Assessing Student Learning

Chris Parker, Ph.D.
Office of Assessment Services
Department of Psychology

cparker@niu.edu
753-7120
Objectives

- State multiple reasons why student assessment is important
- Write clear student learning objectives for a course or activity
- Identify different assessment options that can be applied to your course
- Know where to look for resources
At your table, identify why assessment of student learning can benefit or is important to:

- Students
- Course Faculty / Instructors
- Degree Programs
- Outside Stakeholders (e.g., Administrators, Accreditors, IBHE, etc.)
How Can Assessment Benefit...

- Students?
- Course Faculty/Instructors?
- Degree Programs?
- Outside Stakeholders?
Assessment Process

- Write clear and measurable student learning objectives
- Choose an appropriate assessment method
- Select/develop a rubric or rating scale
- Collect and score “artifacts”
- Interpret the data and use the results
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

- Identify what **specific** knowledge, skill, or attitude will be developed
- Specify the **measureable** student behavior that will demonstrate learning
- Consider relationship to degree program or baccalaureate student learning objectives
What is Student Learning?

• **Cognitive** – What do you know?
  – Facts, principles, findings, theories
  – Applications, strategies, processes

• **Behavioral** – What can you do?
  – Demonstrable skills
  – Performance at a specified level

• **Affective** – How do you feel?
  – Attitudes
  – Appreciation, Motivation
Measureable Behaviors?

- Appreciate
- Understand
- Believe
- Realize
- Learn

Translate ambiguous behaviors into something demonstrable / measureable
Use Measurable Behaviors

Taxonomy of Learning (Bloom):

• Memory/Knowledge: repeat, label, generate
• Comprehension: summarize, interpret
• Application: perform, demonstrate, modify
• Analysis: compare, classify, diagram, outline
• Evaluation: argue, discriminate, select
• Synthesis: create, design, reconstruct
Example SLOs

• Students will conduct appropriate statistical analyses and clearly communicate results.
• Students are able to identify and apply theories of employee motivation to solve business problems.
• Students are able to demonstrate proper exercise techniques.
• Students are able to interpret test results and identify appropriate recommendations.
Develop a Student Learning Objective

Consider a course, module, or activity and write a specific, measurable SLO:

• What is to be learned?
• How will learning be demonstrated?
Choosing an Assessment Method

• Knowledge v. Skill
  – Content
  – Application / performance

• Indirect v. Direct Methods
  – Learning is inferred / implied
  – Learning is demonstrated

• Formative v. Summative
  – Opportunity for feedback / revision
  – Course / program effectiveness
Choosing an Assessment Method

Content Knowledge (Cognitive):
• Problem Sets, Tests, Comprehensive Exam
• Papers, case study analysis

Skills (Behavioral):
• Assignments, projects, papers, presentations
• Experiences, internships, simulations, student teaching, service learning

Attitudes:
• Reflection papers, surveys

Northern Illinois University
Office of Assessment Services
Division of Academic Affairs
Scoring / Evaluation Options

• Absolute Performance Level
  – E.g., 70% correct
  – Accreditation, licensure

• Rubrics
  – Standardized (AAC&U VALUE rubrics)
  – Customized

• Subjective / Normative
  – Satisfaction
  – Rank ordering
Use of Results

• Students
  – Share rubrics / evaluation criteria
  – Feedback enhances learning

• Faculty / Instructor
  – Effectiveness of instructional practices

• Degree Program
  – Curricular design

• Stakeholders
  – Accreditation
  – Program review / prioritization
Resources

• Office of Assessment Services
  – [assess@niu.edu](mailto:assess@niu.edu)

• NIU PLUS ([www.niu.edu/plus](http://www.niu.edu/plus))

• American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)