

IMPROVING EVALUATION IN MARKETING EDUCATION:  
A REVISIT TO THE FINAL EXAM

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ABSTRACT

As marketing educators we have been preaching the virtues of control and evaluation in the context of providing consumer satisfaction through the exchange of goods, services and ideas. It is, therefore, imperative that we re-evaluate the nature and role of final exams as instructional tools. If we deem them necessary as measures of achievement or academic growth, then some effort should be put forth to communicate the results in a timely manner with the concerned students.

Final exams are one of the most uniform artifacts of higher education. Not much has changed in the nature and value of these exams ever since Horace Mann replaced oral exams with written finals back in 1845 A.D. This paper focuses on the role of finals in Marketing education and presents viable recommendations to enhance their usefulness.

The underlying premise of this paper is that a "plan--teach--test--teach" strategy is more in line with the spirit of the Marketing concept than the traditional practice of "plan--teach--teach--test."

Strategies for Corrective Action

1. A next-to-a-final final: This type of a final exam is normally scheduled on the last day of classes and prior to the final class period. With this strategy, the professor would use the scheduled final's period to return paper and discuss the exam. Also, students would benefit from the immediate reinforcement of accurate attributions.
2. ORAL exams represent another viable strategy, especially for smaller classes. This ancient, yet fresh, approach to evaluation provides the professor an opportunity to measure cognitive competencies as well as verbal communication skills. At a time when complaints are voiced about the relative weakness of business graduates in the area of communication, the ORAL final is a viable tool that encourages students to think logically on their feet.
3. Another viable strategy to correct the problem of a traditional final exam is a student self-correcting final. For this type of an exam, the professor is often limited to objective (multiple choice, definition, matching, etc.) items or limited response essay questions. Such test items are easy to grade, but are limited in their scope and value to the measurement of knowledge, understanding and some application. Self-correcting finals offer students the opportunity of receiving immediate reinforcement and correcting inaccurate learned behavior.
4. A similar strategy to a student self-corrective examination is the distribution of a responsive summary at the completion of the exam. The handout would provide the correct responses, discuss their justification, and cite the sources (i.e. pages in texts or notes). Like all other recommended strategies, this approach will reinforce the learning of accurate information and correct the students' misinformation and misattributions.
5. Marketing educators who may not favor any of the suggested alternatives for a traditional final, should give serious consideration to a no-final final. Why have a final exam if we continue to ignore their instructional value and the probable damage to students due to the retention of inaccurate information and misattributions?