Assessing Basic Skills Outcomes

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Background and Description
Background

- Promote inquiry and dialogue among faculty, staff, researchers and administrators.
- Model ways to measure the impact of Basic Skills interventions.
- Guide the development of a comprehensive research agenda.
- Foster a results-driven evaluation plan for Basic Skills.
Description

Steps for Assessing Basic Skills

Designing Research  Identifying Possible Evidence  Employing Research in Decision-making  Evaluation
Balancing Reality and Rigor

- First identify data already being collected
- Data collection should not place an undue burden on the program/project
- Use direct measures whenever possible and reasonable
- Need to ensure that data being collected are actually measuring what you intended to assess
- Requires conversation between program/project leaders and researcher to achieve a suitable balance
Impact

• Demonstrates whether program/project is having desired impact on students.
• Identifies what is working and what needs improvement.
• Measures effect of any changes made within program/project.
• Enables ongoing internal and external sharing/reporting of evaluative results.
• Helps justify continued support and funding.
Components and Strategies
Designing Research Strategies

Start with Two Basic Questions

1. What are the intended outcomes of the program or innovation?
2. What evidence exists to demonstrate that the intended outcome has been achieved?
Designing Research Strategies

- Begin with an exploration of baseline data about the basic skills student population.
- Ensure that the research design includes the questions related to the intended outcome and possible evidence points.
- Ensure that the research agenda is openly discussed in various committees and among various constituency groups.
- Develop a plan where results are gathered and evaluated periodically by all stakeholders.
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
What are the characteristics of basic skills students at your college?
What types of research have been conducted on basic skills programs?

MOVING FORWARD
What types of information could research gather to more effectively evaluate basic skills program and student success?
Identifying Possible Evidence

Begin disseminating data that impacts student success within the campus community

- Share and discuss baseline data to develop culture that is inquiry-based and data-informed

Plan careful evaluation of both assessment measures and curriculum design

- Compare course success or achievement rates between students who assess into the course and those who do not.
- Compare entrance and exit skills within course sequence.
- Evaluate students’ course-taking behavior.
INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

How effective is the placement testing process at your college?

Do you feel that it helps students to determine the best courses to take?

How could this process be improved?
What kinds of information would help to evaluate the impact of placement testing on student performance?
How could this information be incorporated into curriculum design?
## Identifying Possible Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use classroom assessment to stimulate discussion around pedagogy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post testing</td>
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<td>Portfolios</td>
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<td>Common exam questions</td>
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<td>Classroom Assessment Techniques (Cross and Angelo)</td>
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<th>Evaluate participation in various measures of efficacy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Levels of participation correlated with success indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levels of non-participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation of student attitudes and perceptions toward participation</td>
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<td>Research various aspects of an intervention</td>
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Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
What types of activities tend to have low participation rates at your college?
Why do you think students choose not to participate?
Guided Inquiry

MOVING FORWARD

How could your college gather information about participation that goes beyond numbers to student’s perceptions?

If you were to evaluate specific components of an intervention, what would you focus on?
Identifying Possible Evidence

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Measure points of access and success</th>
<th>Examine levels of non-participation in college activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Track students through the basic skills sequence to program completion, transfer, degree or certificate completion</td>
<td>• Evaluate number of students who do not participate in matriculation process</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Track students to determine those who participate in honors programs</td>
<td>• Evaluate number students who begin matriculation process but fail to enroll</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Examine longitudinal cohort data to measure programming differences over time</td>
<td>• Evaluate number of students who do not participate in support services or college activities</td>
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Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
Are you aware of any milestones or momentum points that seem important to students’ progress through the basic skills sequence?

MOVING FORWARD
Identify the cohorts that would be most useful to track among your college’s basic skills populations.
Data Into Decision-Making

• Stakeholders are instrumental in the development of the questions that drive the research agenda
• Results are shared continuously with both stakeholders and the larger campus community
Assign responsibility for tracking the conversation or inquiry so questions can be answered annually and addressed with research.

Consider the development of a comprehensive research model that ties discussions about the research with the vision for the program.

Develop a systemic way of sharing information within the stakeholder group and campus community.

Develop strategies for information dissemination to foster continuous dialogue.
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
Describe your institution’s basic skills programs in general. What research data are routinely gathered in support of the efficacy of these programs? How is it presented? How is it used?

MOVING FORWARD
Given the unique characteristics of your institution and your answers to the questions above, how might your college most effectively structure its program review process?
Evaluation
The Evaluation Cycle

1. Identify Outcomes
2. Gather Evidence
3. Interpret Evidence
4. Implement Change
5. (Closes the Loop)

START HERE

Inquiry Guide - p. 15
Closing the Loop

After implementing suggested changes:

• Reassess achievement of learning objectives

• Ensure that new results relate directly to original program goals, objectives, and results

• New results are analyzed, new changes needed are identified, a new improvement plan is developed, and new changes are implemented
Other Evaluation Ideas

• Include an evaluation of what students who are not succeeding are doing or not doing

• Use the evaluation to identify other options or paths that can be pursued to help increase student success

• Consider new directions for assessment
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
Describe the basic skills programs in general at your institution.
What research data are routinely gathered in support of the efficacy of these programs? How are the data presented? Who receives the information and how is it used?

MOVING FORWARD
How would you develop your institution’s research design for basic skills programs?
BRIC TAP Inquiry Guide Series

1. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes
2. Using an Equity Lens to Assess Student Learning (CUE Module)
3. Assessing Strategic Intervention Points in Student Services
4. A Model for Building Information Capacity and Promoting a Culture of Inquiry
5. Assessing and Planning for Institutional Effectiveness
6. Asssessing Basic Skills Outcomes
7. Maximizing the Program Review Process
8. Turning Data into Meaningful Action
9. Research and Assessment for Noncredit Institutions

http://www.rpgroup.org/content/BRIC-inquiry-guides
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The BRIC Initiative
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