**Progress Report Journal**

Mid-Semester Reflection

Christina Moore, Writing & Rhetoric, cmamoore@oakland.edu

**Learning Outcomes**

Students will

* assess their overall performance in the course
* reflect on how their performance matches their expectations
* make a plan of action for the rest of the semester, individually and with the faculty

**Overview**

Midterm evaluations bring a host of institutional measures to reach out to under-achieving students, such as grade reports. What might make the most difference to students’ success in the course is to enable them to assess their own performance in the class, set goals, and provide questions and feedback to the instructor accordingly. I do this through a “Progress Report” online journal assignment. Since I make all grades available on Moodle, students can see their grades but often don’t check or acknowledge that these grades are available to them.

**Step-by-Step Instructions**

About a third of the way through the semester, students are required to complete a Progress Report journal in which they:

1. Report their overall grade in the course.
2. Report their attendance record (since attendance is required in our course).
3. Reflect on their performance, whether it meets their expectations.
4. Provide goals for the rest of the course (often in the form of a GPA).
5. Provide feedback and questions for me on the class in general.

Students take anywhere from 50 to 400 words to complete this journal, based on their needs. It is not graded, but required in order to submit future assignments.

**Course Information** I implement this in WRT 150 and 160, which are freshman writing foundation courses capped at 22 students. I have implemented this assignment in hybrid and fully online courses.

**Ease of Application to Other Courses** **EASY** MODERATE DIFFICULT

**Additional Comments**

While we may consider ourselves open to student feedback, students often interpret this as their first opportunity to reflect on the course and ask questions. Some will provide context for their content knowledge and other school responsibilities, which is often very enlightening for me. Students generally express gratitude at the official opportunity to assess their progress in the course (even more so when they are doing poorly) because it is early enough in the semester to make progress. Even with brief feedback on the instructor’s part, they see it the professor reaching out and caring about individual student.

Even in the case of students who are negative and critical, it provides an opportunity for the instructor to show understanding and explain course procedure, more effectively shutting down grumblings and increasing course satisfaction. In some cases, it also provides an opportunity to improve our courses and correct mistakes.

I implement this in a writing intensive course that is capped at 22 students, so courses with more than 50 students may want to offer this as extra credit to control review flow. Even for classes with around 50 students, this activity would not take long for the tremendous benefit it provides to the class dynamic, student success, and your end-of-the-semester evaluations.

**The Instructor Requirements** There are two important requirements to make this activity possible: 1) Students must have some graded assignments earlier in the semester and 2) Students must be able to see the individual grades and understand how they contribute to the course grade. Both practices are important for student success in courses. If you don’t yet incorporate these two practices, talk with colleagues, instructional designers, or any other faculty support you may have on campus to consider methods for implementing earlier assessments and transparent grading.

**Non-Tech Version** As all my assignments are submitted through the university’s learning management system and grades are housed there as well, it is easy for me to give students an online assignment for this progress report. If you prefer an offline version of this assignment, given students between class periods to type or handwrite their progress report and hand it in to you the next session.

**Resources**

Weimer, M. (2016 Jun 15). Benefits of talking with students about mid-course evaluations. *Faculty Focus*, facultyfocus.com