Taming the testing/grading cycle in classes centered around open-ended assessment

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Background: Many A&P instructors value open-ended assessments, but encounter roadblocks to using them throughout a class.

Dilemma: Anatomy and physiology (A&P) faculty typically want their students to demonstrate high-order reasoning and critical thinking throughout a class. Demonstrating such skills might include defending ideas using evidence, distinguishing between multiple defensible conclusions, considering alternate points of view, and applying concepts to novel situations. The higher-order assessments that emphasize these skills often take the form of open-ended, short answer questions. However, the time requirements involved in grading open-ended assessments on exams often limit the use of such questions throughout an A&P course.

Potential Solution: This poster discusses an index card questioning strategy (Cards) designed to mitigate the grading workload associated with using open-ended assessments as a centerpiece of a class. The Cards strategy additionally promotes active learning and provides instructors with formative evidence on student progress.

(Additional information regarding Cards can be found in the related article appearing in the Journal of College Science Teaching. Schinske 2011. Journal of College Science Teaching. 40(4) 46-52)

1) Cards facilitates the use of open-ended questioning by instructors.

2) Students rate Cards as one of the most valuable aspects of their A&P course.

A&P students most commonly cited Cards when asked “What aspects of this course have most supported your learning of A&P?”

3) Cards can assess critical thinking by allowing A&P students to defend divergent answers to problems.