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Assessing Self-Directed Learning for International Students in a Graduate Program

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Abstract

Self-directed learning (SDL) can be a powerful method for increasing student learning and engagement. However, incorporating SDL into a rigorous academic program poses assessment challenges. First, how much weight should be given to SDL compared to traditional learning modalities? In addition, how should SDL be evaluated? Should assessment be based only on indirect evidence of general improvement or should student work be evaluated based on the plan and how well it is executed? Finding answers to these questions will help us build a stronger SDL program that includes resources for students and systems for documenting work and assessing progress.

After consultations with Dr. Douglas Kaufmann, an educational psychologist at BU Medical school, our plan was modified to include self-regulated learning.

Definitions:

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) learning that is guided by _metacognition_ (thinking about one's thinking), _strategic action_ (planning, monitoring, and evaluating personal progress against a standard), and _motivation to learn_.[1]

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) learning in which students assess their needs, formulate learning goals, make action plans and carry them out, with or without guidance from others

Specs Grading a pass/fail grading system in which students are given a short list of specifications that they must achieve on an assignment.

Most Useful Sources:

Linda Nilson: _Creating Self-Regulated Learners: Strategies to Strengthen Students' Self-Awareness and Learning Skills_
Stylus Publishing 2013

Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time

Douglass, Carolinda; Morris, Sherrill R. Student Perspectives on Self-Directed Learning, _Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning_, v14 n1 p13-25 Feb 2014

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[1] Zimmerman, B. J. (1990). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. _Educational Psychologist, 25_(1), 3-17. doi: https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2501_2