Thinking Critically about Evaluation: Two Exercises

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ABSTRACT

Students in two different undergraduate classes – a freshman Perspectives class that focused on qualitative analyses, and a junior level Business Analysis class that focused primarily on quantitative analyses - were asked to evaluate simulated answers to questions on assignments. For the freshman class, students were shown an example of a well-thought out response to a question, following which they evaluated some other answers on a rubric provided to them. Student responses on subsequent assignments showed a marked improvement, indicating that going through the evaluation process helped them understand what was needed to demonstrate comprehension and critical thinking when responding to questions.

In the junior level Business Analysis class, students were given a simple breakeven analysis question along with the correct solution, and were asked to grade four simulated answers to the same question. Results showed a wide divergence in student decisions regarding the grades, leading to discussions about criteria and rubrics. Students then created a rubric to achieve greater consistency. Evaluations were done once again with the rubric, and while there was improvement, they were still far from achieving convergence. This led to further discussion of the nature of the decisions being made, and the nature of the rubric itself. A brief survey of the students indicated that the exercise helped them think more critically about their own decision making.