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Assessment

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Overview

1. Introduction

Assessment is an essential part of university teaching. Exams provide students with **feedback on their achievements**. Positive examination results allow students to **progress in their study programme** and **graduate**. Ideally, competence-based assessment determines to what extent students have **achieved the intended learning outcomes**. In order to develop high-quality testing and assessing design, it is useful first to take a closer look at its functions.

2. Functions

In university teaching, assessment fulfils the following key functions:

- Assessment **guides student learning**. Clear requirements, good exam preparation, challenging assignments, as well as fair and nuanced grading encourage students to adopt active and engaged learning habits and to develop a realistic self-perception. Transparent requirements provide students with information on the goals they should aim for, and inspire in-depth learning. Nuanced, performance based grading (see below [link]), provides students with important information on how well they fulfilled the requirements, which helps them to prepare for future exams. Based on exam results, teachers gain insight into the extent to which students have understood course contents, and therefore how well they have taught them, and deduce adjustments if necessary.

- Assessment implements the examination regulations as stipulated by the curriculum. It fulfils the function of **performance evidence** and is paramount for students progressing in a study programme.

- Grades **inform third parties** (other universities and employers) on the levels of competence achieved by students and graduates. Nuanced and performance-based assessment increases the explanatory power of grades to outside. It is in the interest of a study programme, the university, and students that graduates truly attain the knowledge and competencies (skills) expected in their study programme.

3. Implementing Quality Assessment

To enhance the quality of your assessment strategy, you may want to consider the following points:

- **Coordination between exams:** The intended student learning outcomes in the curriculum describe the knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire as the result of a learning process. Along with the learning outcomes, the curriculum specifies the framework for assessing them—generally on the module level.

  Typically, since several courses prepare students for a module exam, we recommend that **instructors coordinate**. This coordination can mean using comparable **requirements**, **assessment and grading designs** and **criteria** in parallel courses, or coordinating **teaching and exam content**, and discussing the exams at the end of the semester.

- **Transparent examination requirements:** Students gather hints for exam preparation from the information teachers provide on exam content and evaluation criteria . The exam requirements should be based on intended student learning outcomes and the expected workload (ECTS credits). We recommend providing all relevant exam information for students in one place. In the case of parallel exams, students should be divided into groups well in advance.

- **Competence-based assessment:** Just as the curriculum includes student learning outcomes expressed as competencies (knowledge and skills), exams assess both knowledge and skills, and thus encourage students to truly attain the intended learning outcomes. [Entsprechende Links einfügen, wenn Übersetzungen vorhanden sind]

- **Culture of feedback that encourages learning:** Exams serve to evaluate student performance. They also document student successes through grades. Moreover, exams and grades offer teachers an opportunity to provide detailed feedback to students on their performance that address both achievements and suggestions for improvement. A **culture of feedback** put into practice contributes to students feeling appreciated and to further developing as learners. Furthermore, it helps teachers to improve their teaching and support students prepare for exams. More information (https://infopool.univie.ac.at/en/home-page/feedback/)

- **Fair and nuanced grading:** Grades can only fulfil their evaluation function when they reliably differentiate between various performance levels.[1] Nuanced grading combined with transparent objectives and evaluation criteria help students to **align their activities with the intended outcomes**, and to structure their own learning better. Giving the highest grade to all students or constantly grading too strictly discourages students, which can lead to passivity and have negative consequences on students' perceived self-efficacy. In such cases, students may not see any value in making an effort. Research has shown that students perceive grades as fair when the requirements are known and transparent, and when they receive an explanation of their grades. They even consider "strict" evaluation as fair, when the evaluation is **nuanced** and uses the **entire spectrum of grades**.[2]

Please see the Teaching Manual (https://intra.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/download/Teaching_Manual.pdf) and the website of the Office of the Studienpräses (https://studienpraeses.univie.ac.at/) (in German) for information relating to study-law and administrative aspects (e.g. proctoring exams, exam review, deadlines).

References:

[1] Bücker, S. & Deimling, M. et al. "Prüfung." In *Gute Hochschullehre. Eine evidenzbasierte Orientierungshilfe edited by* Schneider, M. & Mustafić, M., 119-152. Berlin: Springer, 2015. Download als E-Ressource: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-662-45062-8_6 [last accessed on: 22.10.2019].

[2] Schindler, C. & Bauer, J. et al. "Prüfungen als Indikatoren für den Studienerfolg." In *Handbuch Studienerfolg*, 62-79. Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft 2015. https://www.stifterverband.org/handbuch-studienerfolg [last accessed on: 22.10.2019].

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