Assessing Learning in Programs: A Crash Course for Faculty

Office of University Assessment
Overview

- Introduction to Assessment
- Levels of Assessment
- Why Student Learning Assessment
- Importance of Assessment
- Importance of Intentional Planning
- Elements of an Assessment Plan
- Learning Outcomes
- Indirect vs Direct Evidence
- Rubrics
- Curriculum Mapping
Introduction to Assessment
Levels of Assessment

- Classroom assessment
  - Determination of individual student performance at course level by instructors

- Course assessment
  - Determination of how well a course is meeting student learning outcomes

- Program/Unit assessment
  - Determination of how well an academic program is meeting student learning outcomes
  - Determination of how well an administrative or educational support program is meeting its objectives

- Institutional assessment
  - Determination of institutional performance
Why do Assessment?

- External drivers
  - Regional and program-level accreditation criteria
    - Documentation that you have established an effective assessment process that leads to continuous improvement
    - SACSCOC, ABET, AACSB, NCATE

- Internal drivers
  - Good management
  - Quality motivation
  - Knowing where you are
  - Knowing where you have been
  - Knowing what is possible and how to get there
Importance of Assessment and...

- **University**
  - Recruitment
  - Promise
  - Continuous improvement
  - Evidence-based decision making

- **University / Administrators**
  - Accreditation = Federal Funds
  - Accountability
  - Consistency
  - Transparency
  - Improvement
Importance of Assessment and...

- **Faculty**
  - Improve teaching
  - Ideas for growth and development of the course
  - Are courses as a whole meeting program goals
  - Discover what’s missing
  - Are students learning what they are supposed to learn
  - Think critically about why students are or are not meeting the learning outcomes and the student needs

- **Students**
  - Value of the program
  - Commitment to student
  - Confidence in course sequence
  - Transparency
  - Students learn their strengths and weaknesses
  - Transparency - they know whether or not they are meeting the outcomes/objectives
  - Students take charge of their learning
  - Better information about what is being asked of them
  - Grading is less arbitrary if tied to learning outcomes
  - Helps the professor teach them better
Intentional Planning: Mechanics of Assessment

■ Plan
  • Mission
    – purpose
  • Objectives or Outcomes
    – what you intend to achieve
  • Methods
    – how you plan to get there

■ Measure
  • how well are you doing

■ Act
  • Analyze your results
  • Plan changes
  • Take action
  • Assess impact
Intentional Planning: Identify Scope of Assessment

- What should assessment include?
  - Assess resources (facilities, space, students, faculty)
  - Assess processes (curriculum, advising, co/extra curricular activities)
  - Assess results (outcomes/objectives – learning, impact, satisfaction, service)
  - Who receives feedback and how (faculty, program, alumni, community)

- What course(s) are logical places to collect data?

- Identify assessable assignments/instruments that measure stated program learning outcomes

- Academic program assessment typically focuses on student outcomes (learning and program)

- Administrative unit assessment typically focuses on quality of products, processes, and services as well as a focus on student learning outcomes
Checklist for Assessment

- What are you assessing?
- Why are you assessing?
- What do you want to know?
- From whom will you collect the data?
- Who will see the results?
- How will the data be used?
- How often will the data be collected?
- Who will collect the data?
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Process

Plan Improvements: Faculty and staff collaborate to interpret assessment data and develop strategies to improve student learning outcomes.

Provide Opportunities for Learning: Faculty achieve consensus on learning outcomes to be assessed, and map outcomes to curriculum.

Gather Data: Faculty develop timeline for gathering assessment data, both formative and summative.

Evaluate and Interpret Data: Faculty and staff work together to gather formative and summative assessment data and compile for review.

Provide Opportunities for Learning: Faculty achieve consensus on learning outcomes to be assessed, and map outcomes to curriculum.

Student Learning Outcomes

Data collection

Program improvement

Assessment methods

Timeline/schedule
Elements of Assessment Plan
Mission Statement
- The mission statement provides a clearly articulated description of why the program exists, what it does and its overall intention.

Program-level Student Learning Outcomes
- The program has identified/revised at least three SLOs. All SLOs are focused on student performance of learning, what students are able to do at programs completion. Outcomes are clear, specific, measureable, and verb-driven.

Curriculum Map/Artifact Map
- Map links all program student learning outcomes to program courses. It’s clear where outcomes are covered (or not covered) in the Curriculum. Outcomes exposure is identified for each outcome. Map also links assessments tools to both program courses and discrete program student learning outcomes; identifying how and when a tool will be used to assess the outcome.

Assessment Tools
- A description of assessment tools: surveys, open-ended test questions, multiple choice questions, rubrics, juried reviews, grades and/or scoring guides have been identified. Tools identified gather both direct and indirect evidence.
Assessment Oversight

- Central assessment coordinator(s)/committee charged with oversight responsibilities for assessment is identified.

Assessment Cycle/Data Collection

- Assessment cycle is clearly articulated, includes method and measurement of student achievement of all SLOs, includes a minimum of one date for collection of data, annual date for planning improvement actions, annual date for dissemination and analysis/interpretation of assessment results. *when, where, what and how*

Appendices

- Complete assessment plan, curriculum/artifact map, tools used to gather evidence (rubrics, scoring guides, surveys, etc.), and/or minutes from faculty meetings where assessment was discussed.
NEW to Assessment Plans

- Teaching Effectiveness
  - Identify measures of teaching effectiveness
  - Efforts to improve
  - Example: All instructors will use the University Teacher Course Evaluation (TCE) process to be evaluated by their students each semester. Additionally, each course will be peer reviewed at least once a year. Each instructor will be asked to provide a self-reflection which will include areas of improvement. The Department Chair will review the TCE results, any available peer review forms, and the self-reflection with the instructors and provide feedback to the instructor. This will occur on an annual basis.

- Plans to evaluate students’ post graduate success
  - Example: Our department will look at data provided by the Alumni Survey and will work with the Office of Institutional Research to looks at other possible methods.
## Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Student-focused</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Articulate a single measurable skill/competency/construct</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Describe learning resulting from <em>activity</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask &quot;what do students know that they didn’t know before,&quot; <em>and</em> &quot;what can they do that they couldn’t do before?“</td>
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<td>• Aligned with mission, values at all three levels</td>
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<td>• Focus on broad skills developed over time</td>
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<td>• Not restricted to a single course or learning experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate acquisition of specific disciplinary/professional knowledge and skills necessary <em>after</em> taking the degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask: “What makes a graduate of the program able to function and learn in a specific discipline/profession after the degree?”</td>
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<td>• Clear and specific enough to be measureable</td>
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- Measures must be appropriate to outcome
  - Avoid cumbersome data-gathering
  - Use both direct and indirect methods

“Learning” = *what students know* (content knowledge) + *what they can do with what they know* (performance)

- Performance-based assessment captures both components
- Content knowledge assessment captures only half of the learning
### Evidence for Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Should be the core evidence of learning in all programs</td>
<td>• Provides information on the context for learning in the program</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Students show achievement of learning goals through <em>performance</em> of knowledge, skills:</td>
<td>• <strong>Indirect methods measure proxies for learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scores and pass rates of licensure/certificate exams</td>
<td>Data from which inferences can be made about learning, but do not demonstrate actual learning, such as perception or comparison data</td>
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<td>Individual research projects, presentations, performances</td>
<td>• Surveys</td>
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<td>i.e., substantial course assignments that require performance of learning</td>
<td>• Student opinion/engagement surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborative (group) projects/papers which tackle complex problems</td>
<td>• Student ratings of knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Theses and dissertations</td>
<td>• Employers and alumni, national and local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ratings of skills provided by internship/clinical supervisors</td>
<td>• Focus groups/Exit interviews</td>
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<td>• Portfolios</td>
<td>• Institutional performance indicators</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Enrollment data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Retention rates, placement data</td>
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Rubrics are...

- A means of **decreasing time spent on grading**, while increasing consistency in grading/evaluation
- A method for translating qualitative information into quantitative data
- Clear communication of a program’s expectations for its graduates
- A clear articulation of how student performance is linked to specific course & program outcomes
Basic Elements of a Rubric

- Learning Outcome

- Criteria for achievement of Learning Outcome
  - generally listed on the Y-axis

- Scale
  - generally placed on the X-axis
  - 5-6 point for assessment of learning performance

- Performance indicators
  - Descriptions of observable behaviors/performances that indicate each point on the scale for each outcome
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context of and Purpose for Writing</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).</td>
<td>Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.</td>
<td>Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).</td>
<td>Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).</td>
<td>Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).</td>
<td>Assign a one to any work sample that does not meet the minimum college-level performance, defined in cell 2.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Development</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through much of the work.</td>
<td>Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.</td>
<td>Assign a one to any work sample that does not meet the minimum college-level performance, defined in cell 2.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre and Disciplinary Conventions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices</td>
<td>Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices</td>
<td>Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation</td>
<td>Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assign a one to any work sample that does not meet the minimum college-level performance, defined in cell 2.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources and Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing</td>
<td>Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.</td>
<td>Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.</td>
<td>Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assign a one to any work sample that does not meet the minimum college-level performance, defined in cell 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control of Syntax and Mechanics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.</td>
<td>Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.</td>
<td>Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.</td>
<td>Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assign a one to any work sample that does not meet the minimum college-level performance, defined in cell 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum Maps

- A visual depiction of how learning outcomes and/or professional standards are translated into individual courses taught within a program
  - i.e., Demonstrates which courses are meeting specific outcomes/standards

- Used to determine assessment points in a program

- Used to identify program assessment artifacts
### Basic Curriculum Map Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
<th>Course 3</th>
<th>Course 4</th>
<th>Course 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 1</td>
<td><strong>I</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td><strong>R/A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 2</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I</strong></td>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 5</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*I* = Outcome is introduced  
*R* = Outcome is reinforced  
*E* = Outcome is emphasized  
*A* = Outcome is applied
Planning is KEY

- Integrate assessment and improvement processes into existing unit strategic planning and budgeting
  - Assessment is part of continuous improvement
    - Assessment results drive planning and budgeting in the form of annual assessment reporting
Contact Us

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