Northern Illinois University

SAEM Assessment Professional Development Program

Brian Lance & Victoria Livingston
Planning & Assessment
February 2013
Outline

• Assessment 101

• Creating Effective Student Learning Outcomes

• Creating Effective Assessment Tools
  – Survey
  – Focus Groups/Interviews
  – Rubrics
  – One-Minute Assessments
Expected Learning Outcomes

- Attendees will be able to...

  - Identify two reasons why assessment is important to their department.

  - Explain the ABCD process for writing learning outcomes.

  - Articulate two strategies for improving their assessment tools.
Northern Illinois University

Assessment 101
What is assessment?

• Act of…
  gathering & analyzing data
  which describes effectiveness
  in order to improve programs and/or services

Data = descriptive information (numbers or words)
Effectiveness = how well are you doing?
Institutional, Division, Department, or Program level

Definition adapted from Upcraft & Schuh, 1996; Erwin, 2002; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Yousey-Elsener, in press.
Guiding Principles

• Assessment is:
  – A dynamic and continuous process
  – Aligned with mission and goals of department, division, and university
  – An intentional process, based on a plan
  – An opportunity to intentionally focus on student learning
  – Highly collaborative – each team member can bring different strengths
Why is assessment important?

• Encourages continuous improvement
• Informs strategic planning & decision-making
• Helps align & justify resources
• Encourages accountability
• Documents program impact
• Answers questions & helps tell your story
Why is assessment important?

Assessment is important because it…

“Explains what we do, what we accomplished and what difference that makes in ways that other people who are not us can understand and remember”

University of Memphis, Student Affairs Assessment [website](#)
Assessment Cycle

Foundational Documents (mission, goals, strategic plan)

Establish Criteria for Success (outcomes or targets)

Use results for Improvement

Provide Programs and Services

Determine Effectiveness
Expectations – 3 M’s

Meaningful
- How does the priority’s outcome support my mission/goal?
- How does the priority relate to my “core functions”?

Measurable
- How will I know if the outcome is achieved?
- What is the threshold for success?

Manageable
- What resources are needed to support this priority?
- Are these resources realistic?
Assessment 101 – Summary

• Recap:
  – What is assessment?
  – Importance of Assessment
  – Assessment Cycle
  – 3 M’s

• Learning Outcome:
  – Participants will be able to identify two reasons why assessment is important to their department.
Creating Effective Student Learning Outcomes
Learning vs. Program Outcomes

• Learning Outcomes
  – Examine what a student (or other stakeholders) is to do or think as a result of the program, course, service.

• Program Outcomes
  – Examine what a program or process is to do, achieve or accomplish for its own improvement; generally needs/satisfaction driven.
Why is learning outcome assessment difficult?

- How students experience college
- Assessing learning
- Learning timeframe
- Identifying what’s happening
Why is learning outcome assessment important?

- Clarifies “fit”
- Identifies what students will gain
- Moves beyond satisfaction & tracking
- Links Student Affairs and Academic Affairs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ABC Structure of a Learning Outcome</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Who does the outcome pertain to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do you expect the audience to know/be able to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Under what conditions or circumstances will the learning occur?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How much?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How much will be accomplished, how well will the behavior need to be performed, and to what level?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Development

**Remembering**
- Articulate
- Define
- List
- Label
- Locate
- Identify
- State
- Reproduce
- Arrange
- Order
- Recall
- Relate

**Understanding**
- Describe
- Discuss
- Explain
- Locate
- Recognize
- Report
- Translate
- Classify
- Indicate
- Review
- Demonstrate
- Employ
- Illustrate
- Schedule
- Sketch
- Use
- Apply
- Interpret

**Applying**
- Appraise
- Calculate
- Debate
- Diagram
- Differentiate
- Relate
- Solve
- Test
- Classify
- Experiment
- Criticize
- Arrange
- Employ
- Illustrate
- Schedule
- Sketch
- Use
- Apply
- Interpret

**Analyzing**
- Appraise
- Assess
- Choose
- Compare
- Contrast
- Estimate
- Evaluate
- Measure
- Score
- Justify
- Select
- Predict
- Differentiate
- Relate
- Solve
- Test
- Classify
- Experiment
- Criticize

**Evaluating**
- Appraise
- Assess
- Choose
- Compare
- Contrast
- Estimate
- Evaluate
- Measure
- Score
- Justify
- Select
- Predict

**Creating**
- Arrange
- Assemble
- Collect
- Compose
- Create
- Design
- Formulate
- Organize
- Plan
- Propose

- Arrange
- Assemble
- Collect
- Compose
- Create
- Design
- Formulate
- Organize
- Plan
- Propose
A - Students will …
B - <learn what>
C - <under these circumstances / conditions>
D - <to this level of efficiency / effectiveness>
Learning Outcome Examples

1. After attending a financial aid session, students will be able to submit the FAFSA form.

2. As a result of attending new student orientation, new students will be able to identify two on-campus resources for academic assistance.

3. After participating in a leadership retreat, student organization presidents will be able to differentiate between tasks to complete themselves versus those to delegate to their executive board before their first spring semester planning meeting.
Common Learning Outcome Pitfalls

- Too vast/complex, too wordy
- Multiple outcomes in one learning outcome statement
- Not specific enough
- Not measurable
- Describe program outcomes, rather than learning outcomes
When writing any target/outcome/objective, be...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>Specific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Measurable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Achievable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Time-sensitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating Student Learning Outcomes – Summary

• Recap:
  – Learning v. Program Outcomes
  – Learning Assessment
    • Difficulties of…
    • Importance of…
  – ABCD Model of Learning Outcomes
  – SMART Acronym

• Learning Outcome:
  – Participants will be able to explain the ABCD process for writing learning outcomes.
Creating Effective Assessment Tools
Methods & Strategies

- Accreditation
- Benchmarking
- Focus Groups
- Internal/External Review
- Interviews
- Needs Assessment
- Observation
- Other
- Pre-test/Post-test
- Program Evaluation
- Published test/survey
- Reflective Journals
- Satisfaction Survey
- Retrospective Pre-Test
- Student Retention
- Tracking
Assessment Best Practices – General

Determine your purpose
Examine past assessments
Select the appropriate method
Identify ethical/logistical considerations
Generate the best question and answer format
Note the purpose for each data point
Word questions carefully

What’s wrong with the following questions?

1. What do you do on the weekends for fun?
   - Watch movies
   - Go hiking
   - Hang out with friends

2. Do you have any suggestions for this program?

3. How often do you use our services?

4. How satisfied are you with our department?

5. What did you learn?
   - Interpersonal skills
   - Communication skills
   - Leadership skills
   - Intrapersonal skills

6. Year:
   - Freshman
   - Sophomore
   - Junior
   - Senior

7. How comfortable are you with the following?
   (Strongly agree, Moderately agree, Moderately disagree, Strongly disagree)
   - Coming to the office for assistance in person
   - E-mailing the office for assistance
   - Coming to a campus event by yourself
Assessment Best Practices – General

- Surveys
- Focus Groups/Interviews
- Rubrics
- 1-minute assessments
Assessment Best Practices – Surveys

• Administration
  – Paper vs. online

• Scales
  – Labels
  – Length of Scales (no greater than 6; midpoint)

• Question Order

• Length of Survey
  – Greater attrition at 22 questions or 13 minutes
Assessment Best Practices – Focus Groups/Interviews

• **Definition:** Discussions (done singularly or in a group) where the facilitator supplies the topics and monitors the discussion.
  – Focus groups allow for discussion and interaction by participants and can contribute to a richer conversation
  – Interviews allow for a greater exploration of personal experience

• Must develop protocols (e.g., questions, procedures, ground rules)
Assessment Best Practices – Focus Groups/Interviews

**Cons**
- Facilitation requires skill
- Not generalizable
- Time needed for training and analysis
- Lack of control over discussion
- Focus groups can influence individual responses
- Challenge to get people to attend

**Pros**
- Understand perceptions, beliefs, or opinions of participants
- Direct and indirect method
- FG members build off of each other’s ideas
- Flexible and dynamic
- Relatively low cost

(Stage, 1992; Stage & Manning, 2003)
Assessment Best Practices – Focus Groups/Interviews

• Questions should…
  – Be clear.
  – Avoid biased, loaded or leading questions.
  – Avoid making significant memory demands.
  – Be asked one at a time.
  – Be short.
  – Define terms and concepts.
  – Consider personal safety.
  – Let participants admit they don’t know or can’t remember.

• Question should not…
  – Make assumptions.
  – Be close-ended.
From the Syllabus: This reflection should refer specifically to reading and/or class experiences and offer analysis. Please go beyond summarizing in order to evaluate the theory, research, and/or implications of the reading. Your 3-5 page reflection will be submitted after reading each of the texts. Final Due Date: November 22

Rubric for Written Reflection (Use for McGinn book Analysis Assignment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria/Points</th>
<th>Exemplary 5</th>
<th>Very Good 4</th>
<th>Acceptable 3</th>
<th>Developing 2</th>
<th>Your Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argument/Thesis about book</td>
<td>Well-developed argument, writer always explains why assertions are made.</td>
<td>Argument present, but sometimes hard to follow or not fully developed.</td>
<td>Argument/thesis is confusing. A strong effort is made.</td>
<td>Reader cannot understand the author’s point in the paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originality &amp; Thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Written with passion, emotion, interest, and insight. Deep thinking about purposes of education evident.</td>
<td>Thoughtful &amp; interesting. Makes connections with the text.</td>
<td>Tends to summarize ideas in the book more than critique or extend ideas.</td>
<td>Tends to speak in broad generalities that do not connect text to self, education, or society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Virtually error free in grammar &amp; syntax. Meets general page limit</td>
<td>Few spelling errors, grammar, or syntax mistakes.</td>
<td>Writing is rough.</td>
<td>Many errors in grammar and/or syntax.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to text</td>
<td>Cites text for evidence using specific page numbers and APA style. References are crucial to making your argument. May connect McGinn to other relevant texts.</td>
<td>Makes general reference to text in building an argument. Quotes may lack strong transitions and explanation.</td>
<td>Although writing is logical, it is not specific in its connection to text. You could go much deeper.</td>
<td>Factual errors about the book are present. It appears that you may not have read the text carefully.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your final points (out of)
Assessment Best Practices – Rubrics

• **Definition:** A set of criteria specifying the characteristics of an outcome and the levels of achievement in each characteristic

• **Benefits of Rubrics**
  – Provides consistency in evaluation of behaviors and performance
  – Best used when there is a specific set of evaluation criteria
  – Gathers rich data
  – Mixed-method
  – Allows for direct measure of learning
## Assessment Best Practices – Rubrics

### Analytic Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>1 - Does not meet expectations</th>
<th>2 - Meets expectations</th>
<th>3 - Exceeds expectations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listen effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writes in a professional manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks clearly and concisely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td>What does this look like?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment Best Practices – One-Minute Assessment

• **Definition:** A very short assessment of what a participant is “taking away” from their experience. Should be targeted at a specific learning or program outcome.

• **Examples:**
  – Large campus event (e.g., speaker or concert) & use Twitter for a one-minute assessment
  – One-one-one-one meetings with students answering a question orally/in writing
Assessment Best Practices – One-Minute Assessment

• Quick, 1-question micro-assessment
• Short (so you may lose specifics)
• Need very specific prompts in order to get “good” data
  • Sometimes hard to interpret
• Need to be diligent about documenting/tracking responses so they can be used for improvement
Creating Effective Assessment Tools – Summary

• **Recap:**
  – DESIGN Acronym
  – Surveys
  – Focus Groups/Interviews
  – Rubrics
  – One-Minute Assessments

• **Learning Outcome:**
  – Participants will be able to articulate two strategies for improving their assessment tools.
Questions?