Formative and Summative Evaluation

Introduction

The purpose of formative evaluation is to gather information to understand strengths and weaknesses in order to improve teaching and learning. Summative evaluation assesses achievement with an end in mind such as a grade. The sites below compare these two forms of evaluation and offer examples of each.

General Resources

Formative vs. Summative Assessment (Carnegie Mellon University, Office of Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation).
Succinct definitions of formative and summative evaluation with examples of each. See also on this site the section Assessing Learning and the section Examples and Tools for additional examples of both types of assessment.

The Assessment of Teaching and Learning (University of North Florida, Office of Faculty Enhancement).
Useful discussion, with examples, of formative and summative evaluation measures and numerous links to resources tied to the two types of evaluation.

The Teaching Doctor (Office of Health Sciences Education, Queens University, Ca).
Scroll down to Spring 2008 for a full issue devoted to formative and summative assessment: what, why, techniques, and examples of formative assessment. Encourages faculty to develop a plan for assessment, using formative assessment "as part of a continuum where specific tasks....provide feedback to students throughout the learning experience."

Back to top

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Links