Competency-Based Education and Performance Assessment: WGU's Model for Success

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Western Governors University
Today’s Presentation

Today we will address the following:

- Background on WGU
- How competency-based education can lead to improved efficiencies, student engagement, and employer satisfaction
- Core components of competency-based education
- How performance assessments can be used to determine competency and how these assessments can be scaled online
- How to establish a competency-based model, regardless of educational context
Western Governors University

The principal mission of Western Governors University is to improve the quality of—and expand access to—post-secondary educational opportunities by providing a means for individuals to learn, independent of time and place, and for individuals to earn competency-based degrees and other credentials that are credible to both academic institutions and employers.

- Responsiveness to employment and societal needs
- A focus on competency-based education
- Expanding access
- Cost effectiveness
- Development of technology infrastructure
A Few Facts and Figures

- Chartered in 1996
- Incorporated as a private, non-profit university in 1997
- Began accepting students in 1999
- Currently over 20,000 students from all 50 states
- Accredited nationally and regionally: NWCCU, DETC, NCATE, CCNE, CAHIM
- Recognition from USDLA, SLOAN-C, McGraw-Hill
- Invited to participate in the TPAC pilot with Stanford and AACTE
Notable WGU Information

- Competency-based educational model; focus on outcomes
- Teacher Education, Business, Information Technology, and Health Professions
- Bachelors and Masters degrees, full-time status
- Asynchronous, non-standard terms
- Field experiences offering close geographical proximity to students
- Working, adult students
- Affordable
Why Competency-Based Education?

- **Improved Efficiencies**
  - Reduces likelihood of inefficient use of resources because learning is directly aligned to outcomes
  - Allows for accelerated progress
  - Gives credit for prior learning/experience; eliminates redundant coursework

- **Student Engagement**
  - Streamlines education for time-crunched working adult students
  - Attracts students seeking to improve life circumstances who are serious about school

- **Employer Satisfaction**
  - Competencies aligned to real-world skill sets
  - Clear outcomes provide employers with definable skill sets they can expect from employees
Core Components of Competency-Based Education
Competency-Based Education at WGU

- Domains of competence established by subject matter experts from academic and business entities
- Degrees are awarded based on demonstrations of competence
- A variety of examination methods utilized to assess competence. Pass/Fail.
- Aggregation of performance data forms the body of evidence to verify that a student is competent
- Opportunity to validate competency gained from life and work experience
- Learning resources and mentoring support for students so they can gain the competence they lack
- Access to education free from geographical or scheduling constraints
Competency-Based Education: 
Start with the end in mind

1. What must students know?
   - What academic and job-ready knowledge and skills are required for a person to be considered competent in this discipline?

2. To what degree must students know it?
   - To what level must a student demonstrate mastery of that knowledge and skill to be considered competent?

3. How will we know that students know it?
   - How will we assess competence? What types of artifacts or demonstrations must a student produce to show that he or she is competent?
Translations

- What must students know?
- Program = Core plus concentration
- Major = Concentration
- Courses = Domain

- To what degree must students know it?
- Competencies = Outcomes

- How will we know that students know it?
- Assessment of Competencies/Outcomes
Big Ideas

- Outcomes identified and clearly articulated
- Outcomes operationalized to be observable and measurable
- Curricular planning and implementation aligned to outcomes
- Competency-based approach to education can be integrated into traditional models
Measuring Competencies
Measuring Competencies/Outcomes

Key Components:
- Observable
- Measurable
- Operationalized
- Knowledge-level skills
- Higher-order skills
- Application of skills
- Variety of Methods
  - Live performance
  - Simulation
  - Artifact/deliverable/product
  - Written artifact
  - Other
- Multiple Measures

WGU currently utilizes:
- Performance Assessments
- Selected Response Assessments
- Field Experience Assessments
- Capstone Assessments
  - Proctored/Non-proctored
  - Pass/Fail
Performance Assessments

- Effective for measuring competence because they:
  - Assess ability to apply knowledge and skills
  - Elicit responses which demonstrate higher-order skills
  - Elicit relevant connections to real-world or actual circumstances
  - Incorporate cross-cutting themes
  - Reduce likelihood of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty
  - Are open-ended, so a variety of plausible responses are possible. This fosters opportunities for more substantial demonstrations of competence.
Performance Assessment at WGU

- A single performance assessment consists of a number of component performance tasks
- Subject-matter-expert evaluators
- Rubric scoring
  - Analytic
  - Holistic
  - Decision rules
  - Revision policies
  - Delivered via TaskStream
  - Academic authenticity – Turnitin.com/TaskStream; Caveon; full-time staff
- Current volume: 43,000 performance task submissions a month
  - 482,326 tasks in 2010
- 3-calendar-day scoring turnaround
- Scalability – made possible because of a single tool (TaskStream) for development, student, evaluator, and reporting
Immediate Feedback and Rubric Score

Evaluation Results

Author: John Doe
Evaluated by: Sury Q (evaluator's name is not visible to author)
Date Evaluated: 11/13/2010 06:05:17 PM (MST)
DRF template: ELT1 Teaching Methods - Literacy & Elem Language Arts & Handwriting (V1 UNDERGRAD-0510)
Program: ELT1 TM-Lit,ElemLngArt,&Hndwrng(V1UNDERGRAD-0510)

Evaluation Summary for TM-Lit, ElemLangArts, & Hndwr: ELT Task 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Score</th>
<th>Meets requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall comments</td>
<td>This submission is excellent. The candidate has provided great lesson plans for narrative and expository writing with creative and engaging activities. Keep up the good work!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed Results (Rubric used: ELT Task 12)

Articulation of Response (clarity, organization, mechanics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(0) Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>(1) Does Not Meet Standard</th>
<th>(2) Minimally Competent</th>
<th>(3) Competent</th>
<th>(4) Highly Competent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The candidate provides unsatisfactory articulation of response.</td>
<td>The candidate provides weak articulation of response.</td>
<td>The candidate provides limited articulation of response.</td>
<td>The candidate provides adequate articulation of response.</td>
<td>The candidate provides substantial articulation of response.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criterion Score: 4.00
Comments on this criterion: The task is clearly written and organized. Great job following a logical structure and outline. It made it easier to understand.

General Teaching Dispositions as Indicated in the Teachers College Code of Ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(0) Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>(1) Does Not Meet Standard</th>
<th>(2) Minimally Competent</th>
<th>(3) Competent</th>
<th>(4) Highly Competent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The candidate demonstrates inappropriate professional teaching dispositions.</td>
<td>The candidate demonstrates questionable professional teaching dispositions.</td>
<td>The candidate demonstrates developing professional teaching dispositions.</td>
<td>The candidate demonstrates appropriate professional teaching dispositions.</td>
<td>The candidate demonstrates fully developed professional teaching dispositions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Criterion Score: 4.00
Comments on this criterion: Professional teaching dispositions are demonstrated

A1. Lesson Plan Components: Narrative Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(0) Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>(1) Does Not Meet Standard</th>
<th>(2) Minimally Competent</th>
<th>(3) Competent</th>
<th>(4) Highly Competent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The candidate provides a lesson plan that does not present information for each</td>
<td>The candidate provides a lesson plan that presents information for each</td>
<td>The candidate provides a lesson plan that presents appropriate but limited</td>
<td>The candidate provides a lesson plan that presents appropriate and</td>
<td>The candidate provides a lesson plan that presents appropriate and</td>
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# Student Performance by Rubric Criteria

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>View Work/Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student 4</strong></td>
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<td>3.00 3.00 3.00 3.00 3.00 3.00 3.00 3.00</td>
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<td><strong>AVERAGE FOR GROUP</strong></td>
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<td>3.55 3.40 3.42 3.45 3.43 3.40 3.36</td>
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## View Student Progression

**Evaluate ELT1 TM-Lit, ElemLngArt, & Hndwrtngr(V1UNDERGRAD-0510)**

**DRF Template:** ELT1 Teaching Methods - Literacy & Elem Language Arts & Handwriting (V1 UNDERGRAD-0510)

### Directions:
The grid below displays the categories, requirements, and statuses for each author that you are able to evaluate. NOTE: The grid will only display items based on the search criteria previously selected.

### Legend:
- Work in Progress
- Submitted
- Needs Revision
- Resubmitted
- Evaluation in Progress
- Evaluated
- Evaluation Released

### Show:
- All Individuals (do not filter)

### Update Display

### Back to Search | Print View | Export to Excel

### TM-Lit, ElemLangArts, & Hndwr

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<th>REET Task 3</th>
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# Program Activity Reporting

**Program Activity for All Authors: All Statuses**

**DRF template:** ELT1 Teaching Methods - Literacy & Elem Language Arts & Handwriting (V1 UNDERGRAD-0510)

**Program:** ELT1 TM-Lit,ElemLngArt,&Handwrtng(V1UNDERGRAD-0510)

**# Authors:** 478 Authors matched search criteria

**Report Generated:** Tuesday, February 08, 2011

*Filter By:* [Show Summary Report (Show all work statuses)]

**Legend:**
- Eval/Reconcile Completed: RELEASED
- Eval/Reconcile Complete: NOT Released
- Requires Reconciliation
- Requires Evaluation
- Evaluation In Progress
- Work Sent Back for Revision
- Work in Progress
- Work Not Started

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Instructions</th>
<th>Percentage in Status: All Statuses (Out of 478 authors)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>TM-Lit, ElemLangArts, &amp; Hndwr</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- RELT Task 1
- RELT Task 2
- RELT Task 3
- RELT Task 4
- RELT Task 5
- RELT Task 6
- RELT Task 7
- RELT Task 8
- RELT Task 9
- RELT Task 10
Tips on Establishing a Competency-Based Model
Establishing a Competency-Based Model

- Regardless of the current educational context, institutions can integrate or establish competency-based educational models.

- Competency-based models of education can be applied at the institution-wide level, division level, individual college level, department level, or course level (or at the state, district, school, or classroom level).

- Integration with traditional models is possible. It may not require a complete overhaul of systems, but a change in the way we think about and carry out what we are already doing.

- Core elements of competency-based education can be customized to fit the needs and culture of an institution.
Tips

- Clearly define what competency-based education means for your institution.
- It can be challenging for some to become comfortable with competency-based model of education. Plan for it and be patient. A culture of assessment takes time to build.
- If moving from traditional educational models to a more competency-based approach, establish standard policies and procedures. This allows the process to be stable while the content and resources may move around a bit to fit each situation.
- Piloting can be helpful.
- Don’t be afraid of course corrections. Be creative in finding solutions.
- Always have scalability in mind.
- Find good technology partners.
Questions?

Diane Johnson: djohnson@wgu.edu

TaskStream: info@taskstream.com