

Issues in Student Performance Evaluation with Online Education

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Nursing is experiencing a depletion of its workforce in both the practice and academic areas. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) issued a statement regarding both the current and future shortages in numbers of nurses as well as the aging of nurses and nurse faculty (1998). One factor in the shortage of nurses is access to the educational opportunities that support the achievement of a nursing degree. One mechanism to improve the access is distance education (Selingo, 1998). In addition, distance education offerings fight the “brain drain” experienced by rural areas; allowing students to pursue advanced education without leaving their homes and communities (AACN, 2000). While many educators are still battling the philosophical differences between on site and online nurse education, students are indicating that, given a choice, they are more likely to obtain their degrees if courses are flexible and easily accessed. Online education certainly satisfies those two criteria. The challenge to nurse educators, then, becomes the development and adoption of methods, which will allow the effective performance evaluation in online course offerings.

Online education lends itself to a wide variety of innovative evaluation methods designed to monitor and measure the development of critical thinking and scholarly inquiry as well as currency in nursing knowledge and skills. This presentation will delineate strategies for strengthening evaluation methodologies in online instruction. Strategies reflecting undergraduate and graduate foci will be presented.

Innovative approaches to holistic student development, alternatives in evaluating the affective domain and strategies to promote the enhancement and transfer of learning will be included in this presentation. Topics will include the use of synchronous and asynchronous discussion groups, cooperative cyber groups, mentorship, journaling, and webliography generation and evaluation, planned controversy and metaphorical representation of concepts.

Evaluation of student learning will be discussed relative to the approaches listed above as well as long-term retention of the concepts. To a lesser degree, the presentation will outline the development of faculty expertise in this dynamic education environment.

Objectives:

At the completion of this session the participant will be able to:

- 1. state issues involved in the evaluation of student performance in online education**
- 2. outline a rubric for evaluation of student performance using one of the online teaching strategies.**