

# Assessment of Student Learning: An Introduction

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# Overview

- What is Assessment?
- Why Assess?
- The Assessment Process
  - Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes
  - Ensuring Learning Opportunities: Curriculum maps
  - Measuring Student Learning: Rubrics, not Grades
  - Collecting, Analyzing, and Using Results: Action Plans
- Assessment and You

# What Is Assessment?

- The Systematic Collection
- Of Information about Student Learning
- Using Available Resources
- In Order to Inform Decisions
- About How to Improve Student Learning

# Characteristics of Good Assessment

- Focused on Educational Outputs, Not Inputs
- Useful: Intended to Inform Action
- Feasible with Limited Resources
  - Built on Existing Efforts (e.g., class assignments)
- Tied to Key Processes (e.g., APR, strategic planning, budgeting)
- Owned by the Faculty

# Why Assess?

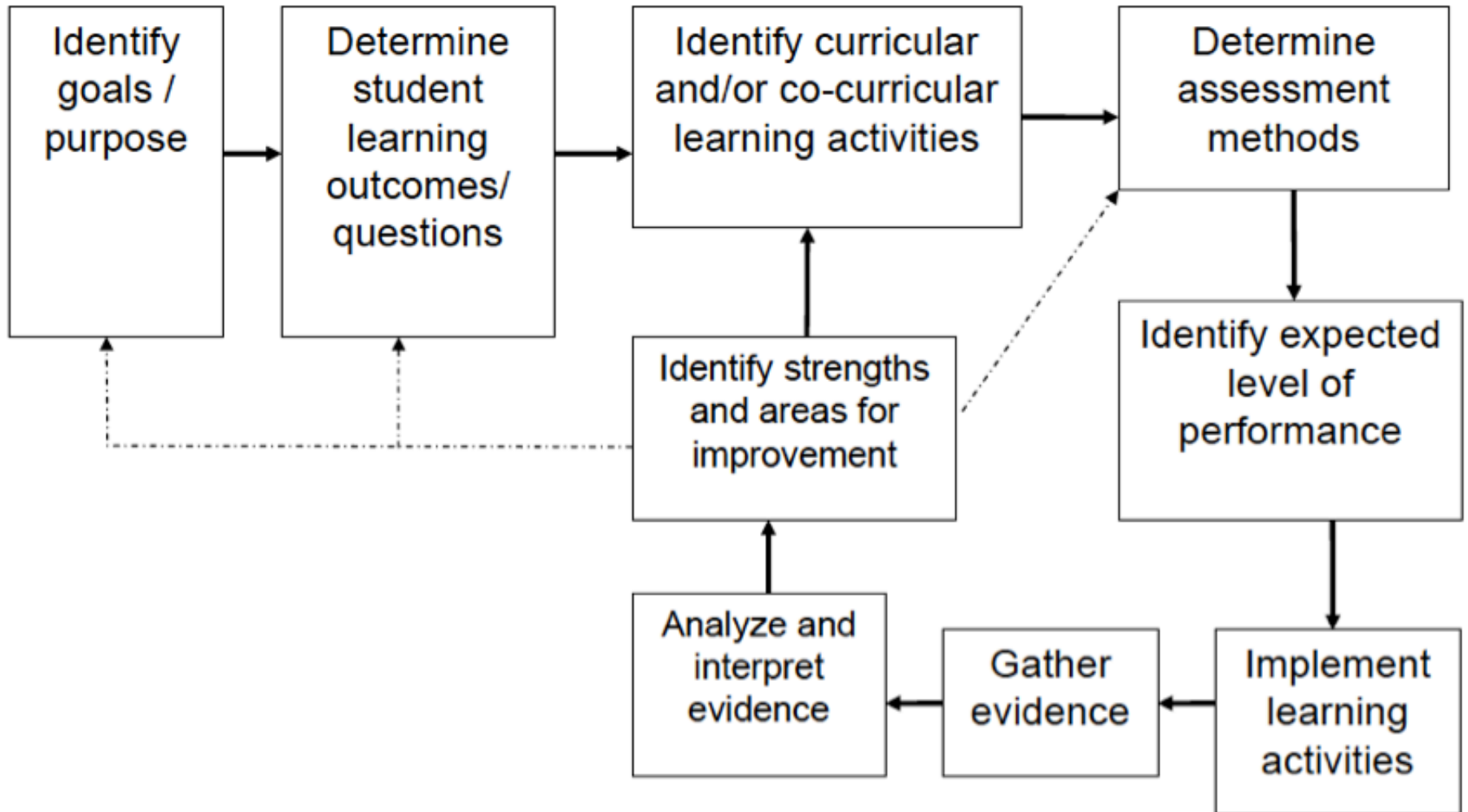
- Continuous Improvement of
  - Teaching and Student Learning
  - Academic Programs
  - Institutional Planning and Decision-making
- Accountability: Demonstrating Effectiveness to
  - Accrediting Agencies (SACSCOC)
  - Funding Sources (government, foundations, business, individuals)
  - Prospective Students and Faculty

# Levels of Academic Assessment

- University
  - General Education
- \*Department
  - Degree Programs
  - Stand-alone Certificates
- Individual Faculty
  - Courses
  - Other Educational Experiences

# The Assessment Process: 7 Steps

- Defining Program Mission and Goals
- Specifying Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
- Ensuring Learning Opportunities: Curriculum Map
- Choosing Effective Measures: Rubrics, not Grades
- Setting Targets
- Collecting and Analyzing Evidence
- Using Results: Action Plans





# Types of SLOs

- Knowledge and Understanding
  - Factual Content
  - Methods and Procedures
- Skills and Abilities
  - Critical Thinking
  - Problem-solving
  - Communication
- Attitudes, Values, and Dispositions
  - Ethical Orientation
  - Sensitivity to Alternative Perspectives

# 7 Characteristics of Good SLOs

- Consistent with Program Goals
- Comprehensive: Cover main program elements
- Focused on Student Learning (not teaching)
- Neither Too Broad Nor Too Narrow
- Ambitious but Attainable
- Measurable
- Actionable: Can be used for program improvement

# Examples

- Students independently design and carry out experimental research that yields valid results
- Students recognize and articulate the assumptions, central ideas, and main criticisms of psychoanalysis
- Students develop lesson plans for teaching at the elementary level
- Students communicate effectively with guests in hospitality industry settings

# Ensuring Learning Opportunities

- Levels
  - Program: Curriculum Maps
  - Course: Content, Pedagogy, Assignments
- Steps
  - Introduction
  - Reinforcement/Practice
  - Mastery
  - Assessment

	Introductory Course	Research Methods	Advanced Content Course A	Laboratory / Practicum Course	Advanced Content Course B	Advanced Content Course C	Advanced Content Course D	Capstone Course
<b>Content</b>								
SLO 1: Disciplinary knowledge base (models and theories)	Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 2: Disciplinary methods		Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 3: Disciplinary applications	Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
<b>Critical Thinking</b>								
SLO 4: Analysis and use of evidence		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 5: Evaluation, selection, and use of sources of information	Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
<b>Communication</b>								
SLO 6: Written communication skills	Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 7: Oral communication skills		Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed		
<b>Integrity / Values</b>								
SLO 8: Disciplinary ethical standards		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced			Mastery / Assessed
SLO 9: Academic integrity	Introduced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
<b>Project Management</b>								
SLO 10: Interpersonal and team skills			Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 11: Self-regulation and metacognitive skills	Introduced			Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed

# Types of Measures

- Direct (student work)
  - Exams
  - Writing Assignments
  - Oral Presentations/Performances
  - Portfolios/Capstone Projects
  - Theses/Dissertations
- Indirect
  - Student/Alumni Surveys
  - Exit Interviews/Focus Groups
  - Reflective Essays

# Why Not Use Grades?

- Grades Alone May
  - Leave Unclear Expectations for Learning
  - Collapse Information About Multiple SLOs
  - Incorporate Other Aspects of Student Performance (attendance, participation, etc.)
  - Be Difficult to Translate into Program Improvements

# Using Rubrics

- Types of Rubrics
  - Checklist
  - \*Descriptive
- Advantages of Rubrics
  - Differentiate SLOs in an Assignment
  - Define Levels of Performance/Ensure Consistency
  - Clarify Faculty Expectations
  - Provide Detailed Feedback to Students



## Value-added Rubric for CTW (v.2)

<b>Skill/ability</b>	<b>Absent/Beginning (1-2)</b>	<b>Developing/Inadequate (3-4)</b>	<b>Competent/Adequate (5-6)</b>	<b>Advanced/Sophisticated (7-8)</b>	<b>Score</b>
Identification/ articulation of key issue or question	Statement of issue is absent or incoherent	States issue/question, but not in a clear manner	Clear statement of the issue or question to be addressed	Sophisticated presentation of the issue/question, reflecting an understanding of nuances and context	
Formulation of student's position (thesis/argument) on the issue	Fails to formulate a position on the issue/ question, or position is incoherent	Position is present but not clearly articulated	Clear statement of student's position on the issue/question	Sophisticated and nuanced statement of student's position	
Effective use of reasons and/or evidence in support of position	No reasons/evidence provided, or given reasons/evidence are not relevant	Some reasons/evidence provided, but do not effectively support student's position	Given reasons/evidence are effective and adequate	Sophisticated and thorough use of reasons/evidence in support of student's position	
Organization of material	Incoherent or illogical organizational structure	Organization of material is simplistic	Presentation of reasons and evidence is logical and coherent	Organization of material is compelling and creative	
Presentation of conclusions	Conclusions are absent or not clearly stated	Conclusions are present but consist mainly of a simplistic summary	Clearly stated conclusions, but not exploration of implications or consequences	Clearly stated conclusions with examination of implications and/or consequences	

# Setting Targets

- Local versus External Standards
- Differentiated versus Minimum Standards
- Value-Added Targets: Before/After Assessment
- Historical Trends: Improvements over Time

# Collecting and Reviewing Evidence

- Every Year/Semester or Less Frequently?
- All Classes or a Sample?
- All Students or a Sample?
- Individual Faculty or a Committee?

# Analyzing the Findings: What Do They Mean?

- Were the Findings Clear?
- Were Measurement Tools Appropriate?
- Was a Representative Sample Assessed?
- Were the Sources Comparable?
- Were Targets Met?
- Were Targets Meaningful?
- Were There Shortfalls in Student Learning?

# Using Assessment Results

- Reports
  - To Program Leaders and Faculty
  - To Oversight Bodies for Review
- Faculty Discussions
- Action Plans for Program Improvement
  - Program: Purpose, SLOs, Curriculum, etc.
  - Individual Course Content and/or Pedagogy
  - Assessment Process Itself

# Assessment and You: Implications for Individual Faculty

- Choosing Course Learning Objectives
  - Are They Consistent with Program Goals/SLOs?
  - To Which Stages of Learning Do They Correspond?
- Designing Course Learning Opportunities
  - Where/How Will Students Learn and Practice What You Want Them to Learn?
- Identifying Appropriate Assessments
  - Do They Get At What You Want Students to Learn?
  - Do/Should They Dovetail with Program Assessments?

# Assessment and Academic Freedom

- Faculty members are responsible for establishing educational goals for student learning, for designing and implementing programs of general education and specialized study that intentionally cultivate the intended learning, and for assessing student achievement...  
Academic freedom is necessary not just so faculty members can conduct their individual research and teach their own courses, but so they can enable students—through whole college programs of study—to acquire the learning they need to contribute to society.
  - American Colleges and Universities’ Board of Directors  
Statement on Academic Freedom and Educational  
Responsibility (2006)

# Useful Sources on Assessment

- Mary Allen, *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* (2004)
- Trudy Banta, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> (2009)
- Barbara Walvoord, *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2010)
- American Association of College and Universities VALUE Rubrics (<http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index>)



# Thanks for Your Interest!

Please visit the Office of Academic Assessment at <http://oie.gsu.edu/academic-assessment-and-review/>