Introduction to Outcomes Assessment Workshop

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Workshop overview
I. Context
II. Concept Definitions
III. What is “Good” Assessment
IV. Steps of Assessment

Workshop Objectives
Participants will be able to:
• Define assessment and other major concepts
• Explain the elements of “good” assessment
• Describe the steps of assessment
• Evaluate outcome statements
• Distinguish types of assessment methods
• Describe various ways assessment results can be used

I. Concept Definitions

Assessment is
A systematic process of gathering and interpreting information to discover if your unit is meeting its intended outcomes, and using that information to enhance your operations in order to improve that performance.

Goals are
broad statements that describe the overarching long range intended outcomes of an administrative unit.

Example:
To implement new technology to provide increasingly improved service to students and their families.
Goals can be

- Operational (daily processes/activities)
  Example operational goal:
  To provide excellent customer service to students served

- Strategic (related to VP or College goals)
  Example of a strategic goal related to VP goal to enhancing students’ global perspective:
  To expand the number of study abroad programs offered in both Asia and Europe

Student Learning Outcomes are

specific statements that describe what we want students to know, to be able to do, or to value as a result of this learning experience.

Example:
Students will be able to develop an educational plan for successfully achieving their goals

II. What is “good” assessment?

Adapted from Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide by Linda Suskie
1. Good assessments are useful (and used)
   - Measure what we intend to measure (validity)
   - Yield consistent results across administrations (reliability)
   - Give us useful information specific to intended outcomes
   - Give us reasonably accurate, truthful information

2. Good assessments are cost-effective
   - Keep it simple
   - Focus on a few (3-6) outcomes
   - Use samples
   - Make use of existing information
   - Stagger assessments

Laying the ground work

Mission

Goals

Example

Who we are

The mission of the Department of Accounting is to offer graduate and undergraduate accounting programs of high quality, which meet the needs of the students preparing for careers in accounting. This mission includes providing a broad-based education as well as education in current business and accounting topics. The department is responsive to the needs of employers and other constituents. The department is also alert to the current local, regional, and national environment, and implements changes in the educational process to respond to those issues when needed. The faculty of the accounting programs assist in accomplishing this mission through a planned integration of their teaching, intellectual, and service contribution.

A mission statement defines

- Who are we?
- What do we do?
- For whom do we do it?

UTSA Mission Statement

The University of Texas at San Antonio is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge through research and discovery, teaching and learning, community engagement, and public service. As an institution of access and excellence, UTSA embraces multicultural traditions, serving as a center for intellectual and creative resources as well as a catalyst for socioeconomic development - for Texas, the nation and the world.
Most unit goals relate to

- Use of services
- Quality
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Student Learning

Example goals:

To provide a diverse range of appropriate standardized testing assessments for the recruitment, retention, and graduation of quality students.
To provide access to contemporary technology to enable students, faculty, and staff to achieve their learning and teaching goals.
To promote academic excellence through individual and group support.
To assist students in developing an educational plan consistent with their life goals and objectives.

See Handout: Goals Worksheet

IV. Six Steps of Assessment

1. Write 3-6 outcomes
2. Determine assessment methods
3. Establish criteria
4. Collect and analyze information
5. Use the results
6. Close the loop


Step 1: Outcomes

Operational Learning

“SMART” method of writing good operational or strategic outcomes

- **Specific**
  - associated with key processes and services
- **Measurable**
  - data can be collected (feasible and reasonable)
- **Attainable** (yet aggressive)
  - increase, enhance, minimize, provide, reduce
- **Results-oriented**
  - Information collected is actionable
- **Time-bound**
  - Assessment schedule

“ABCs” of writing good Student learning outcomes

- **Audience** - Identify who will be learning
- **Behavior** - observable action
  - Design, Apply, Analyze
- **Clear** - no *fuzzy terms* such as Understand, Appreciate, Critical Thinking
- **Domain specific** - Knowledge, Skills, or Attitudes/values
- **Essential** - to unit
  - Leadership, Study Skills, Information Literacy
SWBAT and LWCT Stems

- “The Student will be able to __verb__…”
  - Cognitive outcomes
  - Psychomotor outcomes

- “The Learner will choose to __verb__…”
  - Affective outcomes

See Handout: Action Verbs for Writing Learning Outcomes

Examples

An increased number of students participating in personal counseling will report improvement in the condition or problems for which they sought services during the next academic year.

The number of students utilizing the computerized Study Skills Program will increase by 25% in the next two years.

Students will be able to create an individualized time management plan utilizing the computerized Study Skills Program.

Methods to determine outcomes

1. Ideal Student (Learning outcomes)
2. Collect and review current program goals
3. Review external agencies (e.g. professional organizations)
4. Review other programs

Types of assessment methods

- Direct - direct evidence of accomplishments
- Indirect - reflect student, parent, faculty, staff and employer perceptions

Assessment methods

- Tests (e.g. pre-post)
- Embedded questions
- Field Supervisor ratings
- Employer ratings
- Peer ratings
- Surveys
- Retention rate
- Graduation rate
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Program evaluations
- Student self-ratings
- Alumni satisfaction
- Honors, awards
Step 2A: Identify assessment opportunities

Outcome 1
Method A
Method B
Method C

Outcome 2

Outcome 3

Outcome 4

Assessment Matrix

1. Create a grid

2. Indicate whether the method is a direct or indirect measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Method A</th>
<th>Method B</th>
<th>Method C</th>
<th>Method D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome I</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome II</td>
<td>Direct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome III</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome IV</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look for information already on hand
- Tracking logs
- Evaluations
- Surveys
- Self-ratings

Useful but more time & work
- Additional tests
- Additional surveys
- Additional focus groups

How To: Select Assessment Methods
- Will the method provide results that are easy to understand and interpret?
- Does a change in the results represent a change in the program or something else?
- Start small - test the method
- Appropriate and useful
Matching method to outcome

Outcome: XYZ Administrative Unit will demonstrate increased timeliness in terms of processing student requests.

Assessment Method 1: Number of students served by XYZ Administrative Unit will be tracked for three semesters.

Assessment Method 2: The date and time of each student request and the date and time that it is resolved will be tracked. The time between request and resolution will be compared for two semesters.

Best Practice: Assessment Methods

1. Emphasize direct methods over indirect
2. Use multiple methods to assess each outcome
3. Triangulate information to maximize decision-making

Step 3: Establish criteria

Example statements:

• At least 75% of the employers will be satisfied with the ethical conduct and the knowledge of ethical standards of our graduates.
• Practicum students should receive an average field supervisor rating of 4.25 (85%) or better on a 5 point scale.

Step 4: Establish criteria

Caution:

Set a standard of expected performance ONLY if you have a basis to set a standard

Step 4: Collect and analyze information
Step 5: Collect and Analyze information

- Make a schedule
  - When information is to be collected
  - How often it will be analyzed
  - How often it will be reported

- Assign responsibility
  - Collection of information
  - Analysis

Step 5: Use the results

- Changes to programs/processes
  - modification of frequency or schedule of services
  - improvements of technology
  - implement additional training
  - other implemented or planned change

Step 6: Close the loop

- Discussing results with staff
- Communicating the results and actions taken to stakeholders
  - Students
  - Faculty
  - Staff
  - Others
Bottom line

- Assess what you value
- Keep assessment useful
- Keep assessment cost-effective
  - Especially time
- Recognize that some important outcomes can’t be assessed
- Make a plan and work the plan

See Handouts: Developing a Unit Assessment Plan
Assessment Matrix
Assessment Planning Matrix