

ENHANCING STUDENT SHORT ANSWER QUESTION PERFORMANCE USING EXEMPLARS OF VARYING COMPLEXITY

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The short answer question (SAQ) is one of the mainstay methods in which student conceptual understanding is evaluated. However, students in some courses are only exposed to these questions and associated feedback at the end of the university semester, which would affect their capacity to generate responses that are complex enough to address the question. The study aimed to improve student capacity to evaluate and then generate complex SAQ responses using exemplars of different performance standards. The students were exposed to the exemplars in an activity implemented in one of the lectures during the semester. The change in students' ability to identify their own SAQ performance level prior to and after being exposed to the exemplars was determined by comparing student self-marking accuracy before and after being exposed to the examples. Student scores in the SAQs of the end of semester (EOS) exam were used to determine if exemplars improved their capacity to construct complex responses. Exemplars improved student (n=114) capacity to identify their own SAQ performance. Furthermore, students who attended the activity generated responses that garnered higher scores for SAQs in the EOS exam and performed better in the course overall when compared to those who did not.

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