The Teacher and Effective Student Assessment

"In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test.
In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson."
Tom Bodett

"I'm not telling you it's going to be easy. I'm telling you it's going to be worth it."
Art Williams

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the participant will be able to accomplish the following:

1. Discuss the importance of effective student assessment within the Bible school educational setting.

2. Discuss the major elements of an effective student assessment plan.

3. Understand the importance of a formal, written policy and procedures manual to the overall teamwork effort?

4. Explain the function of clear, well-written institutional goals and student learning objectives in ensuring effective student assessments.

5. List and discuss the major purposes of conducting student assessments.

6. Discuss the considerations and guidelines in selecting question types and writing effective assessment questions.

7. Explain the use and purpose of specific types of assessment questions: true-false, short answer/completion, matching, multiple-choice, and essay.

8. List and discuss the seven sound student assessment practices that promote effective student assessment.

Why Effective Student Assessment is Important

Determining whether Bible school students are achieving the necessary learning outcomes is at the heart of any student assessment plan. Of course, in attempting to assess student learning, it is equally important to evaluate all required student learning outcomes as well. As an educational institution, ensuring its learning outcomes are comprehensive, appropriate, and supporting the Bible school's mission and vision should be the primary focus of

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the organization. If administrators, faculty, and staff are not continuously evaluating learning outcomes in light of strategic goals and expectations, then, it is impossible to determine if the institution is effectively educating its students.

In the scope of this lesson, the discussion will be limited to an effective student assessment plan, determining the purpose of individual assessments, selecting assessment question types, writing assessment questions, and sound student assessment practices. Effective student assessments and periodic review of those assessments will ensure the Bible school remains academically and spiritually focused on educating and graduating highly knowledgeable, well qualified, and equally motivated and inspired students ready to successfully serve as committed leaders, officials, pastors, missionaries, or other ministry leaders.

"You may be disappointed if you fail, but you'll be doomed if you don't try."
Beverly Sills

A Student Assessment Plan

Bible School Goals and Student Learning Objectives

Long-term Bible school goals and short-term student learning objectives (learning outcomes) for each course of instruction should be published in the organization's mission, vision, and purpose statements as well as in individual course syllabi. These organizational goals and learning outcomes are achieved through the Bible school's culture, curricula, and its instruction process. When these goals and objectives are established they provide a definitive assurance that corporate and individual goals and objectives will be achieved.

Effective instructors select clear and measurable short-term objectives that provide both the instructor and students with a focus for learning. Once goals and objective have been established, course materials, teaching strategies and methods, and assessment techniques are defined to teach and measure the selected goals and objectives. This advanced assessment planning ensures both teaching and learning are more effective, and learners are more aware of what is expected of them.

These learning outcomes are assessed for each program through multiple measures and instruments. The primary measure of whether students have achieved the learning outcomes is the actual grade assigned to each student for each course. Individual Bible schools determine how "satisfactory student learning outcomes" are defined and measured. An often overlooked area of student assessment is the end-of-course student program and instructor surveys. These provide valuable student insight into curriculum and faculty effectiveness in meeting institutional goals and student learning outcomes.

Long–term Goals

Remember, a long-range goal is the destination for students, or what you want the students to be able to do accomplish over a long period of learning. Goals are broad and are not easily measured. One such Bible school long-range goals might be:

Long-term Goal: "The student will be able to trace the travels and major events of the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan."

It should be noted that course textbooks usually include learning goals and objectives, but instructors should not accept these without ensuring that they are compatible and in harmony with the Bible school's vision and purpose. Once long-term goals have been established, each goal is broken down into measurable short-term objectives.

Short–term Objectives

Each long-term goal may include several objectives that must be achieved before the goal itself is met. For example, for the long-term goal example above, the following short-term objectives may be prerequisites to the achievement of the overall long-term goal:

Short-term objective #1: "The student will be able to list the reason(s) for the Israelites' departure from Egypt."

Short-term objective #2: "The student will be able to discuss the rise of Moses as leader of the Israelites from Egypt."

Short-term objective #3: "The student will be able to compare the living conditions of the Israelites in Egypt with the living conditions in Canaan."

Short-term objective #4: "The student will list the major events of the 40-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness."

Short-term objective #5: "The student will list and discuss the miraculous interventions of God on behalf of Moses and the Israelites during their wilderness journey."

Well written objectives will provide the students with exactly what it is that the instructor expects them to learn and comprehend by the end of the chapter, unit, or course. Excellent short-term objectives must be:

- Student-centered (uses the phrase: "The student will be able to…" or implies it)

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- State a learning outcome (something students are expected to know or do; not a learning activity)

- Measurable by watching, listening, or analyzing (know, understand, discuss, list, etc.), and

- Clearly written (objective cannot be misinterpreted)

Here is an example of a short-term objective. Is it well written or not?

"The student will compare three Canaanite tribes Israel encountered in the wilderness."

Be very particular when you choose the wording of your learning objectives. These objectives will guide all of your teaching activities and will ensure the long-term goal is achieved as well. Pay special attention to the verb that is used and that it matches what students will actually do on your assessment (test). The above objective can be improved in this manner:

"The student will compare and contrast the origins and relationship to Israel of three Canaanite tribes."

It is important for you to know your student before the course's goals and objectives are finalized. Students develop and learn in many different ways and at varying speeds. In order to ensure your student assessments are effective, you may need to create individualized tests designed for such students. Also, keep in mind that teaching methods and assessments should target more than just a given knowledge level. Goals and objectives should address "higher order or critical thinking." This indicates that learning must include "application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and problem solving," and not simply "know a particular fact."

Determining the Assessment Purpose

The first step in designing an excellent assessment is to determine why you are "giving your students a test." The word, test, here is used very broadly and goes beyond traditional paper and pencil tests, to include performance tests as well.

1. *Are you categorizing students (assigning discrete scores to each student)?*

If this is your primary objective, you will want to include some difficult questions that perhaps only a few students will be able to answer correctly.

2. *Do you want to determine how many of the students have mastered the content?*

If this is your objective, then you will have to decide how many correct answers are needed to demonstrate mastery. Also, you will need to decide if the assessment is a formative or summative one.

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Formative assessment – evaluation of student progress toward mastery of course content at any given time during the course of instruction (oral or written quizzes, draw map of Israel's borders, and label nations bordering on Israel, etc.).

Summative assessment – evaluation of student learning at the end of an instructional unit or course (final examination, music recital, final project, etc.).

3. *Are you diagnosing student problems or to guide future teaching (formative) or are you testing to determine individual grades to be submitted to the Bible school registrar?*

In conducting assessment research, Airasian (1994) listed six decisions instructors should make in developing assessment instruments:

1. What to test?

2. How much emphasis to give each learning objective?

3. What type of assessment to use?

4. How much time to allocate to the conduct of the assessment?

5. How to prepare the students? and

6. Whether to use the test from the textbook or create your own? (This decision is not applicable to GATS curriculum.)

You, as the Bible school instructor, must decide what to assess. Try not to limit yourself to paper and pencil assessments; find new and innovative ways to assess student progress and mastery. These can include group presentations, role playing, mock trials, and student-to-student question and answer sessions or discussion, just to name a few.

Selecting Assessment Question Types

Equally important is the type and number of questions to be used on the assessment. This directly affects the amount of time that must be allocated to "taking the test." The testing research of Nitko (2001) quantifies the estimated time needed to complete an individual question type by high school students (Keep in mind that poor readers may require more time.). Chart 1.1, Question Type versus Time Required, on page 6, shows the time estimate to answer each type of question (Nitko, 2001).

Chart 1.1 Question Type versus Time Required

Question Type	Time to Complete 1 Question
True-False	15-30 seconds
Multiple choice (brief recall questions)	30-60 seconds
Complex multiple choice	60-90 seconds
Multiple choice with calculations	2-5 minutes
Short answer (one word)	30-60 seconds
Short answer (multiple word)	1-4 minutes
Matching (5 premises, 6 responses)	2-4 minutes
Short essays	15-20 minutes

Table 1.2, Table of Specification (APDM, 2007), on page 7, shows the total number of questions planned for the assessment: 20 knowledge questions (true-false) worth 1 point each, 5 comprehensive questions (multiple-choice) worth 2 points each, and 4 application questions (read and respond) worth 5 points each. The assessment will have a total value of 50 points with 10 points (20%) allocated for objective 1 and 20 points (40 %) allocated for objectives 2 and 3 respectively. If the instructor has carefully considered by the objectives, the allocation of objective value, and the type and time of questions to be used, then the Table of Specifications should accurately reflect a valid measure of student learning and the effectiveness of the instruction.

Estimating the time needed for students to complete the assessment, these were the calculations based on the type and number of questions to be used on the test:

Type of Question	# of Questions	Time/Question	Cumulative Time
True-False	20	15-30 seconds	5 - 10 minutes
Multiple Choice	5	60-90 seconds	5 – 7 ½ minutes
Read & Respond	4	5 – 7 ½ minutes	20 - 30 minutes
TOTALS	29		30 – 48 minutes

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Table 1.2 Table of Specifications
The Study of the Exodus

Objectives	Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Percent of the Test
The student will know the reasons for the rise of Moses as leader of the Israelites from Egypt.	**x** 20% 10 Q x 1 (10 T-F)			20% 10 Q 10 pts (10 T-F)
The student will understand the major events of the 40-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness.	**x** 20% 10 Q x 1 (10 T-F)	**x** 20% 5 Q x 2 (5 MC)		40% 15 Q x 20 pts (10 T-F) (5 MC)
The student will compare and contrast the living conditions of the Israelites in Egypt and the living conditions in Canaan.			**x** 40% 4 Q x 5 (4 R & R)	40% 4 Q x 20 pts (4 R & R)
TOTAL	**20 Q**	**5 Q**	**4 Q**	**29 Q 50 pts**

Be sure to consider your slowest students when allocating time to complete the assessment, and ensure the assessment can be completed in a single class period. Also, when considering your students in the design and conduct assessments, always provide the following student accommodations when needed:

Writing Assessment Questions

First, it is important to consider the recommended test materials provided by the textbook publisher. These are an excellent source of test items and questioning techniques that you can incorporate into your final test design. Second, use same assessment philosophy that you use in teaching – always arrange the assessment from the simple to the most complex, from the easiest to the most difficult, and from the concrete to the abstract concepts. In terms of the order of question types, place the true-false questions first, followed by the multiple choice and matching questions; then, progress to short answer or essay questions. Your primary concern is in evaluating what the student has learned about the course content, and if you place difficult questions at the beginning of the assessment, student may spend too much time on these questions or become discouraged and not get to the simpler questions that they can easily answer.

You may also want to consider grouping the same type of questions together (true-false, multiple choice, etc.) so the written directions for completing these type of questions only have to be given once. Be sure your directions always include the point value for each type of question. Evaluate the quality of your written directions by the number of questions your students ask about how to complete the work. Little or no questions from students will indicate your directions are excellent. Always save quality directions for future use. Provide detailed directions for recording answer responses that require students to only circle or underline a correct response. This will avoid the problems that can arise from poor handwriting. Also, when a group of the same type of question runs over to the next page, repeat the directions at the top of the next page.

True–False Questions

In the most basic format, true-false questions are those in which a statement is presented and the student indicates in some manner whether the statement is true or false. In other words, there are only two possible responses for each item, and the student chooses between them. Other forced choice question styles will be discussed later in this module.

True-false questions require the students to select a response (true or false) that shows recognition of correct or incorrect information that is presented to them. These are included among the items that are called "selection," in contrast to "supply" items in which the student must supply the correct information. Another term applied to these items is "forced choice" because the student must choose between two possible answers. Educational objectives that specify the student will "identify," "select," and "recognize" material are appropriately targeted to either forced choice questions or more complex matching or multiple choice questions.

True-false questions are well suited for testing student recall or comprehension. Students can generally respond to many questions, covering a lot of content, in a fairly short amount of time. From the teacher's perspective, these questions can be written quickly and are easy to score. Because they can be objectively scored, the scores are more reliable than for items that are at least partially dependent on the teacher's judgment (APDM, 2007).

Short Answer & Completion Questions

Short answer and completion questions are both forms of "supply" items where students must provide a response rather than selecting a correct answer from the test. Short answer and completion questions are frequently used for the recall of information or for problem solving in math and science (the results of calculations or a formula).

When student learning objectives use the phrase, "The student will know," this t answer and completion questions measure these "knowing" learning objectives. Other verbs that indicate short answer or completion items are "recall," "remember," "label," "list," "state," "define," "describe," and "name."

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These types of questions have some advantages. Like true-false questions, short-answer and completion items can be written fairly easily. Students can complete a large number of items in a fairly short time (unless they involve working complex math problems), thus sampling a lot of content. Since the student has to generate the answers, the possibility of guessing the correct answers to these questions is greatly reduced when compared with true-false questions. While these items can be easy to score, poor student handwriting poses a potential problem.

Completion items are those in which a statement is written with blanks substituted for one or more words which the student is to supply. The example below shows the format for a typical completion item. Students sometimes write their answers directly on the blanks embedded in the sentences, but scoring can be facilitated by providing answer blanks in a column along the left or right side of the paper.

The wilderness sojourn by the Israelites took approximately ____ years.

Short answer questions are similar to completion items except that a question is written in its entirety, with the student supplying a correct response of one word or a short phrase. The use of a short answer question may be preferable to the completion item if it makes the question more specific and leads to the one answer you are seeking.

A cubit is equal to approximately how many inches? _____ inches.

A potential problem with both short answer and completion questions is that unless the items are well written, students may give an answer that is not the one you wanted, but one which is also correct. It takes careful attention to write the question with enough specificity that the answer you are seeking is the only correct one.

The people of Israel were taken into Babylonian captivity in _____.

The writer may have wanted the answer to be the "year" Israel was taken into captivity. But several "correct" answers are possible: 1. chains; 2: defeat; 3. the night; or 4. the winter. A well-written question would be:

The people of Israel were taken into Babylonian captivity in the year _____ B.C.

The definition of a "short answer" question varies among the textbook authors. "Short-answer" refers to responses that may be a complete sentence. At other times, means a word or series of related terms, phrase, list, number, or symbol that completes a statement or response to a question (APDM, 2007).

1. Define the following vocabulary words:

   Murder _____

Kinsman-redeemer _____

Scapegoat _____

2. On what day of creation did God create "every creeping thing?" _____ day.

3. What are three primary colors are found in the tabernacle in the wilderness?

   _____   _____   _____

4. What was the exterior width and length of the tabernacle in the wilderness?

   Width: _____   Length: _____

5. What abstract concepts did the following tabernacle colors represent?

   White: _____   Blue: _____

   Red: _____

Matching Questions

Matching test items, along with true-false and multiple choice, are selection items. They are specialized for use when measuring the student's ability to identify the relationship between a set of similar items, each of which has two components, such as words and their definitions, symbols and their meanings, dates and events, or people and their accomplishments. Of the two objectives listed below, only the second one is appropriate for a matching item:

Objective A: The student will be able to explain the "new birth" experience.

Objective B. The student will be able to identify the three primary elements of the "new birth" experience.

Objective A will require a written response. However, Objective B states the student will be able to "identify" primary elements. This implies some type of selection question in which the answers are provided, and the student task is one of recognition.

In developing matching questions, there are two columns of material. The left column items are usually called premises and are assigned numbers. The right column items are called responses and are assigned capital letters. Here's an example:

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Q. **Directions: On the line next to each book in Column A print the letter of the appropriate division or section of the Bible in which the book is found. Each division or section may be used more than once.**

<div>

Column A   Column B

_____1. Exodus   A. The books of poetry

_____2. Psalms   B. The books of history

_____3. Job   C. The books of the law

_____4. Amos   D. The Pentateuch

_____5. Malachi   E. The books of prophecy

_____6. Song of Solomon   F. The Septuagint

                                         G. The Vulgate

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Some educational researchers suggest there be no more than five to eight premises in one question. However, some material will require several more premises. Also, be sure not to list Column A and Column B items in the same order or categories. As this will provide clues to the correct matching answers. Also, there should always be a larger amount of responses in Column B than there are in Column A. This will reduce student guessing (APDM, 2007).

Multiple–Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions are selection-type items. Students are given three or more possible answers and are asked to choose the correct answer or the "best" answer. The item begins with an item stem, followed by alternatives (the correct answer and distractors). Multiple-choice questions can be used to measure knowledge recall as well as higher order thinking. They are appropriate for use with objectives that call for the students to do such tasks as recognize, distinguish between, select, estimate, infer, predict, relate, categorize.

Some of the most thorough work regarding multiple-choice questions has been done by Thomas Haladyna (1999). He presents four types of content (facts, concepts, principles, and procedures) and five types of cognitive behaviors (recalling, understanding, predicting, evaluating, and problem solving). While multiple-choice questions can be used to measure all of these, he suggests the context-dependent item set (a set of multiple-choice questions based on new content that is presented as part of the assessment, such as a paragraph, graphic display, etc.) or constructed response (short answer, completion, or essay questions) as more appropriate for critical thinking and problem solving than independent multiple-choice questions.

Multiple-choice items can be scored easily and quickly. They can be scored by machine and are frequently used for standardized tests. It is possible to sample a lot of content with multiple-choice items. Although multiple-choice tests are sometimes called "multiple guess" tests, there is less chance of guessing the correct answer than with true-false questions. Higher-order thinking can be assessed with multiple-choice items. The student can be asked to apply a rule or principle, to show understanding of cause and effect, or to identify the reasoning behind a particular choice of action.

Q. Poor personal behavior MAY NOT reveal which of the following?

A. The individual's response to various situations
B. The individual's motive for such behavior
C. The root cause for such personal behavior
D. B and C.

Q. What is/are the likely result/s of poor church attendance?

A. Decreased prayer life
B. Increased spiritual commitment
B. A and D.
C. Resistance to carnal things
D. Increased criticism of church services

Q. Why did God judge the sin of Achan so severely?

A. Achan's sin affected the entire nation of Israel
B. Achan's sin caused God's blessings on Israel to be withheld
C. The items taken were stolen from God.
D. All of the above.

Although a multiple-choice test may be referred to as an "objective test," no test is truly objective. The instructor subjectively determines what content is included in the test, the amount of emphasis placed on various topics, and the types of questions used. Tests containing selection type questions (true-false, multiple-choice, matching, etc.), however, can be scored objectively because the scorer is not called upon to use his or her judgment when scoring the questions. Also, the questions can be scored fairly quickly using an answer key or machine scoring if it is available (APDM, 2007).

Essay Questions

Essay questions are supply or constructed response type questions and can be the best way to measure the students' higher order thinking skills, such as applying, organizing, synthesizing, integrating, evaluating, or projecting while at the same time providing a measure of writing skills. The student has to formulate and write a response, which may be detailed and

lengthy. The accuracy and quality of the response are judged by the instructor. Asking students to simply generate a list of the planets or a definition of a spelling word from memory is not an essay question. There is not a specific category for such questions, but they would more nearly fit the short answer category than essay.

Essay tests or questions should be aligned with objectives and instruction, as are other types of assessments. If the instructor has not taught students what is meant by "compare" and "contrast" during the course of instruction, assessment in which they are called upon to do so in a new situation may be a test of their understanding and interpretation of the terms rather their ability to demonstrate the higher level skills involved. In other words, instruction should prepare students for essay questions.

Because of the time needed to answer and score essay questions and the limited amount of content that can be covered in them, essay questions should be used only when other types of questions cannot measure accomplishment of the objectives. They are particularly appropriate when there is some concern about test security and when the number of students being tested is small. They can be useful when there is little time to prepare the assessment but more time in which to grade it.

The instructor can write essay questions fairly quickly. Fewer essay items can be completed by the students in the same length of time as other types of questions, so fewer essay questions need to be written. One essay question typically replaces several questions of other types, so sampling of the subject matter is more limited with essay questions.

Essay questions eliminate the possibility of the students' guessing the correct answer. However, essay questions are generally more time-consuming to grade than other types of questions and there are several factors that can influence the grade awarded. To respond to essay questions, students need to have writing skills and may be unfairly penalized because of handwriting, spelling, grammar, neatness, vocabulary, sentence structure, or organization (if these are not part of the content being assessed). To prevent this from happening, separate grades or scores should be given for essay content and writing skills. Also, longer answers (which may contain irrelevant information) may be given better scores than shorter ones.

There is a risk that the grading of essay responses can be subjective and unreliable. The concept of reliability is commonly applied to the results of tests and measurement instruments. When consistent results can be obtained with an assessment, we say that the instrument is reliable. In the case of essay questions, reliability is dependent on the scoring of the question. For the scoring to be reliable, there should be consistency among scorers. Two individuals independently scoring the same set of papers should arrive at the same scores. Unreliability may be shown by the teacher's awarding higher grades to students who have a history of performing at higher levels when their answers do not justify the better marks. The order in which papers are graded can also have an impact on the grades that are awarded. An instructor may grow more critical (or more lenient) after having read several papers, thus the early papers receive lower (or higher) scores than papers of similar quality that are scored later. Also, if the scorer becomes tired, judgment can be affected.

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When students are directed to take a stand on a controversial issue, the scorer must be careful to insure that the evidence and the way it is presented is evaluated, not the position taken by the student. If the student takes a position contrary to that of the scorer, the scorer must be sensitive to possible bias in scoring the essay because the student's position differs from that of the scorer. Brookhart (1999) developed a scoring rubric for an essay test based on three criteria: thesis and organization, content knowledge, and writing style and mechanics (A generic sample rubric is shown at Enclosure 3). Thesis and organization was judged on the extent to which it was defensible, clearly stated, appropriateness of supporting facts and concepts, and logical use. Macmillan (1997) suggests the following criteria for scoring arguments: distinguishing between facts and opinions, judging the credibility of a source, identifying relevant material, recognizing inconsistencies, and using logic.

Essay questions designed to elicit lengthy responses are sometimes referred to as e*xtended response* items. *Restricted response* items, on the other hand, include in the directions a limitation on the length of the answer (such as "in 75 words or less," "in one paragraph," or "in no more than two pages,"). As is true with other types of questions, one or more essay questions can be based on content supplied as part of the question: a poem, a chart or graph, a paragraph, etc. One author refers to this particular structure as an *interpretive exercise* (APDM, 2007).

Additional Test Structure Considerations

- All elements of an individual question should be on the same page

- Graphs, tables, charts or illustrations should be placed as near as possible to the questions based on them (on the same page if possible)

- Check to ensure all questions are independent of one another (that one question does not provide the answer to another question)

- The assessment should be written at the reading level of your students (this can be a program with textbook assessments)

- Space questions comfortably apart (not squeezing questions together)

- Provide adequate space in which students easily write their responses to short answer, fill-in-the-blank or short essay questions

- For true-false and multiple choice questions, provide vertical answer blanks on either the left or right side of the page to allow for easy grading student responses

- If possible, use only one of two methods for students to mark their answer – either on the test paper itself or a separate answer sheet (include the student name and date)

- Check answers to questions for any response pattern. Rearrange the order of questions within a question type so the correct answers appear to be in random order, and

- After the assessment is written, put it aside for a period of time; then, re-read all the questions and proofread the entire assessment (if possible, have another person proofread the assessment as well)

Special Student Accommodations

- Provide written instructions for students with hearing disabilities

- Have an aide or assistant write/mark answers for students with coordination disabilities

- Provide written assessment for students with speech disabilities

- Ask students to repeat the assessment directions to ensure they know what to do

- Include samples of each type of question showing how to mark answers

Sound Student Assessment Practices

Instructors, regardless of course content, can use these seven assessment and grading practices to build effective student assessments. Classroom assessment and grading practices have the potential not only to measure and report learning but also to promote it (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005).

Use Summative Assessment to Define Institutional Goals

This practice has three advantages:

1. Summative assessments reinforce institutional goals and standards.
2. Institutional goals and standards are continuously highlighted through assessments; and
3. Assessment results identify weaknesses or gaps in instruction or course content and the corrective action to be taken.

Students are Aware of All Institutional Goals in Advance

At every opportunity, administrators, faculty, and staff promote and reinforce institutional vision and mission goals. Students are also recruited to do the same with fellow students. After being on campus for a reasonable amount of time, every student should have heard and been inspired by the Bible school's vision and mission goals. And every individual,

from the President of the Bible School to a newly arrived student, can recite and support these critical goals.

Instructors Assess Before Teaching

Administrators and faculty should work closely together to determine what knowledge and skills students *already know or possess*. This can be accomplished through pre-admission, entrance, and/or diagnostic assessments prior to beginning classes, or through pre-course knowledge assessments conducted by course instructors. By evaluating students as early as possible in the learning process, time, resources, and duplicative learning can be reduced, or in some cases, eliminated completely. Re-teaching knowledge wastes everyone's time and effort.

Offer Learning Choices

In Bible school education, "one size does not fit all." Based on pre-testing results, student should be allowed to advance at their own pace. Highly knowledgeable students can be used as assistant instructors, mentors, or tutors for other students or in local churches. While the majority of course students may progress through the course material together, others should be challenged with advanced study and research projects and/or special presentations to enhance the breadth and width of the learning experience. Such learning approaches put new demands on instructors for managing innovative learning methods, but will bring an increased level of synergy to the Bible school's vision and purpose.

Mutual Feedback for Instructors & Students Alike

Instructors must look for new student learning opportunities in any situation. And students must be prepared to learn in these new ways. Instructor feedback to students not only allows the student to realize the potential gaps in their learning, but also reinforces areas of exceptional learning and outstanding performance. Positive and constructive student feedback by instructors will reinforce the overall learning experience of all students. Such feedback can be done through informal conversations as well as scheduled student assessments.

Students should also be encouraged to respectfully provide instructors with their feedback on course content, teaching methods and strategies, and what their learning expectations are for that particular course of instruction. Such feedback allows the instructor to more efficiently tailor the course instruction to best accommodate the students and achieve learning objectives.

Encourage Self-assessment and Goal-setting

Instructors should encourage student-to-student cooperation and collaboration on course requirements. Students can enhance the learning process for one another by evaluating their

understanding and knowledge of the course material prior to any formal assessment. Armed with this insight, students can set new personal goals for learning. Research has shown that encouraging students to evaluate themselves and each other results in significantly higher assessment scores.

Look for New Ways of Achieving Long-established Tasks

The old proverb says, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."." But is this proverb really true? As educators, if we are not continually learning, then we will quickly become static at best and stagnate at worst. Always ask questions of yourself:

What aspects of the course were the most effective?
What aspects of the course were the least effective?
What specific actions or changes will improve my performance?
What will be new or different about the course the next time I teach it?

Questions like these help focus instructors' planning and reflection on what has been accomplished. By being honest and open to improvement or change, each instructor will continually improve both his or her teaching effectiveness and the appropriateness of the course material. This attitude shifts the learning focus from, "What did I get out of the course?" to "What did I contribute to the course that increased the learning experience for everyone?"

Discussing Effective Student Assessment

A. Discuss the major reasons why effective student assessment is critical to the goals and objectives of Bible schools.

B. Why is an effective student assessment plan required, and what are its major elements?

C. Define and discuss long-term institutional goals and short-list student learning objectives. How are these goals and objectives different?

D. Determining a student assessment's purpose is critical to designing and organizing the assessment. Explain 3 valid purposes for student assessments.

E. Why is it important for instructors to carefully select what types of questions will be used on student assessments? What information should guide this selection process?

F. Student assessment must be both reliable and effective. Discuss how the precise writing of the assessment questions contributes to its reliability and effectiveness.

G. Discuss how selection assessment questions differ from supply or constructed assessment questions.

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H. Discuss the seven sound effective student assessment practices, and why they contribute significantly to effective student assessments.

I. Discuss your Bible school's institutional goals. Are these goals published and heavily promoted among the faculty, staff, and students?

J. Discuss the major challenges for Bible schools if the institution has no formal, written, or promoted long-term goals.

Conclusions

"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."
Henry Ford

Henry Ford, as a visionary entrepreneur and founder of Ford Motor Company, reminds us, in this quote, that it is absolutely essential for an institution to continually define, evaluate, and review its long-term goals and short-term objectives. It is an important lesson we cannot afford not to learn. This is especially true within the Bible school educational setting where goals and objectives are not concerned with production rates, but with the religious and spiritual education of today's young people and tomorrow's pastors, ministers, and officials.

Marzano (1992) underscored the critical nature of student assessment by identifying three factors that influence student motivation and learning. Marzano found that students are more likely to put forth the required effort when there is:

1. *Task clarity* – when they clearly understand the learning goal and know how instructors will evaluate their learning
2. *Relevance* – when they think the learning goals and assessments are meaningful and worth learning; and
3. *Potential for success* – when they believe they can successfully learn and meet the evaluative expectations.

So, we see that student motivation and learning depends on students understanding, agreeing with, and making an effort to meet the learning goals by successfully passing assessments (testing). If this is true, then, the institutional goals and learning objectives form the supporting foundation for all student assessments. Much time, prayer, and careful consideration must go into the establishment of Bible school goals and student learning objectives. Bible schools cannot design course because they are popular, or easy to pass; every Bible school course must be founded on institutional values, absolute biblical truths, and essential knowledge to fully achieve its vision, purpose, and goals.

After establishing the student assessment foundation, Bible school leaders must create an institutional student assessment plan that is not only effective, but comprehensive – a plan that addresses every institutional value and goal. Such a student assessment plan must include institutional and individual course assessments that adequately answer at least these questions:

Is this institution teaching what this institution says it believes?
Is every course firmly anchored to institutional values and goals?
Does every member of the institution understand and promote its values and goals?
What value or goal has been overlooked or undervalued?

Yes, we must ensure student assessments are properly designed and written; that assessment questions are clear, well-written, and accurately measure every course student learning objective. But every Bible school official, administrator, faculty or staff member, and student must deeply believe in, be committed to, and actively embrace biblical truths, sound doctrine, godly living, and dedicated service to the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

We have identified sound student assessment practices that enhance the effectiveness of student assessment, but the key is not identifying these practices. We no longer have the luxury of "testing for testing sake." It is necessary to integrate them in our institutional culture, incorporate them in our everyday schedule of activities, and eagerly adopt them into our collective and individual lives.

"The aim of education is the knowledge, not of facts, but of values."
William S. Burroughs

The Teacher and Effective Student Assessment

Name: _____

Nation: _____ **Date:** _____

1. Student assessments are essential to ensuring institutional goals are met. What are the driving factors that form the foundation of assessments?
_____
_____
_____

2. Long-term institutional goals and short-term student learning objectives are critically important to student assessments. How are these important elements related to one another?
_____
_____
_____

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3. How does a Bible school determine if its institutional values and goals are being achieved?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Institutional goals reflect the institution's value system. What should student learning objectives reflect?

_____
_____
_____

5. Instructors conduct assessments to "test" student knowledge or skills. What plan should be the practical guide for all student assessments within the Bible school?

_____
_____
_____

6. Does it really matter what type of questions we use on tests? If it does, why?

_____
_____
_____

7. Which is the more effective test question, question A or B? Why?

Question A: True or False. Students with high grade point averages always make A's.
Question B: True or False. Attention in class and study are excellent student learning habits.

_____
_____
_____

8. What is wrong with this short answer question?

I have no compunction about the ___ of some barbarians. But it is a conundrum _____.

_____
_____
_____

9. Is it easier to write true-false questions properly than to write essay questions properly? Give two reasons for your answer.

_____
_____
_____
_____

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10. Informing students of all learning objectives in advance is a sound assessment practice. How does this help students with tests?

_____
_____
_____
_____

11. What are the three factors that educational researchers have discovered that increase student motivation?

_____
_____
_____

12. "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."

Explain what this Henry Ford quote means to you.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Enclosure 1 – Guidelines for Writing Assessment Questions

True-False Questions

Statements should be relatively short and simple

True statements should be about the same length as false statements

The answers should not be obvious to students who do not know the material

Sweeping, broad general statements or absolutes (all, always, never, none, only), such as the example below, tend to be false, since student need only to think of one incident where it is untrue to mark it false

_T_   _F_   _Student who make A's always have above average IQ scores._

A similar situation occurs with the use of "can" in a true-false statement. If the student knows of a single case in which something could be done, it would be true.

Ambiguous or vague statements and terms, such as "large," "long time," "regularly," "some," and "usually" should be avoided in the interest of clarity. Some terms have more than one meaning and may be interpreted differently by individuals. See the example below.

T   F   The brazen altar was of greater spiritual importance than the table of shewbread (True, if we are referring to its "type and shadow" for repentance; but false, if we are referring to its physical location and nearness to the Holiest of Holies.)

Vary the ratio of true-false statements from test to test or quiz to quiz, so that students do not depend on previous tests for cues as to the balance of true and false questions (Some authors recommend having about the same number of true and false statements while others suggest having a larger number of false statements.)

Do not have students write in a "T" or "F" to indicate answers. Individual handwriting can cause errors in marking. Have students circle or underline their answers.

Use "T" or "F" for "True" and "False," not "Yes" or "No."

Arrange the statements so that there is no discernable pattern of answer (such as T, F, T, F, T, F or T, T, F, F, T, T, F, F, T, T, for true and false statements.)

Short Answer or Completion Questions

The requested answer should be brief and specific.
Statements should not be quoted directly from the text.

Answer blanks for short answer questions should be in the same place on the page (along the left or right margin) to aid in scoring unless it creates confusion for the students. Separate answer blanks can also be provided in the same way for completion items (see below).

Q. The two tribes of Israel that represented Joseph were (a) and (b).

   a. _____   b. _____

Directions for responding should be provided.

There should be only one blank in an item unless the terms are part of a series.

The wording/grammar in the statement should not provide clues to the answer ("a/an" or "is/are").

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If the answer is a number, indicate the unit of measurement (pounds, kilometers, cubits, etc.) and the degree of specificity (1 decimal place) that is required.

If students are to know a process, use an example that focuses on the process rather than the calculations. Use numbers that are easy to compute.

Q. What is the average age (to the nearest year) of Moses (120), Aaron (123), and Joshua (110)?

   A. _____

The questions should measure accomplishment of objectives appropriately.

The questions should be at an appropriate reading level for the students.

Blanks should be the same length to avoid giving clues about the respective answers.

For completion questions only:

Only key or important words should be replaced by blanks in these questions.

Embedded blanks should be the same length.

Embedded blanks should be near the end of the sentence rather than at the beginning so that students have an opportunity to formulate a framework before encountering the missing word or phrase.

Potential scoring issues:

How to score answers that are correct, but not the ones the instructor wanted.

Whether to award partial credit for questions in which the student correctly supplies the word to fill one blank but incorrectly answers the second blank in the same sentence.

Instructors should decide in advance (and inform the students) if errors in spelling will be penalized.

If the answer is to be in sentence form, a similar decision must be made about grammatical correctness and what to do in case the response is a fragment or phrase rather than a sentence.

Matching Questions

Check your learning objectives to make sure this type of question is appropriate.

Include more responses than premises OR allow responses to be used more than once.

Put the items with more words in Column A.

Arrange items in Column B in either a logical or natural order or alphabetically if there is no apparent correct structure.

Correct answers should not be obvious to those who don't know the content.

There should not be keywords appearing in both a premise and response providing a clue to the correct answer.

The items should all be part of a common set. It should not be possible to subdivide the premises and responses into two or more discrete subsets.

All of the responses and premises for a matching item should appear on the same page.

Directions to the students should explain how many times responses can be used.

Multiple-Choice Questions

The question's stem (the introductory question or phrase) should be meaningful and lead to a logical conclusion as to the correct response.The question's stem should be stated positively, not negatively.

The question's stem should be stated simply with no irrelevant information.

The question's stem never includes the phrase, "what do you think…"

The question's stem avoids "not, never, except, or only."

The question's alternatives fit the stem grammatically.

The question's alternatives fit the stem in number.

The question's alternatives are approximately the same length.

The question's alternatives are brief.

The question's alternatives are in logical order.

The question's alternatives include only one correct or best answer.

The question's alternatives provide 3 to 5 options, including the correct answer.

Essay Questions

Determine the level at which thinking is to be assessed (refer to learning objectives and instructional methods).

Keep in mind the reading and writing levels of students.

Use essay questions only for outcomes that cannot be measured by other types of questions.

Two or more questions that are more specific and shorter are preferable to a single long question.

Define the task specifically as possible without giving away the answers. From your directions students should be able to tell how the item will be scored and how much weight will be given the essay answers in determining the total test score.

Provide more than one essay item and let the student select which one to answer. Items may or may not be of similar difficulty.

Suggest a (reasonable) time or page or word count limit for each essay question.

Decide in advance what you are seeking in the answer. Write a model response and develop a scoring system (rubric) that includes the information you will reward in the answer.

Linn & Gronlund, 2000 found that some of the tasks should be addressed by essay questions. The question shells are listed here:

Show understanding and explain…

"Explain in your own words the meaning of…"

"Explain in your own words what is meant by…"

"Describe an example of…that you have witnessed or become aware of in your job."

"Explain what…meant when he said, "…"

"Why did the…"

Compare and contrast

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"Describe the similarities and differences between…"

"Compare the following/attached two methods for…"

Classify, organize or arrange items in sequence

"Group the following items according to…"

"What do the following items have in common?"

Predict, recognize cause and effect

"What are the major causes of…?"

"What would be the most likely effects of…?"

Infer

"In light of the facts presented, what is most likely to happen when…?"
"How would (Senator X) be likely to react to the following issue?"

Apply principles

"Using the principle of…as a guide, describe how you would solve the following problem situation."

"Describe a situation that illustrates the principle of…"

Analyze

"Describe the reasoning errors in the following paragraph."

"List and describe the main characteristics of…"

<u>Synthesize, integrate data from multiple sources</u>

"Describe a plan for proving that…"

"Write a well-organized report that shows…"

Justify, formulate relevant arguments and valid conclusions, organize data to support a viewpoint, persuade

"Which of the following alternatives would you favor, and why"

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"Explain why you agree or disagree with the following statement…"

"Write a letter to the County Commission to get increased funding for biblical studies."

Summarize

"In your own words, summarize…"

"State the main points included in…"

"Briefly summarize the contents of…"

Generalize

"Formulate several valid generalizations from the following data."

"State a set of principles that can explain the following events."

Evaluate

"Using the criteria developed in class, write an evaluation of…"

"Describe the strengths and weaknesses of…"

"Attached is a selected reading and the rubric to be used to evaluate the portfolio. Evaluate the selected reading using the rubric. Explain your scores by citing examples from the selected reading."

Create an original solution, product, or procedure

"List as many ways as you can think of for…"

"Make up a story describing what would happen if…"

Remember that instruction is necessary to prepare students for any of these types of questions. All of them require students to use higher order thinking skills, and those skills must be taught adequately and prior to any assessment.

Example Essay Questions:

Here are four examples of biblical studies essay questions.

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1. Write a paragraph about the implications that can be drawn for today's Pentecostals from the life of the Apostle Paul.

2. Write a paragraph about the sacrifices that Jesus made as an example for us today.

3. Compare and contrast the life of Joseph with the life of Jesus Christ.

4. In your own words, explain two biblical doctrinal truths and how they have impacted your life.

Enclosure 2 – Guidelines for Assessment Administration

As the classroom instructor, you have the greatest influence and impact on overall student test performance. Because of this, your actions and interactions with students during the conduct of the test is extremely important. Here are some very important actions you can take during the administration of the test to enhance student performance and success:

Before the Test…

The following are instructor actions and considerations before administering the test:

Avoid any actions that would create student anxiety

Explain the purpose of the test to students

Provide any necessary oral directions, but keep them to a minimum

Remind students of "test-taking hints" about guessing, skipping difficult questions, and coming back to those questions later

Inform the students of the amount of time allocated to take the test.

Let students know how to signal you when they have a question

If possible, ensure the classroom is well lighted and at a comfortable temperature

During the Test…

The following are instructor actions and considerations during the test:

Minimize interruptions and distractions (noise, conversations, etc.)

Do not give hints

Remain in the classroom to monitor student progress

Periodically place the "time remaining" on a board visible to all students

Note if there are several questions about a particular question. It may need revising or eliminating from the test

After the Test…

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The following are instructor actions and considerations after the test:

Grade the student assessments and return to students as quickly as possible

Record student grades in pencil in the event of grading errors
Discuss test items with students

During your discussion with students about the test, there may be several students who have questions about the same test item. If there is a majority of student with the same question, it will be important to consider either eliminating the item from the test or giving partial credit for the students' answers. In either case, do not make a final decision until you have adequately considered whether the test item wording or possible answers could have caused students to misinterpret your intended correct answer.

Enclosure 3 – Rubric Definition and Generic Sample

A RUBRIC is a simple standard by which student behavior, performance, knowledge, skills, writing ability, grammar, etc. are measured.

Most students don't understand exactly why they have been given a particular test grade. And without a rubric, teachers may also find it difficult to explain a particular numerical grade.

A RUBRIC helps the student and the teacher. By reading the RUBRIC, the student will understand how he or she will be evaluated, how the course grade is broken down into sections or units, and what the performance standards are for each level of mastery. By using the RUBRIC, the teacher is guided by the performance standards and not a subjective evaluation.

A generic rubric sample is shown on the next page:

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General Rubric

	Excellent 100 – 90 A+, A	Very Good 90-80. B+, B	Good 80-70 C+, C	Satisfactory 70-65 D	Unsatisfactory 64 and under F
Accuracy	No mistakes, scholarly and accurate. Excellent knowledge of the topic shown	Few if any mistakes, any mistakes must be minor in nature & good knowledge of the topic shown	Some, but not many, mistakes made, good knowledge shown.	Several mistakes made, fair knowledge of the topic shown.	Many mistakes made. Does not show an adequate knowledge of the topic.
Use of historical data	Used many details in a thorough and expert manner.	Used many details to illustrate topic.	Used some details to illustrate topic	Used one or two details, alluded to details vaguely.	Used no historical details. Made factual errors.
Demonstrated learning and understanding	Applied integrated concepts; made connections between facts and ideas.	Clearly understood topic well.	Understood topic.	Followed directions, had a basic knowledge of the topic.	Thinking not justified; no evidence that knowledge was acquired.
Mechanics (Grammar or Art)	Grammar and/or art work were without flaws and professional in nature.	Grammar and/or art work are quality in nature.	Occasional errors but not enough to distract.	Distracting errors, difficult to read.	Fragmented sentences and grammar. Art completed haphazardly. Very difficult to understand
Neat and orderly	Professional appearance	Quality appearance	Neat and orderly, easy to follow.	Moderately neat, almost distracting.	Lacks neatness and orderliness. Hard to understand
Word Usage	Word choice and usage are professional.	Word choice makes piece interesting.	Word choice simple but acceptable.	Some mistakes in word choice and usage. Could be clear	Word choice is inadequate or inappropriate.
Message	Message flows and is passionate.	Message is clear and easy to understand.	Message can be understood.	Message not easily understood.	Very hard to understand message.
Creativity	Very clever; creatively designed	Displays creative thinking	Shows some creative thinking	Lacks creativity	Copied from another source.