From Issues in Student Counseling (Psychology/Counseling Education)

To assess their ability to recognize and diagnose different types of common problems, the instructor in this course for high school counselors presented his graduate students with six half-page mini-cases, each describing an adolescent referred for counseling. The graduate students were given a half-hour to read the cases and to make an initial judgment about the main problem in each case. Was it substance abuse, family conflicts, academic stress, conflicts with peers, or depression? The students were also asked to write one or two sentences explaining the basis for their judgments.

The psychology professor, himself a counselor, found that many of the graduate students missed important clues and evidence in the mini-cases and that they often failed to support reasonable diagnoses with relevant evidence. Several students refused to make any judgments, arguing that there was too little evidence presented in the mini-cases. As he read through and summarized the responses to the Problem Recognition Task, the professor planned his strategy for the next class. This feedback showed him that many of the graduate students did not appreciate the absolute need to make quick and accurate initial diagnoses in the high-volume, understaffed school environment. He also saw that many had not yet developed the diagnostic skills needed to counsel confidently and well. To build skills and confidence, the professor began assigning mini-cases requiring quick diagnosis for in-class discussion weekly. To assess progress, he used the Problem Recognition Task again at three-week intervals.

From Intermediate Statistics for Management (Statistics/Business/Management)

To determine how well his students had learned to distinguish different types of statistical procedures, this business professor created a Problem Recognition Task to use during the first week of his second-year course. The one-page assessment consisted of five word problems adapted from the introductory course’s final exam. The students were asked to indicate what kind of statistical procedure would best solve each problem. Specifically, the assessment asked whether the problems could be solved by chi-square testing, one-way ANOVA, two-way ANOVA, simple linear regression, or multiple regression. The instructor found that the students had most trouble recognizing ANOVA problems and adjusted his review preparation accordingly.