Assessment

Many instructors access their students using one or two methods. Unfortunately, the use of only one or two methods (exams and/or papers) limits students' ability to accurately demonstrate what they have learned. Many students have test taking anxieties or are not great paper writers, however that does not mean that they did not grasp the material to the satisfaction of the professor. By offering students flexibility in how they demonstrate their knowledge, instructors can more accurately measure how well students understand the material. The following are the steps instructors should follow when adding UCD to their course assessments:

1. Don't test students on things that you did not touch on.

2. Provide ongoing evaluation of "what is working and what is not." Change your approach if something is not working.

3. Change methods according to the effectiveness and appropriateness of the presentation format.

4. Offer various forms assessment (papers, presentations, web quests, etc.)

There are many different types of strategies an instructor can choose from. **Below are just non-technology required strategies:**

Provide guidelines for students regarding how to submit assignments, when they are do, participation in discussions, etc.
Create a clear rubric of what constitutes an "A" paper and what doesn't--give examples of previous student work and distribute to the class. For independent projects the instructor and student should develop an outline that explains the project's essential elements and expectations.
Allow Independent Study projects related to the course as well as student interests.
Encourage students to use various forms of non-tech (graphs, color coding, maps, diagrams, etc.) as they develop the themes/ideas for their assignments.
Incorporate the personal interest of students into assessment topics, essay choices, etc.
Provide multiple opportunities for students to get feedback prior to submitting final draft and provide flexible due dates for each step of the paper (topic, outline, rough draft, resources, final draft, etc.).
Provide opportunities for group evaluations (allow students either alone or as a group to evaluate their work as a group).
Require students to complete a 'mini' paper at the end of each class to check comprehension, encourage students to reflect (using reflection sheets) on the essential question.
Provide the option of attending lab or forming a group of 5 or more and doing the lab in the manner that they see fit (allow creativity and dismiss the group from coming to school).
Provide students with study tips, don't ask questions on material not covered in class on the exam. Form discussion groups for review purposes.

Here are a few technology-related UCD assessment strategies:

Give students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge in alternative formats (presentations, papers, videos, newspaper articles, case-studies, photo essays, etc.).
Encourage students to do their final presentations in a medium that works best for their learning style, provide a rubric as a guide.
Encourage students to use technology as they develop the themes/ideas for their assignments (Concept map tools, spell checks, PowerPoints, digital cameras, etc.).
Assign students to conduct webquests around a topic that they are interested in that relates to the course.
Have students create informative topic specific websites--allow them to provide the information in a manner that works best for them.
Create and monitor online debates between groups. Use a web conferring tool, wikis, a blog or Skype. See more information on these tools.
Encourage students to include their notes and/or pictures in their lab reports.
Ask students to create course-related MP3 files to share with the rest of the class.
Provide online review sessions.

For example, a journalism professor typically asked her students to write a 15 page paper on the ethics journalist must adhere to. Students grumbled at the assignment and the professor found that many of her students who we're grasping the concepts in class didn't do as well on the paper. She reviewed the UCD strategies and the next semester she offered her students two options:

1. Write a 15 page paper on the ethics of journalism. Choose to write on the ethics that a newspaper, television or online journalist must adhere to.

or

2. Spend a day shadowing a local journalist. Interview them on their code of ethics, include a personal reflection. Submit your project in a medium that works best for you (paper, audio file, podcast, video).

The following is the breakdown of what she received:

Paper (10 total)	Alternative project (15 total)
Print journalism (5)	Audio files, including actual interview and self-reflections (7)
Video journalism (3)	Written reports (6)
online journalism (2)	Short video movies documenting the experience (2)

For assistance in creating a UCD assessment strategies please contact Kirsten Behling at kbehling@suffolk.edu.