

The Communique

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“Assessing Elon University through the timely collection, analysis, and dissemination of institutional related information.”

Grades and Assessment: Why Grades are Not Sufficient

A grade (whether a course, test, or quiz grade) is typically comprised of more than a single content or skill area. Therefore, a grade can mask results that indicate an area for student improvement. Because of this, grades by themselves are not considered sufficient indicators for assessing student outcomes.

An example of a grade that masks results:

- ◇ A 50 question test is evenly divided into 5 content areas, 10 questions for each area.
- ◇ The department expects 80% of students to correctly answer at least 7 questions in each content area
- ◇ A student gets 90% of the answers correct (45 correct answers) on the test, but misses 4 answers from one content area and 1 from another content area
- ◇ The student easily passes the test, but fails one content area

How Using Item Analysis Can Help

The chart below indicates that while a criterion of having at least 80% of students correctly answer at least 7 questions is achieved in the content area of XZY (only students 1 and 9 have scores below 7), 50% of students correctly answer question #3 and 40% of students correctly answer question #9. Why did so few students correctly answer these questions? Examining how the content was delivered for questions #3 and #9 might shed some light on why so many students missed these questions. NOTE: If old tests results are available, the following type of analysis can be conducted on previous semesters' course tests.

Student	Test Questions Related to Content Area XZY										Student Score
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Std 1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	6
Std 2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Std 3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	9
Std 4	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	8
Std 5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	9
Std 6	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	8
Std 7	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Std 8	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	8
Std 9	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	6
Std 10	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	8
	10	9	5	8	10	8	8	8	4	10	
Correct Answers by Test Question											