



A New Year, A New Committee



Jennifer Patterson, Ph.D.
Chair, Learning Assessment Committee
Professor of Management

Greetings to everyone and welcome to the November edition of DataVersed, your newsletter for all things related to the FSW Learning Assessment Committee (LAC) and the Office of Assessment and Effectiveness (AASPIRE)! I hope you are well and excited to begin the Thanksgiving holiday break. As we rapidly approach the conclusion of the 2023 Fall semester, the next few weeks will no doubt be filled with numerous end-of-term activities, along with preparations for the winter break and the upcoming Spring term. Hopefully, we can all take a much-needed break and enjoy time with our families and friends, or just take a few moments to rest. However you celebrate, best wishes for a safe and Happy Thanksgiving!

In this edition of DataVersed, Dr. Rebecca Harris, Collegewide Curriculum and Academic Enhancement Director, provides valuable information for “Using Backward Design for Effective Course Learning Outcomes”. In a second article, titled “The Bake-Off Method of Assessment; Or, the Three Kinds of Heat”, Dr. Harris provides insight into developing “the three kinds of assessments we should include in all of our courses”. Both articles are valuable resources that will be especially helpful as we work on reviewing and developing learning outcomes and assessments for our courses.

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A New Year, A New Committee cont.

The edition also includes reminders for the opportunity to participate in the self-paced, asynchronous, online Assessment 101 Canvas-based course. The upcoming winter break might be a great time to consider the possibility of completing professional development opportunities, such as Assessment 101. Finally, this edition of DataVersed concludes with a list of your Learning Assessment Committee members. Since many of the members have numerous years of teaching and assessment experience, you might consider reaching out to some of the committee members for their thoughts on your assessment questions.

In closing, on behalf of the LAC and Team AASPIRE, we wish you a safe and Happy Thanksgiving and conclusion to your Fall semester!

All the best,
Jenny



Using Backward Design for Effective Course Learning Outcomes

For a lot of faculty members, writing course learning outcomes for curriculum and assessment is a chore. Often, the process can seem disconnected from the actual work of the course. Speaking of the mountains of assessment reports he was required to write as an academic administrator, Jerry Z. Mullen wrote in *The Tyranny of Metrics* that “much of the information was of no real use, and indeed, was read by no one.” Not exactly a great use of our limited time! However, assessment can be extremely fruitful if the process of designing the course learning outcomes is active, focused, and reflective; then, assessment provides us with an opportunity to continuously improve for the benefit of our students.



Rebecca Harris, Ph.D.
Director, Collegewide Curriculum and
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So, what should we do? And how can backward design help? To start, here is a description of the backward design approach from [Vanderbilt University](#):

The backward design approach has instructors consider the learning goals of the course first. These learning goals embody the knowledge and skills instructors want their students to have learned when they leave the course.

When designing your course learning outcomes, consider these questions first:

- What is the most important thing you want students to be able to do?
- What skills do you want students to learn in your course, and what knowledge will they need to use those skills effectively?

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Using Backward Design for Effective Course Learning Outcomes cont.

In consideration of these questions, think about the action verbs that reflect your goals for your students. Will they apply? Evaluate? Interpret? Focus on the doing rather than on the inert acquisition of knowledge, not only to improve your assessment process, but to better engage your students in the most exciting parts of your discipline.

Finally, ask yourself how the knowledge and skills learned in your course will continue to serve students in their academic and professional careers, both within and beyond your discipline. This is the transdisciplinary element of backward design that “transcends disciplinary boundaries and has the most potential to respond to new and emerging human problems and opportunities” ([Purdue Innovation Hub](#)). In many cases, our students are not preparing for majors or career in our disciplines, but the skills and knowledge we have to offer them transcend the parts of the cell or the names of the Caesars. Using backward design to develop our course learning outcomes gives us the opportunity to think about how what we do can be of service to our students beyond the walls of our classrooms.



The Bake-Off Method of Assessment; Or, the Three Kinds of Heat

Like many, I am a huge fan of The Great British Bake-Off (or Baking Show, depending on when and where you started watching) and I log in to Netflix every Friday during the season to watch as amateur contestants put their best bakes forward in the tent. As I was watching this most recent season, I got to thinking about how the three challenges on Bake-Off offer a great framework for thinking about course assessment. Like the challenges on the show, it is the combination of these three methods of assessment that leads to classroom magic.



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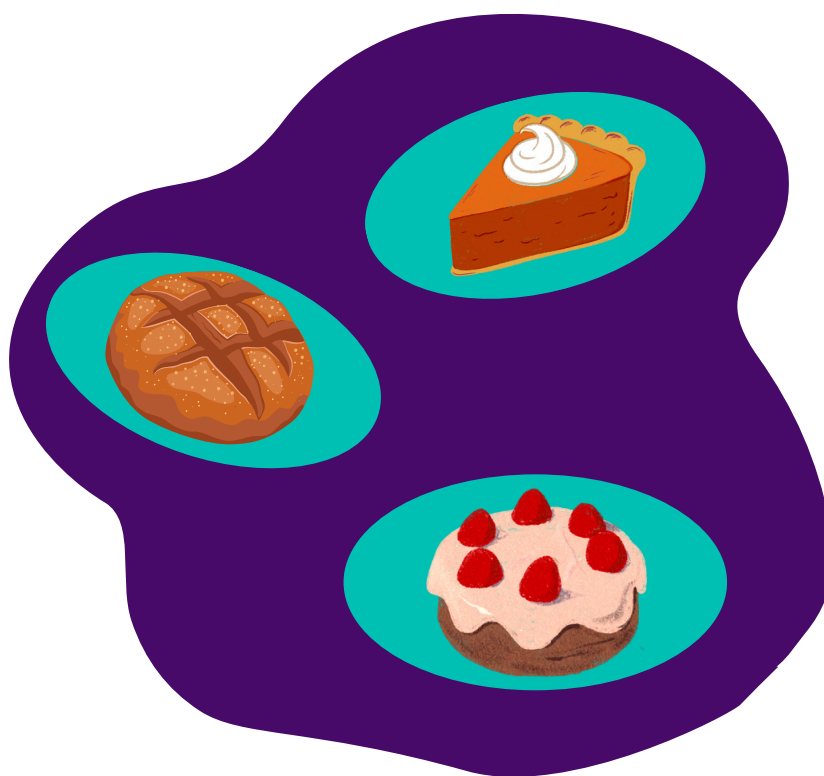
On the Bake-Off, for the uninitiated, there are three challenges: the Technical, the Signature, and the Showstopper, and these three challenges can be correlated to the three kinds of assessments we should strive to have in all our courses.

- The technical challenge tests objective skills by asking all the bakers to replicate a single recipe, which is like our objective assessments, such as multiple-choice tests, labeling diagrams, timelines, or formatting a Works Cited Page. Action verbs associated with this type of assessment include identify, recognize, name, recall, or define.
- The signature challenge asks participants to interpret a classic recipe, putting their own spin on it with flavors or ingredients. This challenge can be likened to course assessments like lab reports, oral exams, persuasive speeches, journals, or posters. Action verbs associated with this type of assessment include interpret, apply, explain, discern, solve, demonstrate, or express.
- The showstopper challenges bakers to develop and execute their own original recipes and designs. This challenge can be compared to course assessments like research projects, designing an experiment, staging a scene from a play, data visualizations, divergent thinking questions, counterfactuals, or unessays. Action verbs associated with this type of assessment include create, research, develop, investigate, evaluate, experiment, critique, justify, or analyze.

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The Bake-Off Method of Assessment; Or, the Three Kinds of Heat cont.

Like the mega-hit Bake-Off, a successful course assessment plan engages students in all three challenges, encouraging content knowledge, skill-building, and creative thinking. The Bake-Off would be far less engaging, and would show fewer skills, if there were only one kind of challenge. Likewise, our courses are not as fulfilling for our students without the opportunity to flex all their intellectual and creative muscles.



On the sitcom 30 Rock, boss Jack Donaghy was known at GE for his “trivection” oven project, an oven that uses three kinds of heat: thermal, convection, and microwave. “With three kinds of heat”, [Jack tells Liz Lemon](#), “you can cook a turkey in 22 minutes.” Jack’s point is that for any product or project to be maximally successful, you need multiple avenues of approach. The three types of assessment in the framework laid out here are the three kinds of heat that allow our students to cook the best turkey in the very short amount of time we have with them. Challenging our students with the three kinds of heat, or the three types of challenges, lets them put their best bake forward.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Self-paced!



Learning Assessment Committee 2023-2024

Member	Department or Division	Primary Campus
Patterson, Jennifer	Accounting, Bus., Management and LAC Chair	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Batiato, Dolores	Business	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Cabral, Krissy	Crime Scene Technology	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Carlson, Meghan	Mathematics	Collier
Charles, Jane	Libraries	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Coman, Marius	Biology/Chemistry/Physics	Collier
Conwell, Mary	Paralegal, Arch., Const., Engineering	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Donaldson, Tom	Social Sciences	Charlotte
Godwin, Jessica	Team AASPIRE	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Hester, Renee	Academic Success	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Moore, Colleen	Health Professions	Charlotte
Ruiz, Veronica	Team AASPIRE	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Seefchak, Caroline	Education	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Seelau, Eric	Social Sciences	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Such, Tami	Dean, Health Sciences	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Summary, Jennifer	Communication Studies	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Trogan, Amy	English	Thomas Edison (Lee)
van Gaalen, Joseph	Team AASPIRE	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Worch, Richard	Criminal Justice/Public Admin.	Thomas Edison (Lee)
Zamor, Terry	Mathematics	Thomas Edison (Lee)

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