

Assessment Process Feedback Example Course Delivery Changes

1. In Spring 2006, CSci 372 students were given an assignment in which they were asked to read and summarize an article of relevance to the topic area of the course. After the semester was over, the assessment committee scrutinized student responses, which revealed that most students accurately reported the key points of the article, but very few provided any sense of critique, evaluation, or discernment regarding what they had read. As a result, in spring semester of 2007, students in CSci 467, when assigned an article to read, are being carefully and specifically asked to go beyond simplistic reporting of the article in their report, to provide a more detailed analysis and critique of the material.
2. In Fall 2005, students in a section of CSci 161 were asked to complete an extensive assignment involving programming of heapsort and quicksort algorithms for sorting. The students were to conduct empirical testing of both procedures and report on performance, including scalability of the procedures. Several students reported comparisons that were counter to theory, and, in some cases, realized that their results were counter to theory. In response, it was decided that this type of assignment requires explicit directions concerning verification of code correctness, and a valid, albeit limited, experimental design. Professors offering subsequent sections of CSci 161 are being asked to be attentive to these recommendations in their configuring of assignment requirements for the course.
3. In Spring semester of 2006, students in one section of CSci 160 were given an assignment in which they were asked to program the game of Pong in Java. Completion of the assignment was facilitated by providing the students with template code for a game that has some similarities with Pong. The assignment is considered to be an excellent exercise involving both problem solving and analysis. However, the student responses varied considerably in terms of reporting their understanding of the distinction between the problem solving and analysis aspects of the assignment. More specifically, some students focused on the problem-solving aspects of design, coding, and testing their program; while others focused on analysis of the merits of alternative approaches. This prompted the assessment committee to recommend modified explanations of our rating scales for outcomes (to provide sharper distinctions between these aspects) and also to mature how instructors of CSci 160 craft such assignments in the future.