FAS - Assessment Scaffolding Strategies

Annotated bibliography

This scaffolding technique is one that is familiar and well used. As a list of citations with brief description and succinct analysis, it is a great tool for allowing groups of students to share resources on a given topic. Consider asking students to divide up a list of resources, annotate, and share at the beginning of an inquiry project for a cooperative approach to research.

Assignment checklist

Providing students with a checklist breaks down their assignments into manageable chunks. Providing students with a breakdown of segments helps them formulate what their final task must be and allows them to work backwards, helping them plan their group progress.

Assignment schedule

Encourage students to access Queen's University's assignment planner tool, which can help students and groups plan their assignment by generating important milestones for their project. This resource has also been used by instructors and the CTL at Queen's to generate scaffolding ideas for their assessments!

Concept/mind mapping

Students can use concept or mind mapping on their own or in groups to create a visual representation of content as they progress through the course or through a research project. Consider providing groups of students with the opportunity to develop a map as preparation for final exams. Visually representing the relationship between concepts presented in the course, students collaboratively recall and explore their complexity, and co-author a study tool to use as they further prepare for the exam. Programs such as Mindomo and MindMup both facilitate collaborative mapping activities.

Concrete examples

Be intentional about providing illustrative examples in your instructor-developed resources when explaining concepts. Examples provide students with a way to enhance learning since concrete information is easier to remember than abstract concepts. Encourage students to keep a running list of examples that illustrate the concepts in your course.

Dissemination

Allow students the opportunity, when they have completed a paper/project, to share their results/findings through a narrated PowerPoint, poster, or infographic.

Dual coding

By combining multiple representations of the same idea, it gives students two ways of remembering the information. You can use and model dual coding in your instructor-developed materials and ask students to do the same through scaffolded activities, such as building a timeline with both text and visuals, an infographic, or a storyboard.

Elaboration Techniques :

Elaboration helps students integrate what they are learning by asking "how" and "why" things work. You can provide students with the opportunity to elaborate through discussion activities in your remote course, asking them to relate topics and concepts to their lives or through other extension-type tasks like comparisons.

Exemplars:

Exemplars are an important tool in scaffolding learning. Examples of exemplary submissions (often from students in previous offerings of a course, used with permission) provide learners with a way of illustrating and understanding success criteria, which can seem highly abstract. Exemplars support assessment literacy and can be particularly efficacious in a remote learning environment where students may experience heightened uncertainty.

Group feedback sessions:

Group feedback sessions are beneficial, as they encourage open communication, improve group functionality, and increase performance. To facilitate a group feedback session, provide students with a set of guiding questions which they will discuss as a group to help them understand and reflect upon how their group is functioning as a whole, and what they can do to improve.

Group mini-presentation:

Group mini-presentations are one way to involve students in active and collaborative peer learning. Assign groups to a specific topic in the course in which their group will be responsible to research and present on. This provides students with practice researching and working well in groups remotely, and presenting a low-steak presentation in preparation for a bigger group presentation later in the term.

Group paper / article analysis:

For assignments that use a topic list or guided reading, allocate students into groups based on their selections. Students work in these small groups to brainstorm ideas from the text, support each others' understanding, and may be used to provide feedback.

Library search:

Providing students, particularly those in first year courses, with the opportunity to practice performing library searches can effectively scaffold research and other inquiry projects. Many instructors structure these searches as a "scavenger hunt". Consider inviting a librarian to help you design an asynchronous activity or facilitate a workshop in Teams.

Literature review:

A literature review provides students with the opportunity to practice Internet research techniques, while fostering their ability to scan literature efficiently, and identify and summarize various studies relevant to a given research topic.

Mind mapping:

See "Concept/Mind mapping"

One-minute paper:

A one-minute paper is a powerful learning strategy where students are given one minute to summarize a specific topic of the lecture, or respond to a content-specific question to check their understanding. This not only provides instructors with feedback on how their students are understanding and interpreting concepts, but it also provides the learner an opportunity to engage in and reflect upon their own learning process.

Peer review / feedback:

Provides students with learning opportunities on evaluation of their peers, while also giving them an opportunity to evaluate their own learning.

Peer support:

Allow students to work in small groups to formulate ideas when they are thinking about their topic for inquiry. Group members assist their peers to narrow in on their topic

Proposal / outline submission:

Allow students to submit a short proposal for or outline of a paper, project, or presentation they are planning. Proposals allow your teaching team to ensure that students are on the right path and is an opportunity to give students feedback before they begin their inquiry.

Research journal: A research journal can act as an informal annotated bibliography where the student tracks their research findings, and how it connects to their assignment in a journal-like fashion.

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Research reflection:

Students reflect on their research for their assignment, identifying what worked and what needs to be improved before their next assignment. This allows students to identify where they need to seek help, and identifies to the teaching team where future support may be needed.

Retrieval practice:

Retrieval practice activities are those that provide students with opportunities to test their knowledge through recall. Some examples include self-assessment quizzes, writing out or drawing everything they know about a specific topic, flashcards, and creating concept maps from memory.

Revision options:

Revision options allow students to submit work for non-graded feedback, which will be returned to them before the final submission date. Students would then integrate that feedback into their final submission for continuous improvement.

Rubrics:

Rubrics scaffold student learning by helping them to understand, explicitly instructors' expectations and how to be successful.

Self-assessment:

Student assesses and reflects on their assignment, and the work that they put into it. Students learn important evaluation skills but also identity for their future assignments where they need to improve or seek help.

Self-inquiry journal:

A tool used in labs where students report what they are doing and why they are doing it. It helps students reflect on their learning and extend their thinking into their next lab assignment.

Sequenced assignment / bridging assignment:

A sequenced assignment is a series of tasks that increase in difficulty, ending in a culminating product. These types of assessments provide coherence within a course and provide support for students in deepening their thinking. One example of a sequenced assignment is an "Essential Question", where students are guided through a structured exploration of an authentic question that begins with eliciting students' initial thoughts, introduces new perspectives, and helps students reach tentative closure.

Source evaluation:

Though many students begin learning how to evaluate sources in high school, it is a skill that requires continual honing as a crucial step in the research process. Consider providing students with the opportunity to evaluate sources and perform library searches through an asynchronous activity co-designed with, or a synchronous workshop facilitated by, a librarian.

Statement of confusion:

A statement of confusion is a statement submitted by individual students or groups at any time during their activity that allows them to articulate what about their inquiry is confusing to them. It prompts students to inquire deeper into a subject while giving you an opportunity to get a snapshot of their learning.

Topic list: Provide students with a detailed list of topics or topic papers that they can build their assignment from.

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Uncertainty guide / journal / reflection article:

A journal or article of reflection that a student uses throughout a lab or experiment where they make note of what they are unsure about, what they find confusing, or any other questions they may have from the exercise. Encourage students to search for answers on their own following the lab, or submit those questions to their teaching team for support.