to the diverse components of educational evaluation: evaluation of school students and educational staff, evaluation of programs, evaluation tools for effective management, etc.). At the end of the course, the students were assessed by means of a final exam. The course was a distance learning one, and students were required to study 14 lessons independently. After completing each lesson, every student was required to compose three questions based on the content of the lesson: two multiple choice questions, one at a level of lower-order thinking and one at a level of higher-order thinking (the students studied the distinction between these levels of thinking in another course as part of their degree studies) and one “focused open” question (requiring an answer of up to five lines). The students uploaded the questions to a forum designated for this purpose during the lesson, all the students being exposed to the range of questions composed by their peers.

At the end of the course, the students took an exam in which 80 points were allocated to questions from the pool of questions composed by the students themselves during the course (the questions were selected by the lecturer according to content, level of difficulty, and type of question), and 20 points for two open questions composed by the lecturer.

On the one hand, this method allows the students to approach the exam with a high level of confidence, having already studied and seen most of the exam questions (thereby significantly reducing the element of surprise when they receive the exam). On the other hand, the inclusion of the lecturer’s questions means that they must study all the material, and not confine themselves to the pool of questions created during the course. It is important to note that students who study courses using the distance learning method often feel that they lack any indication of as to the extent which they understand of the study material over the course of their study. This method, which provides the students with numerous questions to examine themselves in each lesson, can give learners a good indication of their command of the material and their capabilities.

C. Exams with “cheat-sheets”: As part of the course “Quantitative Research Methods,” which taught basic concepts in research methods and descriptive statistics, the students were assessed at the end of the course by means of an exam in which they were permitted to bring in five cheat-sheets they had prepared in advance. **We can suggest three main advantages to allowing students to bring some cheat-sheets into the exam:**

Firstly, the students are not required to memorize the material, but they must show higher cognitive capabilities, such as applying the concepts in new research situations, synthesizing different fields of content they have learned, and evaluating the quality of the methodological sections in a given study.

Secondly, the process of preparing the cheat-sheets is in itself a learning process, both in terms of the need to review all the study material and in terms of individual thought regarding the best way to present the material on a limited number of pages. This allows students to choose the most effective and convenient preparation method for themselves, thereby responding to the variance among learners in terms of their command of different subjects, the difficulties they encounter in subjects, and their preferred form of presentation. For example, some students will prefer to present the material in a visual and diagrammatic way, while others will choose to include a large amount of text, summarize using bullet points, or include examples of a range of possible exercises. In addition, in order for the cheat-sheets to be useful during the exam, they must be legible, clear, and organized according to an order that is logical to the learner and which allows rapid and easy location of material during the exam.

Thirdly, bringing ancillary material into the exam helps the student emotionally. When asked to complete a short survey after the exam relating to the benefit of the cheat sheets, the students reported that bringing in the sheets significantly reduced their stress level and their fears before and during the exam. Moreover, it increased their motivation to study and succeed in the exam, helped them demonstrate their capabilities during the exam, and made them feel that the exam was fairer. It is important to note that allowing the use of ancillary material did not lead to “grade inflation” – the distribution of grades received was within the accepted distribution range in academia.

**Presentations of deliverables from assignments and peer assessment**

The following example combines several principles of alternative assessment as reflected in the assessment of students in the course “ Assessment for Learning,” which was provided for trainee teachers. The course exposes the students to the changes that have occurred in attitudes to teaching-learning- assessment, focusing on alternative approaches for the assessment of achievements and practical tools for applying these approaches.

During the second part of the course, after the students have acquired theoretical knowledge and the principles of the alternative assessment approaches, they are required to develop a practical assignment to use with their future pupils. The assignment they develop must be from their field of specialization and intended for a specific population. It must assess clear goals that the students must define, and must meet all the main criteria of a practical assignment. The assignment is implemented as a group, with the goal of ensuring that the group discourse and the ideas contributed by each participants help to define an original, authentic, interesting, and challenging assignment—requiring complex cognitive performances and constituting meaningful learning for the students for whom it is intended. Since the development of a practical assignment is a complex process combining a wide range of skills and fields of intelligence, group work allows the expression of the different fields of intelligence in the group.

The instructions given to the students include two rubrics: rubrics to be used by the lecturer in evaluating their work, and rubrics for peer assessment. The assignment was implemented partly in class, with the lecturer’s guidance and direction, and partly outside class. The final three lessons in the course are devoted to presenting the assignments to the class and submitting them for peer assessment. The students are asked to present the assignment they have developed to the class, treating the group of students as if they were the group of school students for whom the assignment is intended. Thus they must use any method they have chosen (a brief activity, video clip, presentation, poster, etc.) to stimulate the students’ interest in performing the assignment, just as they are required to do in the classroom where they will use the assignment in the future.

Peer assessments are administered during the group‘s presentation. Each student is asked to use a “peer assessment rubrics” sheet to assess the deliverable presented by their peers. The students are asked to assess and address each criterion, so that the group presenting can improve and enrich its deliverable with the assistance of the assessment. Each group is allocated 15 minutes to present its deliverable, after which five minutes are allocated for writing peer assessment. Up to five minutes are also allocated for a brief discussion of the assignment presented, offering an opportunity for the students to share their feelings and experiences and to thank the presenters. At the end of the presentation, all assessments completed by the students are forwarded to the group that made the presentation, so that is can make improvements ahead of final submission.

**This format of class presentations and peer assessment benefits the students in several respects:**

A. Since the peer assessment is undertaken before the final submission to the lecturer, it functions as formative assessment, enabling correction and improvement in order to produce a better assignment.

B. The students are exposed to diverse examples of assignments they can use in the future as teachers. The students report that the exposure to their peers’ deliverables during the course was the highlight of this course, effectively bridging between the material studied in the course and practice.

C. Peer assessment using clear criteria develops the students’ abilities in self- assessment regarding their own assignments, as well as their skill in providing feedback – a vital and essential component in the work of the teacher. We should add that the involvement of students in assessing their peers deepens and influences their perception of assessment as a complex and multidimensional concept.