What to Observe and Evaluate in Teaching & Learning
What about teaching is evaluated?

Learning

Duquesne University recognizes rigor and engagement as crucial components of learning, and these are the primary ways that evaluations should discuss learning. However, the understanding of learning, and how that understanding connects with, and is facilitated by, rigor and engagement is important to consider.

Learning is multimodal and occurs under various circumstances. However, learning can be understood generally as the production of growth, changes in behavior or understanding, the integration of experience into the formation of new skills, and it is important to remember that learning is shared.
Together with your peer, review these descriptions of the learning process. Discuss how they do or do not (and why in either case) apply to the teaching methods you feel should be used for the evaluated course. Some example guiding questions can be found on the next slide.

“[Learning is] acquiring knowledge and skills and having them readily available from memory so you can make sense of future problems and opportunities.” Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning by Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, Mark A. McDaniel (2014)

“Engaging students in learning is principally the responsibility of the teacher, who becomes less an imparter of knowledge and more a designer and facilitator of learning experiences and opportunities.” (Smith, Sheppard, Johnson and Johnson 2005)

“Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves” (Chickering & Gamson, 1987)
Guiding questions about learning to discuss with your peer:

- How would you define the learning you create through your course design and bring about through your teaching and assignments? What is the core of what you want students to learn in the observed class and how should this be achieved?

- Reflect on your own most meaningful learning experience(s). What stands out? How do you pull from these experiences in your own development of your teaching and your views on education more generally?

- What does it mean to you to say "learning is shared"?
Now that you've reflected on what learning looks like in your classes, let's consider how rigor and engagement, the core aspects of Duquesne teaching evaluations, fit into this picture.

Rigor and engagement are also two sides of the same coin, often going hand-in-hand. We'll be covering 'rigor' in the next few slides before diving into a similar review of 'engagement'.

It's important to note that we're only providing very broad characterizations of both 'rigor' and 'engagement' so that they can apply to all disciplines and levels of learners.

We encourage you to co-create with your colleague definitions that are more specific to your particular context.
We characterize rigor as depth of learning demonstrated across multiple strata with layers of support to facilitate self-produced learning in the field/topic at hand.

In education scholarship, rigor is broadly understood as the development of immersive and relevant connections between students and the content area through various educational experiences.

Classwork is not 'rigorous' just because it is difficult or time-consuming. Classwork becomes rigorous when it demands attention, thoughtfulness, and adaptive application of ideas and/or skills relevant to the field.

The next few slides will cover some example indicators of 'rigor', discuss how to determine if rigor is being fostered, and encourage reflection through discussion questions.

Remember: these are broad characterizations. It is up to you to work with your peer to determine how exactly rigor should be defined in the observed class. Hopefully, these characterizations help get that discussion going.

Further reading on the idea of 'rigor' in learning that generated this characterization can be found in Sztabnik, 2015 and Campbell, Dortch, & Burt, 2018.
### Indicators of Rigor

#### In Student Behavior, Activities, or Work
- Applies higher order reasoning to solve field-relevant issues.
- Persistence to complete tasks despite barriers.
- Productively responds to feedback from peers and instructor.
- Metacognitive reflection.
- Authentically engages counter positions.
- Collaboration activities or projects.
- Synthesizes information from multiple sources.
- Displays understanding of nuanced differences.
- Community engaged learning or other forms of experiential learning.
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- Evidence of out of class research.
- Extracts information from datasets and/or readings and applies correctly.
- Creative shared resource for self and peers.
- Unprompted question raising.
- Small/large group work.
- Paired tasks.
- Guided work with instructor.
- Online discussion board activity.
- Reference to online resources in class discussions.
- Notetaking.
- Creation of shared resource for self and peers.
- Unprompted question raising.

#### In Professor's Course Design or Lesson Plan
- Allows time for students to work through problems alone or in groups.
- Provides scaffolding for skill development.
- Developmental approach to assessment.
- Aligns learning goals with scope and level of the course.
- Explains this alignment to students.
- Offers students a role in choosing course readings and/or developing assessment guidelines.
- Objectives are clear and measurable.
- Provides rubrics for course materials.
- Follows logical progression.
- Guides students to discover answers to issues rather than stating the answers to be memorized.
- Encourages student-driven content.
- Problem- or project-based learning.
- Flipped classroom.
- Instructs students on how to tease out nuanced differences and expresses the value of this skill.

Note: These are examples, not an exhaustive list.

As you will see on the next slide, the presence of an indicator of rigor does not automatically mean that the indicator is being utilized properly and thereby creating a truly rigorous learning experience.
A teaching technique could be used to create a rigorous learning experience, but it could also be misaligned with the course context. As such, the levels below provide guideposts that signal the professor’s efforts as well as the expectations and support experienced by the student.

Review this with your colleague to make sure you both share a common understanding of how the course as a whole and each individual class achieves rigor in your discipline. Strongly consider articulating this shared understanding in the summative evaluation.

### Fundamental Rigor
- Class activities and expectations are aligned with course goals
- Focused engagement with the content but the scope of engagement is unimodal
- Class meetings are procedural and habituated in order to achieve daily/weekly goals
- Utilizes scaffolding to ensure all students experience a developmental learning experience
- Encourages broad scope of engagement with topic

### Exemplary Rigor
- Collaboration in both the articulation of course goals and the methods utilized to meet those goals and be cognizant of student needs
- Professor both models and expects a multimodal scope of engagement with the topic from diverse perspectives
- Variety in instructional methods and evaluations used to refine the skills being developed in the course that recognizes the diverse contexts of future implementation outside of the course
Pause to discuss together the levels of rigor discussed in the “Fostering Rigor” slide. Here are some example discussion questions:

- How would you evaluate the rigor of your own teaching? What goals for refining the rigor in your teaching do you have and what is your plan for reaching those goals?

- Thinking back to the list of indicators of rigor, how do you think these indicators should be evaluated in terms of whether they actually produce the intended learning impact?

- How would you adjust the definition of 'rigor' to better match your discipline? What does 'rigorous teaching' mean to you? What about 'rigorous learning'? What aspects of the observed course do you expect to be the primary observable sites of rigor?
We understand engagement as student participation in activities, course events, and assignments that cultivate knowledge in the field and encourage expanding the scope of application of that knowledge.

Engagement can take many forms -- discussion, note-taking, attentive listening, in-class activities, lab work, out-of-class research or project development. The important element of an engaged learning experience is that it fosters connections between faculty and students in ways that revolve around the course material.

Activities or teaching techniques that foster engagement do so by connecting with students' interests and passions in a way that directs them to develop those passions in field oriented ways.

The next few slides will cover some example indicators of 'engagement', discuss how to determine if 'engagement' is being fostered, and encourage reflection through discussion questions.

Remember: these are broad characterizations. It is up to you to work with your peer to determine how exactly how engagement should be defined in the observed class. Hopefully, these characterizations help get that discussion going. Further reading on the idea of 'engagement' in learning that generated this characterization can be found in Smail & Groccia, 2018 and Abla & Fraumeni, 2019.
### Indicators of Engagement

#### In Student Behavior, Activities, or Work
- simulations
- lab work
- role playing
debates
- mock trials
- learning games
case studies
- expression of affect (‘aha’ or ‘huh’ moments)
opportunities to practice professional tasks
- minute papers
- reflections
- brainstorming
- concept maps
- jigsaw activities
- small/large group work
- paired tasks
- guided work with instructor
- creation of shared resource for self and peers
- unprompted question raising
- projects
- presentations
- evidence of out of class research
- précis assignments
- journaling
- making connections between course material and current events/issues

#### In Professor's Course Design or Lesson Plan
- respectful dialogue
- connections to current events/issues
- reading guides
- intention pauses to cultivate discussion and feedback
- reading guides
- quizzes
- energy of the lecturer carries over to students
- use of various learning activities
- offers students a role in choosing course readings and/or developing assessment guidelines
- productive use of third party apps to stimulate discussion (padlet, nearpod, kahoot, etc.)
- opportunities for student research projects
- use of relevant online materials during class

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**Note:** These are examples, not an exhaustive list. Some indicators apply to both rigor and engagement, so they may be repeated from the previous slide.
As with rigor, steps can be taken to try to create an engaging learning experience, but these efforts could be misaligned with the course context. As such, the levels below provide guideposts that signal the professor's efforts as well as the attitudes and habits expressed by the student.

Review this with your colleague to make sure you both share a common understanding of how the course as a whole and each individual class creates engagement with your discipline. Strongly consider articulating this shared understanding in the summative evaluation.

**Fostering Engagement**

**Fundamental Engagement**
- Students resist getting started on work/activities but complete tasks
- Students take notes but do not reflect on materials or ask questions
- Students are usually focused on class with minimal/no off-topic use of devices
- Students get started on work/activities quickly and produce finished projects

**Enduring Engagement**
- Activities in class are aligned with course goals and/or professional expectations beyond the class.
- Students readily make connections between the events/topics of the day's class with previous class meetings/topics
- Instructor clarifies the connection between the activities in class and the skills those activities develop in order to reach course goals and/or hone professional skills
- Students seek out professor's approval for, and guidance of, unique projects based on the class's topic
Pause to discuss together the definition of engagement and how you see/expect to see engagement unfolding in the observed course(s). Here are some example discussion questions:

- How would you adjust the definition of 'engagement' to better match your discipline? What does 'engaging teaching' mean to you? What about 'engaged learning'? What aspects of the observed course do you expect to be the primary observable sites of engagement?

- Looking over the list of example indicators of engagement given in a previous slide, what are your thoughts? What would you add? Take away? Reflecting on these changes that you would make, how do these changes align with your definition of 'engagement'?

- How do you think 'engagement' in teaching and learning can/should be documented in a peer evaluation?