Ranking Alternatives

Overview

Problem-based learning and scaffolded inquiry-based learning are common active learning approaches that improve students' critical thinking skills and academic performance. In Ranking Alternatives, students rank multiple responses according to provided criteria which allows them to practice identifying the problem and the most appropriate solution given the context.

Through peer discussion and instructor scaffolding, students will need to consider trade-offs prior to making a final decision on their rankings, encouraging a deeper level of content understanding.

Ranking Alternatives are ideal for: multiple approaches, or when there is more than one correct answer.

Ranking Alternatives meets the following WSU Learning Goals: critical and creative thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific literacy, information literacy, diversity, communication, and depth, breadth, and integration of learning.

Group size: 1-2 **|** **Active Time**: 20 mins **|** **Prep. Time**: Medium

Active time is an estimate and may vary depending on your class.

Implementation

Suggested Tech Tools: Blackboard Group Discussion Board, Blackboard Survey, Panopto, VoiceThread, Padlet

Instructor:
Provide students with the criteria to base their rankings on and create a list of possible responses for students to rank.

Students:
1. Rank the provided responses in order from best to worst. You will need to be able to provide justification based on reasoning and evidence.

Variations & Tips:

➢ For **face-to-face** or **video conference (VC)** courses, give students class time to work together on ranking and then share with the class.

➢ In **online** courses, use a Blackboard Discussion Board, or have students make and post a short video discussing their rankings, then allow for peer feedback.

➢ For **large-enrollment** courses, have students share their rankings using Padlet or Blackboard Group Discussion Board.

➢ Create distinct answer choices that are representative of likely student conceptual or reasoning difficulties to encourage discussion of trade-off considerations.

➢ Give different ranking criteria to different groups. This will provide the opportunity to discuss how varying approaches may be more suitable for varying objectives and make follow-up discussion more interesting.

➢ Have students complete a preliminary ranking without criteria. Discuss their choices focusing on the considerations they made and identify the criteria they used. Students should then re-rank their choices based on the identified criteria.

You may also be interested in:

What's the Principle
Think-Pair-Share
Defining Features Matrix

Resources:

The effectiveness of problem-based learning on development of nursing students' critical thinking
Meta-Analysis of Inquiry-Based Learning

Let's explore the possibilities together!
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To find more activities, visit the LI website and select Teaching Tool Boxes.