

Laying the Foundation: Assessment Basics

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Session Outcomes

- Articulate the definitions of important assessment terms
- Articulate the purposes of assessment
- Articulate the different types of assessment
- Articulate the importance of anchoring assessment
- Articulate how to align outcomes

Definitions

- **Assessment:** Upcraft and Schuh (1996): “Assessment is any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness. (p. 18).

Upcraft, M. L. and Schuh, J. H. (1996). *Assessment in student affairs: A guide for practitioners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Definitions

- **Evaluation:** Upcraft and Schuh (1996): “Evaluation is any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness” (p. 19).

Upcraft, M. L. and Schuh, J. H. (1996). *Assessment in student affairs: A guide for practitioners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Definitions

- **Research:** The collection and analysis of data to build or confirm theory and conceptual foundations.

Definitions

- What are some examples of assessment, evaluation, and research which highlight the differences?

Definitions

- **Mission:** A mission clarifies an organization's purpose, or why it should be doing what it does (Bryson, 2004, p. 102).
 - *Example:* Dartmouth educates the most promising students of this generation to be leaders of the next generation with a faculty of scholars dedicated to teaching and the creation of new knowledge.

Definitions

- **Mission:** A mission clarifies an organization's purpose, or why it should be doing what it does (Bryson, 2004, p. 102).
 - *Example:* Student Affairs Planning, Evaluation and Research (SAPER) promotes a culture of assessment and planning within the Dean of the College Division by providing assessment education, consultation, and technical support.

Definitions

- **Goal:** A goal is an end result written in broad terms.
 - *Example:* As a result of participating in the Pathways to Success Program students will increase their academic achievement. *Here, academic achievement is a broad term.*

Definitions

- **Objective:** An objective is the intended effect of a service or intervention, but is much more specific than goals. It is facilitator centered.
 - *Example:* The Pathways to Success Program will help students increase their first year grade point average. (Compare to the similar goal statement, grade point average is a more specific outcome compared to academic achievement.)

Definitions

- **Outcome:** An outcome is the desired effect of a service or intervention, but is much more specific than goals. It is participant centered.
 - *Example:* As a result of participating in the Pathways to Success Program students will increase their first year grade point average. (Compare to the similar goal statement, grade point average is a more specific outcome compared to academic achievement.)

Definitions

- **Strategy:** A strategy is a means to achieving an outcome or goal.
 - *Example:* In order for students to increase their GPA they will participate in weekly study groups with trained facilitators in the traditionally difficult courses.

Definitions

- **Action step:** An action step is a way to implement a strategy to achieve an outcome or goal.
 - *Example:* If the strategy was to have students participate in study groups action steps might include identifying difficult courses, identifying students in those courses, contacting the students, selecting a study group leader, finding a meeting location, evaluating the experience, etc.

Hierarchy



Forms of Assessment

- Summative
- Formative
- Political

Forms of Assessment

- **Summative:** is used to determine if a particular organizational activity or function should be continued, enhanced, curtailed, or eliminated. These are used for accountability and strategic planning.

Scriven, M. (1967). The methodology of evaluation. In R. W. Tyler, R. M Gagne, and M. Scriven (Eds.), *Perspectives on curriculum evaluation, no. 1*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Forms of Assessment

- **Formative:** is used to improve organizational or institutional effectiveness and typically focuses on improving the processes which potentially lead to increased effectiveness.

Scriven, M. (1967). The methodology of evaluation. In R. W. Tyler, R. M Gagne, and M. Scriven (Eds.), *Perspectives on curriculum evaluation, no. 1*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Forms of Assessment

- **Political:** is used to communicate and defend a program to potential stakeholders, including professional staff, office staff, faculty, administrators, parents, taxpayers, and funders.

Brown, R. D., and Podolske, D. L. (1993). Strengthening program through evaluation and research. In R. B. Winston, S. Anchors, and Associates, *Student housing and residential life: A handbook for professionals committed to student development goals*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Forms of Assessment

- What are some examples of formative, summative, and political assessment?

Types of Assessment

- Increasing complexity and integration
- 
- Tracking Usage
 - Needs Assessment
 - Satisfaction Study
 - Outcomes Assessment
 - Benchmarking
 - Department/Unit Evaluation
 - Strategic Planning
 - System Effectiveness Evaluation

Uses for Assessment

- Which do you think you are likely to use most often and why?

Types of Assessment

- Increasing complexity and integration
- 
- Tracking Usage
 - Needs Assessment
 - Satisfaction Study
 - Outcomes Assessment
 - Benchmarking
 - Department/Unit Evaluation
 - Strategic Planning
 - System Effectiveness Evaluation

Anchoring Assessment

- Theory
- Established practice
- Professional standards
 - Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)
 - <http://www.cas.edu/>

Anchoring Assessment

- White Papers
 - *Learning Reconsidered*
 - <http://www.myacpa.org/pub/documents/LearningReconsidered.pdf>
 - *Student Learning Imperative*
 - <http://www.myacpa.org/sli/sli.htm>
 - *Spellings Report*
 - <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/pre-pub-report.pdf>
 - *AAHE Principles of Good Assessment*

Anchoring Assessment

AAHE Principles of Good Assessment

- The assessment of student learning **begins with educational values**.
- Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of **learning as multidimensional**, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
- Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have **clear, explicitly stated purposes**.

Anchoring Assessment

AAHE Principles of Good Assessment

- Assessment requires **attention to outcomes** but also and equally to the **experiences** that lead to those outcomes.
- Assessment works best when it is **ongoing** not episodic.
- Assessment fosters wider improvement when **representatives** from across the educational community are involved.

Anchoring Assessment

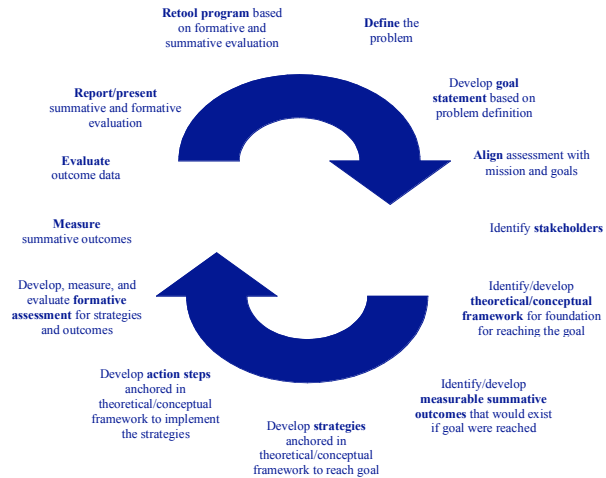
AAHE Principles of Good Assessment

- Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates **questions that people really care about**.
- Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is **part of a larger set of conditions** that promote change.
- Through assessment, educators **meet responsibilities** to students and to the public.

Alignment



Assessment Cycle



Politics of Assessment

- Control/ownership of the issue
 - Stakeholder involvement
 - Position on agenda
 - Resources
 - Communication
 - Timing
 - Spin
- Assessment @ Dartmouth

Human Subjects Review

- Federal mandate
 - “Human subjects research”
 - Assessment vs. generalizable research
 - Human subjects review boards (IRBs)
 - Exempt
 - Expedited
 - Full review
 - Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects
 - <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~cphs/>
- Assessment @ Dartmouth

Ethical Assessment

- Informed consent
 - Voluntary participation
 - No repercussions for non-participation
 - Confidentiality
 - Minimization of risk
- Assessment @ Dartmouth

Challenges to Assessment

- What are some of the challenges to engaging in assessment for you, your department, or the division?

Resources

- Student Affairs Planning, Evaluation, and Research
 - www.dartmouth.edu/~saper
- ACPA Commission for Assessment
 - <http://www.myacpa.org/comm/assessment/>
- NASPA Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Knowledge Community
 - <http://www.naspa.org/communities/kc/community.cfm?kcid=24>
- NC State Website
 - <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>
- <http://ahe.cqu.edu.au/glossaries.htm>