

# **Establishing Reliability And Validity In The Student Learning Outcomes Of A Unique Interdisciplinary Practitioner Based Graduate Program.**

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## **Aim of project**

The development of an interdisciplinary practitioner based graduate program must meet the demands of both potential doctoral students and accreditation standards. Establishing validity and reliability in student learning assessment is critical in providing a rigorous academic program, but can be challenging when the material is unique and non-traditional.

## **Theoretical background**

Potential graduate students are seeking academic programs that allow them to balance work, life and school while receiving knowledge from experts in their desired field of study. Graduate programs using traditional means of assessing student learning outcomes may miss the applicability of the information gained when applied to the current needs of the sport industry. Incorporating the appropriate balance of traditional academic instruction with practitioner focused instruction provides the student with an opportunity to be successful in the field by using evidenced based decision making. The development of non-traditional student learning outcomes provides students and program directors an opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of the education programming in the real world rather than just the theoretical world. The appropriate assessment of these non-traditional student learning outcomes provides the instructor with assessments that are aligned with teaching and real world learning activities, empowering faculty to use the results for practical application improvement.

## **Methods**

Providing practical learning outcome assessments is critical in developing academic programming for working professionals. Often times these practical learning outcomes are not found in traditional academic programs. Following the SACSCOC on-site review of the Global Sport Leadership (GSLD) program, the GSLD program coordinator worked with interdisciplinary faculty teaching in the GSLD program to refine the program's curriculum map. The GSLD program identified two direct assessment measures — one early in the curriculum and another near the end of a student's program of study. In an effort to ensure the validity of the assessment measures, practicing professionals from the US and abroad in each of the program's eight student learning outcome areas reviewed the student learning outcome, assignment instructions, evaluation rubric, and performance criteria. When indicated, feedback from the external consultants was used to revise assignment instructions and scoring rubric items. Once GSLD program faculty were confident that the measures used to assess program SLOs were valid, they focused on calibrating the rubrics using a process described on the University of Hawaii at Manoa assessment website (Hawaii, 2012). Teams of at least three faculty members (both internal and external to ETSU) met to calibrate each of the rubrics used for program assessment. Teams discussed the purpose of the rubrics, how the rubrics were developed, each rubric dimension, and how to apply the criteria. After reaching consensus on the rubric, each faculty member independently evaluated multiple assignment samples using the agreed upon rubric.

## **Results**

The results of the SLO evaluations resulted in changes in instructions, rubric and assignment assessment. The combination of both practitioner and academic professional provides an appropriate benchmark for student learning outcomes. Because these outcomes will now be assessed using valid and reliable rubrics, both faculty and students will benefit from having clear expectations for performance. These improvements, while minor, are expected to improve the teaching and learning process through clear and consistent communication. As a result, students are better prepared to submit assignments that reflect the intent of the assessment to benefit them in practical application as well as meet academic rigor. Additional improvement plans will be documented as they are developed, based on the analysis of results. Effectiveness of improvements will be evaluated by faculty based on results from successive assessment cycles (Ayala et al., 2008; Yin, Tomita, & Shavelson, 2014).

## **References**

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