Assessment
Keeping It Simple & Useful

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Why Are We Assessing?

- Form follows function!
Give Individual Feedback & Grades
Give Students the Best Possible Education
Stewardship

Make sure we use limited resources effectively
Tell the World How Good We Are

...and what we’re doing to get even better
Keep Our Promises

• Our graduates have learned what we promise.

• We are prudent stewards of other people’s money.
What is Assessment?

- Deciding what we want our students to learn
- Making sure they learn it!

--Jane Wolfson, Director, Environmental Science & Studies Program, Towson University
The Teaching-Learning-Assessment Cycle

Learning Goals
Learning Opportunities
Using Results
Assessment
“Good” Assessment

Useful

...and Used
Assessment Results
Inform Important Decisions on Important Goals.

- Resource allocations
- Strategic goals and plans
An Enduring Culture of Evidence-Informed Improvement
Barriers to Using Assessment Results
#1. Change is Hard!

- A great teacher is always improving.
Value Efforts to Change, Improve & Innovate

- Stipends & fellowships for extraordinary work to understand & improve student learning
- **Fund needs identified through assessment**
- Incorporate efforts to improve teaching into P&T
#2 Fuzzy Goals

- Develop and integrate perspectives to make discriminating aesthetic judgments
#3. Fuzzy Standards of Success

- What are your standards for success?
  - What is an “A” paper? “C” paper?
  - Why?

- Recognize, celebrate, & publicize successes
#4. If You’re Not Teaching It, There’s No Point in Assessing It
## Students Learn What They’re Graded On

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is what you’ll learn how to do.</td>
<td>This is how you’ll learn it.</td>
<td>This is how you’ll show that you’ve learned it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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</table>
#5. Results Don’t Get to the Right People

- Department colleagues
- Faculty teaching cognates
- Dean
- Provost
- Others with the same goals
  - Writing
  - Critical thinking
#6. No One Has Time to Study the Results

- Short, simple, clear
  - *PowerPoint, not narrative*
  - *Percentages, not means*
  - *Descriptive, not inferential statistics*

- Form follows function
  - *It’s all about goals.*
  - *Why are you sharing results?*
  - *What decisions can they inform?*

- Make a clear, meaningful point
“Good” Assessment

- Sustained
- Simple
The Perfect is the Enemy of the Good
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate &amp; disseminate</td>
<td>• Improve local practice (action research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Key learning outcomes with justifiable targets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review of literature</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good practices elsewhere</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generalizable</td>
<td>• NOT generalizable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Replicable</td>
<td>• Maybe NOT replicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pilot study</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pilot study—just once!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis &amp; conclusions</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations for further study</strong></td>
<td>Implemented improvements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Set Priorities

• What do you most want students to learn?
One Size Does Not Fit All

- Be flexible!
Don’t Collect More Than You Can Handle

- Samples
- Staggering
Start at the End and Work Backwards

• Capstones
Look for the Biggest Return on Investment (of Time)

• Capstones
  – Senior papers & projects
  – Graduate theses & comps
  – Internships

• High-enrollment courses
Keep Reports to a Bare Bones Minimum

• Form follows function
  – *Purpose*?
  – *Audience*?

• Tie results to learning outcomes
• Most information is useless.

• Give yourself permission to dismiss it.

– Harris & Muchin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Report</th>
<th>Your Documentation</th>
<th>Assessment Report</th>
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<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Meaningful results</td>
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<td>Analysis &amp; conclusions</td>
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<td>Key analysis &amp; conclusions</td>
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<td>Recommendations for further study</td>
<td>Planned and implemented improvements to</td>
<td>• Implemented improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teaching &amp; learning</td>
<td>• Recommended broader improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment methods</td>
<td>• Budget proposals</td>
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</table>


Periodically Regroup & Reflect

Has this assessment been useful?

Has its value been in proportion to the time and money put into it?
Time to Reflect!