Assessment of Student Learning

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Motivation for Assessment

Measure what you value, rather than valuing what you can measure.

Kermit Hall
1944-2006, former President, University at Albany - SUNY

If you don’t measure what you value, it won’t improve.
Alan Merten
President, George Mason University

PASD
Pre-Assessment Stress Disorder
Anxiety
Denial
Paranoia
Passive-Aggressive Behavior
Amnesia for skills in research methods

The Assessment Process

Make Decisions About Program Changes Based on Evidence

Identify What You Value: Student Learning Outcomes in ALCs and ALPs

Design Programs & Courses to Promote What You Value

Source of cycle graphic: University of Washington
http://depts.washington.edu/learning/

Student Learning Outcomes

Statements that describe what students will be able to know, do, or value as a result of their educational experience.
Knowledge, skills, abilities, values of the student
Focus on changes in the student rather than on what the instructor does while teaching.
Described in behaviorally measurable terms.
See TIP Sheets #1-9 on the CUTLA web for advice on writing SLOs.
Earlier workshops are posted on the CUTLA Assessment Resources Page: http://uwf.edu/cutla/Assessres.cfm

Identify Student Learning Outcomes

Program Student Learning Outcomes
Overarching concepts that span several courses, not individual course objectives taken from each syllabus
• Describe what students should think, know and be able to do when they finish your program
• Measurable (behavioral)
Identify Student Learning Outcomes

Course Student Learning Outcomes
More specific learning outcomes that identify learning in an individual course
Course SLOs should be included in the course syllabus
• Describe what students should think, know and be able to do when they finish the course
• Measurable (behavioral)
• Aligned to course topics, assignments, exams, and other graded work

Curriculum Map
Graphic device that shows how the curriculum aligns to student learning outcomes
Identify courses where educational outcomes are likely to be achieved
Identify gaps in the curriculum where an educational outcome might not be addressed as well as hoped
Identify courses that might be suitable for an embedded assessment
See TIP Sheets 10 & 11 on the CUTLA Web for more information

Assess Student Learning
Indirect Measures
Student self-reports
Reports of clients or experts on student skill
Alumni & employer surveys
Exit interviews or focus groups

Direct Measures
Evaluation of work with a rubric:
• Course papers & presentations
• Theses
• Case notes
• Capstone experiences
• Portfolios
Performance on state or national licensure, certification, or professional examinations
Standardized tests (nationally standardized or locally developed)
See TIP Sheets 13-15 on the CUTLA web for more information

Rubrics: Explicit criteria for assessing student work
Focus on specific student learning outcomes as rubric elements.
Describe the criteria that will be used to evaluate the work on this assignment: What will the instructor look for during grading?
Describe the characteristics of performance at different levels of skill on the target student learning outcome.
More effective than grades for assessment.
Rubrics provide diagnostic information about strengths and weaknesses in student learning.

Closing the Loop
Assessment data that are merely collected and archived serve no purpose
Effective assessment practices make use of the data collected to inform decision making:
• Changes in instructional strategy
• Changes in course offerings in the curriculum
• Changes in course sequencing in the curriculum
• Changes in support services and advising offered to students
Use Assessment-Based Evidence to Refine Curriculum or Instructional Strategies
Plan when program faculty will meet to discuss assessment results and determine appropriate action.
Use assessment results to initiate action aimed at improving program.
Clearly relate the results back to the intended educational outcomes.
Document assessment work and decisions made for communication to external audiences.

Not all that can be measured is important and not all that is important can be measured.
[easily or reliably]
Albert Einstein

Measure what you value, and others will value what you measure.

General Resources on Assessment


Useful Resources

Useful Web Resources
APA Cyberguide on Assessment
North Carolina State University
University Planning & Analysis Index of Assessment Resources
http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm
University of Washington
http://depts.washington.edu/learning

http://uwf.edu/cutla/
CUTLA Web Resources on SLOs, ALCs, ALPs, and Assessment

TIP Sheets
http://uwf.edu/cutla/Tipsheet.cfm

Assessment Resources Page
http://uwf.edu/cutla/Assessres.cfm
- CUTLA workshops on assessment (2005 onward)
- Barbara Walvoord workshop materials
- Peggy Maki workshop materials

Resources on Assessment

