



Cognitive Wrappers

CONTEXT

- Large or small classes
- Minimal to no grading support needed
- Small time investment for implementation

VALUES

- Failure
- Collaboration
- Metacognition
- Reflection

ABOUT

Cognitive wrappers, also called exam wrappers, are short ungraded surveys administered to students when an assessment is returned. The survey can generally fit on 1-2 pages and asks students to reflect on their preparation, gaps in their learning and plan for the future. They are most effective when they are discipline-specific and used in multiple classes.

Practice

Framing

Explaining the "Why"

Without framing students may see exam wrappers as busy work. Sample framing "Exam wrappers are an opportunity for you to reflect on how you prepared for the exam and how you can improve on the next exam. It is also an opportunity to give feedback to your instructor about how we can better support your learning." After you have completed this practice ask for student feedback you can use in framing the activity in the future.

Sample Wrappers

Examples from STEM

- [STEM examples from the Eberly Center](#)
- [FLAMENet example](#)

Modifications

Different iterations on a theme

- Pair the exam wrapper with exam corrections done in collaborative groups
- Offer a bonus point for participation but only grade for completion
- Follow the exam wrapper with a lesson on effective study techniques

Impact on teaching

What do practitioners say about exam wrappers

- Exam wrappers encouraged students to reflect on how they studied and opened a conversation about how to study smarter not harder
- Reading the responses before meeting with students allowed me to better tailor my advice for them
- Way to check in on their well being more frequently in the virtual courses. They tend to share more in the wrappers/surveys than in any other way.

Evidence

Hodges et al. (2020) Effect of Exam Wrappers on Student Achievement in Multiple, Large STEM Courses. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 50, 69-81. <https://www.nsta.org/journal-college-science-teaching/journal-college-science-teaching-septemberoctober-2020/effect-exam>