Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

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Description and Impact
Description

Purpose of this inquiry guide:

1. Provide an overview of the SLO assessment cycle.
2. Present a framework for improving student learning through evidence-based assessment and analysis.
3. Offer additional resources for in-depth work.
4. Improve teaching and learning through planning and allocation of resources.
5. Help to begin or continue the conversation through the *Guided Inquiry* questions.
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

Take a moment to think about the education this institution provides. Consider the institution’s various structures and demographic profile. What important skills, knowledge and values should graduates from this college have in common?
Guided Inquiry

MOVING FORWARD

Now more specifically, describe what kinds of conversations take place on your campus about outcomes assessment?

Is there broad dialog about what students should know and be able to do within courses, programs, student services, administrative units and the institution as a whole?

Which constituencies have been involved?
Why Do We Assess?

• To implement strategies that respond to diverse needs.
• To improve effectiveness by:
  • Measuring how and what students learn,
  • Developing new and varied educational experiences, and
  • Revealing students mastery.
Major Overarching Principles

1. Promotes collaboration
2. Is dynamic and continuous
3. Ensures quality education
4. Focuses on learning; how, what and how well students learn
5. Is integrated into our daily teaching and planning
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

Based on your reading of the section “Why Do We Assess?” describe how your institution addresses the four overarching principles.

MOVING FORWARD

How could these overarching principles be integrated into your current college culture?
Questions Facing Colleges

- How do we improve our practice to address student success?
- Are the teaching practices equally effective for diverse populations?
- How do we know what students are learning?
- Are students acquiring needed skills and values?
- Can students apply information to real world applications?

*SLO assessment is the professional habit of evaluating our own work: What we put into it and what we/others get out of it.*
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
What kind of reflective processes do you currently use to assess whether students have learned something?

MOVING FORWARD
How do you translate student learning into improving your professional practice?
Impact

• **Good Educational Practices**
  • Formative Assessment: Intermittent feedback that guides students
  • Summative Assessment: Final analysis of students’ cumulative knowledge, skills or attitudes

• **Self-reflection and Collaborative Priorities**
  • Facilitating a shared vision for student success

• **Creation of an infrastructure for on-going campus-wide dialogue**
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
What institutional practices should connect to and embed assessment of student learning outcomes?

MOVING FORWARD
Which existing institutional infrastructure or activities can be leveraged for the assessment process?
Components and Strategies
Six Building Blocks to Assessment

1. Research and reflect on outcomes
2. Define measureable SLOs
3. Carefully design & conduct assessment
4. Analyze assessment data
5. Report assessment results
6. Improve Practice
Reflect and Research Outcomes

- Reflect on the aspiration of the institution and its students by:
  - Collaborating with all stakeholders
  - Including other related departments
- Look at other colleges, discipline groups and professional organizations
- Ultimately determine:
  - The skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes to be learned.
  - The way that mastery of the outcomes is defined.
  - The way we improve practice after we have measured learning.
Research and Align SLOs

- Institutional values
- Unique student populations
- Other colleges’ standards
- Professional organizations criteria
- External agency licensure requirements
- Workplace expectations
Define Measurable SLOs

- Can be observed and measured
- Address knowledge, skills or attitudes as they relate to:
  - Cognitive Domain: Critical thinking
  - Behavioral Domain: Concrete actions
  - Affective Domain: Feelings and attitudes
- Represent the overarching outcomes of a course, program, degree or certificate
- Are larger and more encompassing than objectives
Questions in the SLO Process

1. What should a student know, be able to do or value?

2. Are the outcomes authentic and consistent with real world applications?

3. Do the SLOs reflect major professional and discipline concepts associated with this course of study?

4. Are the SLOs measureable?

5. Do the SLOs measure higher level learning as exemplified in Bloom’s Taxonomy?
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
Describe what outcomes and assessment strategies your institution has developed to measure learning at the institutional, program and course levels?

MOVING FORWARD
Based on your description in the first question, what might your logical next steps be in your development of effective assessment structures?
Define & Conduct Assessment

• Assessment is a process that generates continual flow of evidence to demonstrate learning and to suggest areas for improvement.

• Data must be manageable and directly tied to decision-making.

• Evidence can be:
  • Quantitative: capable of numerical manipulation and analysis
  • Qualitative: performance or observational based experience

• Embedded assessment are those that are built into curricular or program activities.
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
What embedded assessment strategies are already being used or can be integrated into your classroom/program practice?

MOVING FORWARD
Describe the infrastructure for assessment that your institution already has in place. What do you need to support your assessment processes?
Analyze the Results

- **Achievement or Mastery**
  - Measures student attainment against a set of criteria

- **Growth or Value-added**
  - Sets baseline levels of performance so that retest can be done after an intervention has been implemented
Things to Consider

- Involve practitioners in the dialogue.
- Relate critical factors to the context of results.
- Find ways to confirm or challenge assumptions.
- Track and analyze potential trends or patterns over time.
- Use results to inform teaching, learning and/or services.
- Find ways for the college to follow up on results.
- Communicate and distribute of data, interpretation of data and recommended and/or necessary improvements.
Report the Results

Guiding Principles

- Identify purpose
- Be useful to decision-makers
- Effectively tell the story
- Use a sustainable format
- Identify areas to improve
- Focus assessment on decisions
- Celebrate and share results
- Focus assessment on decisions

Identify purpose

Build Block #5
Improved Practice

- Ultimate goal of assessment:
  - Continued quality improvement
  - Positive changes in teaching and learning

- When examining improvements consider:
  1. Modifying instruction
  2. Improving student feedback
  3. Changing programmatic structure
  4. Integrating outcome results into program review
  5. Linking results to inform integrated planning and resource allocation
Guided Inquiry

INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

How do you use SLO assessment in the improvement feedback loop?
What challenges exist?
How does your college incorporate assessment results into integrated planning and resource allocation?
Guided Inquiry

MOVING FORWARD

How might you develop a collaborative and integrated assessment process at your institution?

What existing infrastructures can you use to more fully involve the college community in assessment?

How might you engage your community at the institutional, program and course level in assessment design and reflection?
Evaluation
Evaluation

Link SLO assessment to Program Review

Examine effectiveness of student learning through dialogue and discussion

Design a committee focused on SLOs
INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT
What institutional practices connect to the assessment of student learning outcomes? Which existing institutional infrastructure or activities can be leveraged to offer additional opportunities for dialogue surrounding the assessment process?

MOVING FORWARD
What might your next steps be in your efforts to improve or develop effective methods of assessment?
Developing Action Plans

Identify the specific steps you could take to develop and/or improve the assessment of student learning at your institution. Consider each of the building blocks to assessment and identify next steps including:

- Engaging in reflection and research at the institutional, program, and course level
- Defining measurable SLOs
- Designing and conducting assessment
- Analyzing assessment data
- Reporting assessment results at the institutional, program, and course levels
- Improving practice and providing opportunities for professional development
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