

The Syllabus Quiz as an Indicator of Course Performance

DR. DAN KEAST
PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF MUSIC
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PERMIAN BASIN (ODESSA, TEXAS)

What does QM suggest?

- ▶ Specific Review Standard 1.1
 - ▶ Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.

Annotation for SRS 1.1

- ▶ Information posted at the beginning of the course provides a general course overview, presents the schedule of activities, guides the learner to explore the course site, and indicates what to do first, in addition to listing detailed navigational instructions for the whole course.
- ▶ Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus. In this case, learners should be directed to the syllabus at the beginning of the course. A useful feature is a "Read Me First" or "Start Here" button or icon on the course home page, linking learners to start-up information.
- ▶ Reviewers, use the first visit to the course to experience what new learners encounter on their first visit to the course. Look for clear directions on what to do first, where to find the syllabus, and how to navigate the course.
- ▶ Examples of guidance to help learners get acquainted with the course:
 - ▶ 1. Clear statements about how to get started in the course
 - ▶ 2. A course "tour"
 - ▶ 3. A "scavenger hunt" or "syllabus quiz" assignment that leads learners through an exploration of the different parts of the course
 - ▶ 4. An illustration, table, diagram, visual representation, or mind map that depicts the online and face-to-face portions of a blended course

What's in your syllabus?

Do you ask students about the content in your syllabus?
How so?

The "Syllabus Quiz" in research

- ▶ Raymark & Connor-Greene (2002): N=131
 - ▶ ½ of Intro to Psych course took 21-item test over syllabus. Other ½ took quiz over simple behavioral questions. While results were significant, the researchers cautioned that "instructors should consider ways to make it more likely that student will take the quiz seriously." (pg. 288)
- ▶ Nilson (2010)
 - ▶ Go over syllabus early in course. Assign students to review it for homework. Give short answer syllabus quiz in next class session.
- ▶ James Lang (2015)
 - ▶ Every few weeks, end class with a different type of syllabus quiz. Stop 10 minutes early. Pull out syllabus and point to a topic/reading in past and ask them to write whatever they remember about it.
- ▶ Kirk & Huff (2010)
 - ▶ Online - misunderstanding of policies is more common. The quiz helps students make sure they understanding the important policies before they embark into the course.

How does this match - or mismatch - your experience?

What I wanted to learn:

- ▶ 1) survey questions used in syllabus quizzes,
- ▶ 2) compare final course grade to the first attempt score at a syllabus quiz in an online general education course,
- ▶ 3) compare final course grade to the day of the first attempt at the syllabus quiz in an online general education course,
- ▶ 4) compare the final course grade to the number of attempts necessary to earn a 90% on the syllabus quiz in an online general education course,
- ▶ 5) compare group member evaluation scores to the syllabus quiz first attempt score, and
- ▶ 6) compare the self-evaluation score to the syllabus quiz first attempt score.

Design of this study:

- ▶ N=450
- ▶ Fully online general education course over 3 semesters
- ▶ 23-item syllabus quiz consistent over all 3 semesters
 - ▶ One item was an essay response (retype the honor code)
 - ▶ Two questions were uploading photos (one their student ID and the other a driver's license or passport to confirm identity)
- ▶ Unlimited attempts on the syllabus quiz
- ▶ Students needed to earn a 90% on the quiz in order to "begin" the first module in the course

Compare final course grade to the first attempt score at a syllabus quiz

- ▶ $r = .20$ (N=450), a lower Pearson confidence rating. This is not a statistically significant result as the t value is $t = .29$.

Compare final course grade to the day of the first attempt at the syllabus quiz

- ▶ $r = -.32$ (N=450), a negative moderate Pearson confidence rating. However, the t value was $t = -.23$ resulting in another null hypothesis.

Compare the final course grade to the number of attempts necessary to earn a 90% on the syllabus quiz

- ▶ $r = -.12$ (N=450), a lower negative Pearson confidence rating. The t-test value was $t = -.03$ and thus significant in this study.

Compare group member evaluation scores to the syllabus quiz first attempt score

- ▶ $r = -.26$ (N=450), a negative lower Pearson confidence rating. The t-test result was $t = -.17$.

Compare the self-evaluation score to the syllabus quiz first attempt score.

- ▶ $r = -.12$ (N=450), a lower Pearson confidence rating. The t-test result was $t = -.02$ and thus significant in this study.

Survey questions used in syllabus quiz

- ▶ Primarily multiple choice and short answer
- ▶ Communication methods with professor/Office Hours/Office Location
- ▶ Location of assignments in the LMS
- ▶ Clarification of policies such as late work, make-up exams, extra credit, grading policies, plagiarism, attendance, lab/library co-requirements, length of time for reply from a professor, etc.
- ▶ Course objectives
- ▶ Required text and other materials
- ▶ How to receive technical help

Suggestions for further research

- ▶ The number of attempts on the syllabus quiz were significantly correlated ($t = -.03$) to the final course grade. A negative correlation doesn't always mean there was an opposite effect by the variable. There are multiple factors that could be interacting to contribute to this finding. It should be isolated and studied in additional research to corroborate or explain.
- ▶ The day of the first attempt on the syllabus quiz correlated to the self-assessment at the end of the course, albeit a negative one ($t = -.02$).
- ▶ Students in the study were allowed to drop/add the course throughout the first two weeks. This affects the days in which students began the course. Future iterations of research should delineate the student start date as the day they joined the course, not day 1 of the course itself.
- ▶ Future data collection should incorporate day-by-day averages for the syllabus quiz to view which day of the course is effective, highest pass rates, or most trafficked.

Questions?

Dr. Dan Keast
Professor & Chair of Music
The University of Texas Permian Basin (Odessa, TX)
Keast_d@utpb.edu
@keast_d on Twitter
