

Questionmark Case Study

Aggregating assessment data enhances learning at Dallas Baptist University

Assessing core competencies improves the accreditation process.

Background

Dallas Baptist University is a private, liberal arts university in Dallas with extension sites in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and more than 5,200 students in the arts, sciences, and professional studies at undergraduate and graduate levels.

Perception for Placement

The university began using Perception to create an online assessment that determined placement for students in music classes. Using audio files integrated with multiple-choice questions and Adobe Flash, the test assessed students' levels of music knowledge. After listening to a short piece of music, students then identified major and minor chords, musical notes, pitches and other musical concepts.

Aggregating Data

Use of Perception at DBU has spread to nearly all departments as an alternative to paper-and-pencil tests. In order to aggregate the data from both types of assessment delivery, the Online Education department uses the Printing and Scanning feature in Perception. Students use Scantron sheets to mark their answers, then the answers are scanned so that the response data can be read and uploaded by Perception.

"The ability to aggregate data is important, because we do comparison studies to make sure that students are having comparable learning outcomes whether they take courses that are delivered online, traditionally, or as a hybrid of the two," says Kaye Shelton, Dean of Online Education.

Currently, about 25 professors use Perception to deliver assessments, and a few hundred students take those assessments each semester. Kevin Bock, an online course developer in DBU's online education department, says that number is likely to grow quickly as more professors see the value of delivering assessments online.

Blackboard Connector

One feature that is likely to help with that expansion is the Questionmark Blackboard Connector, which connects Perception to the Blackboard Learning System™ and allows students to move back and forth between the two easily. When students log on to Blackboard, they can link to and take required Perception assessments, and receive immediate feedback on their performance. They can also see their scores in the Gradebook, and when they view their grades, the system brings up a Coaching Report for that assessment.

Aiding Accreditation

Shelton's department has also begun using Perception to gather data on learner outcomes. Instead of demonstrating that they are graduating a certain number of students, accrediting agencies want schools to show that students who graduate have learned certain skills. So DBU wants to assess its graduates' core competencies, such as critical thinking, reading, writing, mathematics, and others.

Shelton says that Perception will be the key for providing additional assessment data for its annual reports and reaccreditation documents. Many of the student learning outcomes for which DBU gathers data are assessed by the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress standardized test. But by adding specific "learner outcome" questions to tests in courses throughout the curriculum, DBU is able to aggregate data across the university that helps show that graduates possess desired competencies.

Course developer Kevin Bock tags each assessment question with one of the learner outcomes it measures. This allows Shelton's department to show specific data on each learner outcome, exporting assessment data to ASCII to create customized reports.

More information

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