

Assessment of Student Learning and Program Outcomes in Student and Administrative Services

Presented by :

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Session Objectives



- Refine Student Learning and Program Outcomes
- Clarify the Assessment Cycle and Important Considerations
- Identify Appropriate Approaches to Assessment
- Engage in an exercise to develop program and student learning assessment plans

But before we jump into the specifics of outcomes terminology and assessment techniques:



Consider the contribution of student support professionals towards learning.

What is *learning*?

Learning Reconsidered defines *learning* as “a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development.” (p. 4)

“Learning is a complex, holistic, multi-centric activity that occurs throughout and across the college experience.” (p. 5)

With this perspective on learning, academic learning and student development cannot be considered separate or independent of each other – they are not fundamentally different, and they cannot occur without each other.

Toward a new understanding of students and learning

By viewing students as an integrated whole, rather than as their component parts (body, mind, spirit) where academic affairs cultivates the intellect and student affairs cultivates the body, emotions, and spirit, our concept of learning expands to reflect the diverse ways through which students may engage with the tasks and content of learning. “The new concept of learning recognizes the essential integration of personal development with learning.” (*Learning Reconsidered*, p. 4)

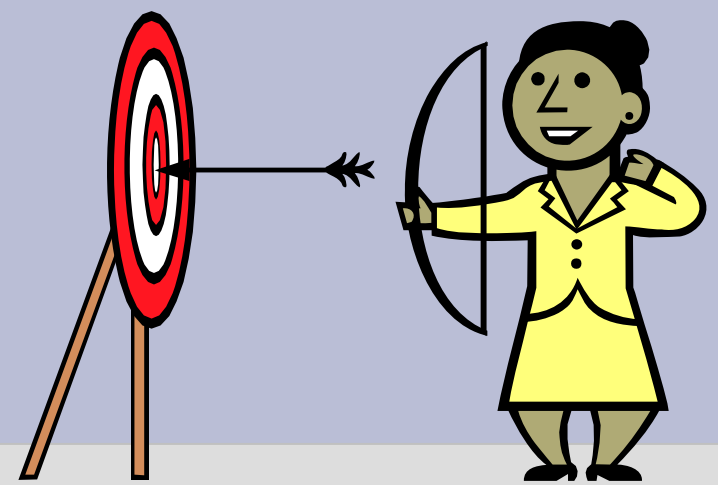


Terminology Checkpoint – Student Learning Outcomes:

Describe what students should be able to think (attitudinal), know (cognitive), or do (behavioral) when they've completed a given educational program.

What do you want students to know or do as a result of interacting with your services, or at the end of a learning unit (e.g. orientation, advising)?

Program Outcomes:



Related to student learning, a program-level outcome provides an opportunity to assess ourselves (programs, services), not just our students.

Related to other support services, program outcomes focus on what services the units provide in order to support the mission of the college and may focus on process (not just results).

Important Points Related to Developing Student Learning Outcomes:

- Use active verbs in describing student learning outcomes. Refer to the handouts for suggestions.
- Focus on results, not process
- The accomplishment of most statements of student learning outcomes should be ascertainable/measurable
- Consider whether the SLO is appropriate – does it represent a fundamental result of the program? Is it the penultimate outcome, the result of outcomes from sequenced activities?

Writing SLOs: Be Pragmatic!

- Typically, between 3-5 statements of intended educational outcomes for each program is sufficient.
- Remember that at least one means of assessment will need to be developed for each intended educational outcome. It is far better to limit the number of statements, conduct successful programs of assessment, and use assessment results to improve student learning than to curse a pile of paper which has been difficult to produce, expensive, and is virtually useless (Nichols and Nichols, p. 20).

Example Statements of Administrative and Student Services Outcomes (student learning or program)

- Students will be able to compare and contrast various leadership styles.
- Students will be able to locate all of the items they need for a balanced diet.
- Students will demonstrate care when using the recreation center equipment.
- Resident advisors will apply conflict resolution skills in the residence halls
- Facilities experts will respond to work order requests within 24 hours of completed filing.
- Students who are greeted at the front counter will report that they received accurate information delivered in a friendly manner.
- Students who read the monthly newsletter report that it contains accurate and timely information.

Develop/Identify
Outcomes

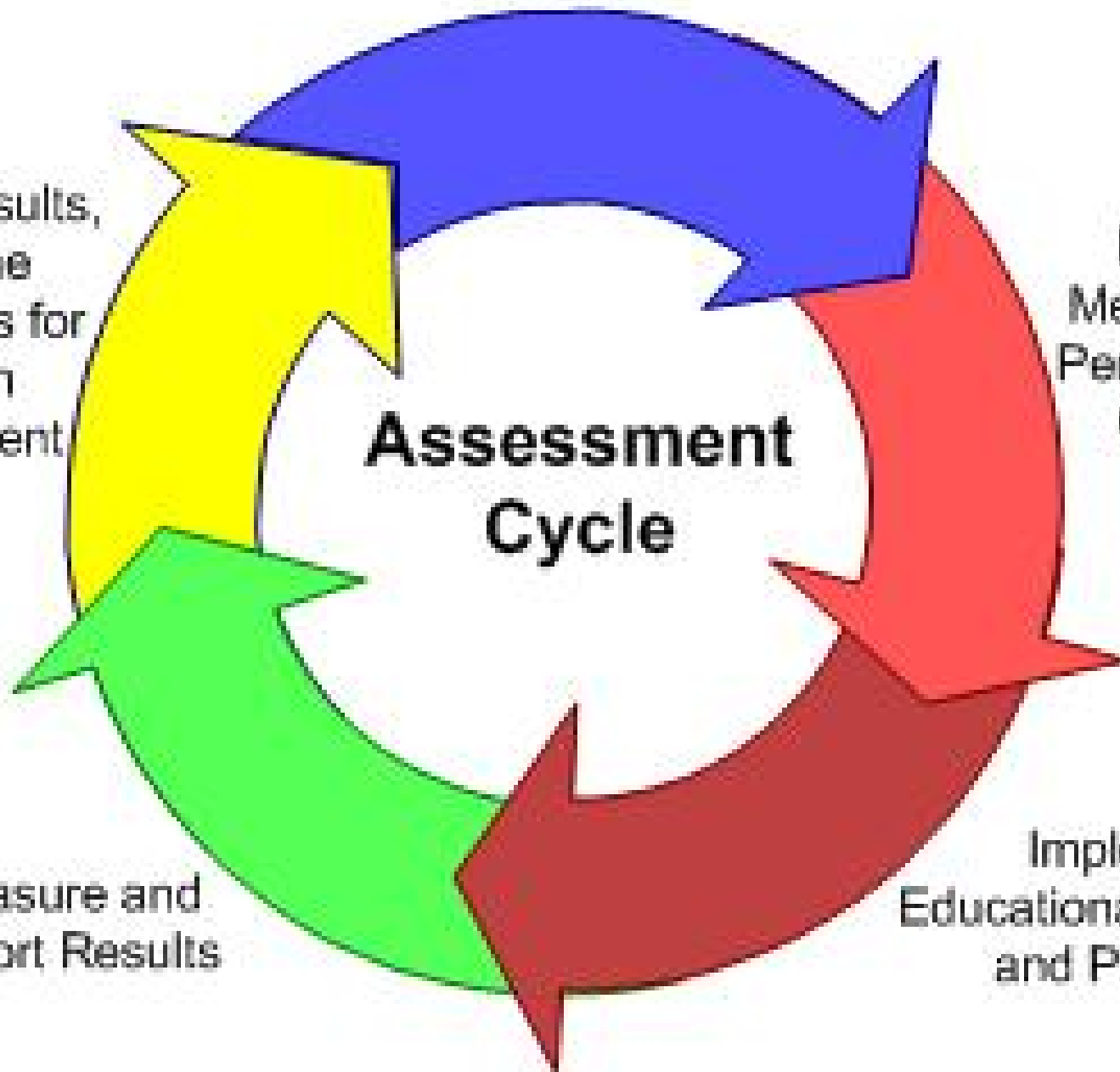
Identify
Measurable
Performance
Criteria

Implement
Educational Strategies
and Practices

Measure and
Report Results

Evaluate results,
determine
implications for
program
improvement

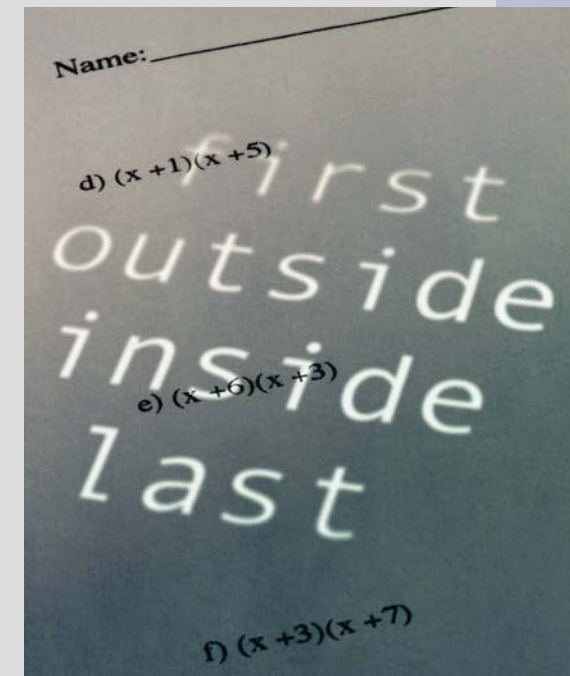
**Assessment
Cycle**



Assessment Method Examples



- Written surveys and questionnaires
- Exit and other interviews
- Standardized exams
- Locally developed exams
- Archival records (e.g. IR data)
- Focus Groups
- Portfolios
- Simulations
- Performance appraisal
- External examiner
- Behavioral observations



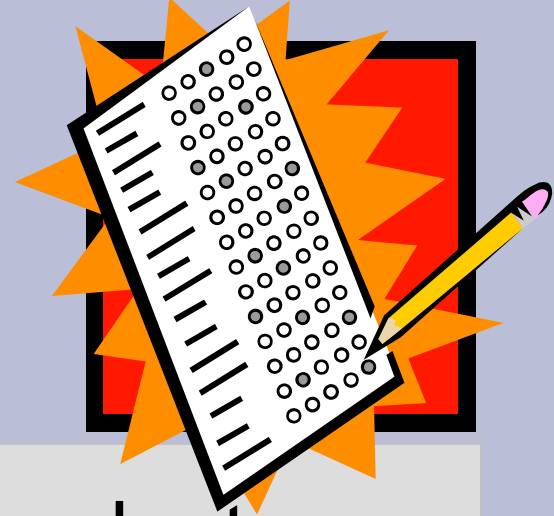
Direct v. Indirect Measures

Direct measures provide for the direct examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable learning outcomes

Indirect measures of student learning ascertain the perceived extent or value of learning experiences.

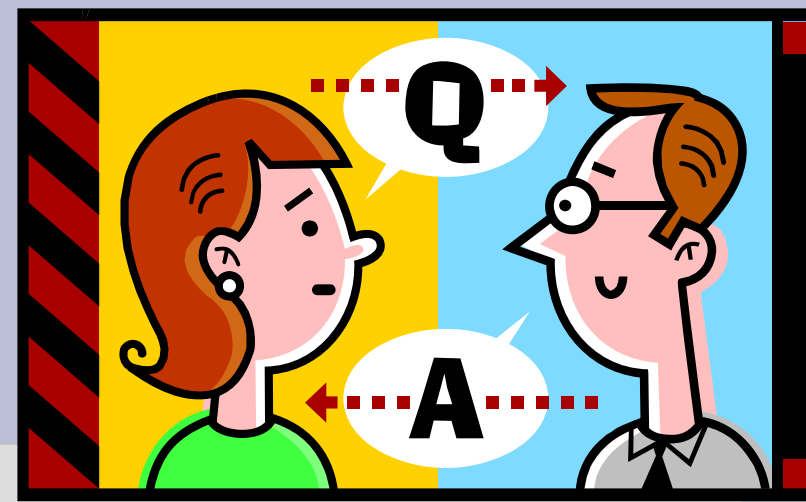
Assessment methods may be either direct or indirect, depending on the nature of what is being measured and how the method is being used.

Examples of Direct Assessment



- Capstone experience (e.g. independent project, honors thesis)
- Portfolios
- CLA (Collegiate Learning Assessment)
- Internal and external juried reviews (e.g. speeches, recitals, exhibitions)
- Oral exams
- Embedded assignments (e.g. test questions or essay questions embedded in the course)
- National testing within a discipline, or licensure exams

Examples of Indirect Assessment



- Self-reported student experiences, such as those included in NSSE
- Satisfaction surveys
- Alumni surveys
- Exit interviews with graduates
- Group discussions
- Employer Surveys

Qualitative Analysis



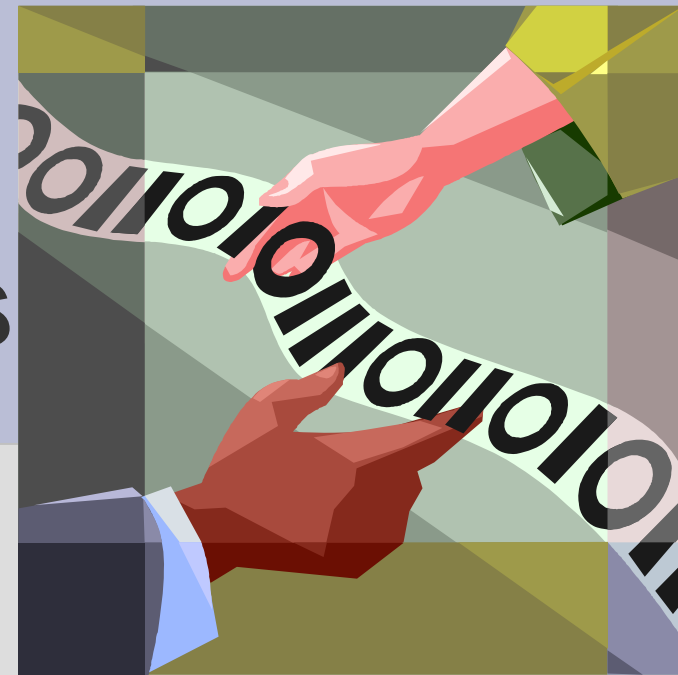
Advantages:

- Often produces the most valuable and insightful data

Disadvantages:

- Bulky data,
- Difficult to store and report results
- Results cannot be generalized
- Difficulty to identify standards for success
- Difficulty in identifying objective evaluators
- inter-rater reliability

Quantitative Analysis




Advantages:

- Data are easy to store and manage
- Results can be generalized and reproduced

Disadvantages:

- Results have limited value due to the rigidity of responses
- Research must be carefully constructed to be valid



Examples of qualitative and quantitative assessment:

- Carrying on a conversation about daily activities in a foreign language using correct grammar and comprehensible pronunciation
- Achieving a certain score on a standardized test

Assessment Method Validity



Relevance: How *direct* is your measure?

Accuracy: How *precise* is your measure?

Utility: Will results provide clear implications for educational program evaluation and improvement?

Additional Considerations Regarding Assessment:

- All assessment options have advantages and disadvantages
- There will always be more than one way to measure any outcome
- Multiple methods maximize validity and reduce the bias of any one approach
- There is often an inverse relationship between the quality of the measurement method and its expediency

Choosing Appropriate Assessment Methods



- “Ideal” methods are those that provide the best fit between program needs, satisfactory validity, and affordability (time, effort, and money)
- Program-level assessment measures can be more blunt than course-level measures



Final Assessment Advice: Be Practical!

- $E = MC^2$
(Evaluation = Measurement times a double dose of Common sense)
- You don't have to measure everything all the time – consider a three-year assessment cycle for each outcome
- More data are not always better
- Don't wait until you have a perfect plan