

Common Assessment Language

General Terminology

Assessment - collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and disseminating data applied for accountability and program and learning improvement. The evaluation or estimation of the nature, quality, or ability of someone or something. A method used to identify the strengths and weaknesses based on the defined learning outcomes. Focused on learning.

Assessment Cycle – the ongoing intentional cycle, referring to the full sequence of assessment activities including:

- Develop/Revise learning outcomes
- Establish a plan to collect evidence
- Provide experience and collect data
- Make meaning and draw conclusions from findings
- Identify and implement changes

Outcomes Assessment - A process of measuring learning outcomes to analyze and reflect on student learning and make informed decisions for improvement.

Formative Assessment - Formative assessments take place while the learning experience is occurring to provide immediate feedback on how outcomes are being met. This allows for real-time improvements to be made.

Summative Assessments - Assessments that take place after a learning experience is completed in order to see student performance over the entirety of their learning to inform future practice. Summative assessment allows for reflection that can be used to improve in the future. Used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year.

Evaluation - Using data to make judgements regards programs or services. The utilization of information [gathered through assessment] for institutional and individual improvement. Evaluation is a judgement that assesses the final value of the exercise, is usually focused on processes and procedures, not student learning.

Research - Collecting data for the purpose of testing a theory to produce generalizable knowledge.

Culture of Assessment - A culture of assessment exists in an organization/institution where faculty staff, and administrators care to know what assessment results they produce and how these results relate to desired institutional outcomes and learning outcomes for students, their parents, and other stakeholders.

Assessment Plan - Assessment Plans are in-depth descriptions that outline program's mission, outcomes, how outcomes are measured, targets for success, and a calendar of when outcomes are to be assessed. The plan is an intentionally developed sequence of activities that ensures coherence from

program planning through implementation. (i.e. Looking ahead, what the program is PLANNING on assessing that year)

Assessment Report - Annual Assessment Reports (also called Assessment Findings) are due each year and contain the program's mission, assessment contact, outcomes scheduled to be assessed in that year, targets, results, action plans if targets are not met, activities that support "closing the loop" and program improvement, and supporting documentation of assessment (examples of survey items, test questions, or other assignments). (i.e. What the program REPORTS on from the previous year; looking back)

Program Review - Academic Program Review (APR) at the University of North Dakota (UND) provides an opportunity for all academic programs to document, examine, and assess the achievement of their goals and objectives over time and is founded on principles of continuous evaluation and improvement and institutional quality. The results of the APR process inform planning; budget, time, space, and other resource allocation decisions; curriculum change; professional development; and more. For programs that undergo professional or other specialized types of accreditation, APR fundamentally accompanies those accreditation efforts.

Accreditation – a quality control process in which institutions or programs voluntarily engage in a rigorous review for the purpose of demonstrating compliance with a set of standards established by the accrediting organization.

Create: Plan & Identify Outcomes

Strategic Plan - A long-term plan that designates what a unit/department/organization will accomplish

Vision - An inspirational statement regarding the ideal success of an organization

Mission - A short statement illustrating the basic purpose of the program/organization/entity of interest

- Clear, Concise, and broad
- Aligned with the mission of the University

Values - Foundational beliefs that guide an organization

Goals - Statements articulating what the program realistically intend to accomplish, the end result; written in broad terms. Describes a university's/division's/program's expectations of itself.

Outcomes - Statement specifically describing the end result/desired effect of the program. These outcomes must be specific and measurable: they describe what you will be able to observe and measure if the program has been successful. At times, could be used interchangeably with objectives.

Learning Outcomes/Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) - Statements of the knowledge, skills and abilities individual students should possess and can demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience or sequence of learning experiences. Examines the intellectual and cognitive skills or behaviors that students develop through departmental interactions; measurable, transferable skills development. They are statements indicating what a participant (usually students) will know, think, or

be able to do as a result of an event, activity, program, etc. Learning outcomes should also align and mirror any programmatic accreditation or professional standards/competencies for an area. Learning outcomes guide course, program, and service design—outcomes are the destinations.

Student Development Outcome (SDO) - Affective dimensions or attitudes and values (not cognitive abilities); and consider growth in ethical, spiritual, emotional, and social responsibility dimensions; sometimes also referred to as learning outcomes.

Program/Process Outcome - Describes the success metrics a program should display on completion, from the perspective of the program. The activities to be completed or delivered. What the process is expected to provide.

Targets - The desired or expected level of performance you want to see; acting as an indicator for whether the outcome was achieved. These are set *before* collecting any data. Targets should be consistent with best practices, relevant to what you care about, available to be answered with the data, applicable to use, and relevant to the outcome.

Objectives - Statements articulating what the program realistically intends to accomplish, put in specific measurable terms. Describe the task needed to achieve the goals or outcome.

- Are written from the perspective of the program/person providing the services
- Inform strategic plans and action plans
- Should be paired with achievement timelines

Blooms Taxonomy - A listing of measurable verbs that are commonly used to describe and classify observable knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and abilities. Used when writing learning outcomes.

Plan: Establish a Plan to Collect Evidence

Curriculum Map - A chart that shows where and how in the curricular program outcomes are addressed, to ensure completeness and avoid excessive overlap. The process of aligning outcomes between multiple levels (course, general education/ Essential Studies, program, department, college, university).

Assessment Methods/Measures - The measures used to collect data to determine whether a program has met its goal and outcomes and/or a student has learned

Existing Data - Information from any source that currently exists that describes the current functioning of the individual and may be available to the division for an eligibility determination.

Direct Measures - Measures student learning outcomes directly. Direct evidence of student learning is tangible, visible, self-explanatory, and compelling evidence of exactly what students have and have not learned.

Rubric - A set of criteria specifying the characteristics of an outcome and the levels of achievement in each characteristic.

Indirect Measures - Measures opinions or thoughts about students' own knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, perceptions of services received, etc. Indirect methods "consist of proxy signs that students are probably learning. Indirect evidence is less clear and less convincing than direct evidence"

Focus Groups - A demographically diverse group of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion about a product before it is launched, or to provide ongoing feedback on a political campaign, television series, etc.

Survey – method of collecting information from people about their characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, or perceptions. Most often surveys are questionnaires or structured interviews with a specific set of questions. This data is comprehensive information gathered from a target audience about a specific topic to conduct research. There are many methods used for survey data collection and statistical analysis.

Survey Fatigue - When potential survey respondents (usually students) become bored or uninterested in completing surveys. This normally happens in two ways:

1. Before taking the survey — overwhelmed by the sheer volume of requests for feedback, students decide not to even begin your survey. The result is a drop in response rates as fewer students decide to give feedback.
2. During the survey — this happens after someone has started the survey and is usually caused by poor survey design such as including too many questions, a high proportion of open text fields or asking the same question repeatedly. As a result, respondents can drop out midway or lose interest and speed through, giving you inaccurate data.

Measure: Provide Experience & Collect Data

Learning Experience - Any workshop, activity, course, or program that was designed to develop learning.

Data Collection: Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on targeted variables in an established system, which then enables one to answer relevant questions and evaluate outcomes.

Qualitative Data - Outcomes assessed using qualitative methods focus on words and descriptions and produce verbal or narrative data. These types of data are collected through focus groups, interviews, opened-ended questionnaires, and other less structured methodologies. Often qualitative data is used to articulate common themes that are not drawn out via quantitative methods. They can be the clue that leads to a more focused collection of data on a given topic. Detailed description of the situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors, the use of direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and the analysis of excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories

Quantitative Data - Assessment data measured numerically (counts, scores, percentages, etc.) are most often summarized using simple charts, graphs, tables, and descriptive statistics- mean, median, mode, standard deviation, percentage, etc. Deciding on which quantitative analysis method is best depends on (a) the specific assessment method (b) the type of data collected (nominal, ordinal interval, or ratio data) and (c) the audience receiving and using the results. Uses structured, predetermined response options that can be summarized into meaningful numbers and analyzed statistically. Test scores, rubric scores, survey ratings, and performance indicators are all examples of quantitative evidence.

Analyze: Make Meaning and Draw Conclusions from Findings

Data Analysis - Turning raw data points into useful information that answers the assessment questions you set in your plan; comparing actual student performance with intended student performance.

Interpretation - WHY you have or have not achieved the targets and that it means for your program.

Apply: Identify & Implement Changes

Closing the Loop – the process of utilizing data for improvement or modification of a program, service, or department.

Action plans - Documents to improve programs and services based on assessment data and are related to the identified outcomes.

Sources:

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