“Quizzes in Student Affairs?”:
The Benefits of Using Direct Assessments

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Learning Outcomes

As a result of attending this session, participants will be able to:

- Define direct assessments
- Identify several key principles related to direct assessments
- Describe three programs at UNCW that used direct assessments, which can then be compared and adapted for use at their own institutions
Participants in this session will have the opportunity to:

- Outline how such initiatives can be effectively designed, implemented, assessed, and applied
- Ask questions and share best practices about direct assessments
I understand the differences between direct and indirect assessments.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don’t Know/Not Applicable
Which of the following is most likely to be a direct assessment?

1. Needs Assessment
2. Satisfaction Survey
3. Quiz given after a Workshop
4. Focus Group
5. None of the Above
6. Not Sure
Indirect Assessment

- A primary goal of assessment is to deliver truthful and clear information that can be used to inform and improve outcomes (Walvoord, 2004).

- Indirect assessments partially address this objective
  - We use these as a means to gain knowledge of students’ perspectives.
  - The accuracy of the data is sometimes suspect, because the information is self-reported.
Direct Assessment

- Direct assessments are a good way to observe very tangible evidence of assessment outcomes.

- Suskie (2009) defines direct assessments as:
  - Using “structured, predetermined response options that can be summarized into meaningful numbers and analyzed statistically”
Direct Assessment

- Direct assessments indicate what participants actually know or are able to do.

- Direct assessment can take many forms:
  - Quizzes
  - Commercial tests
  - Rubrics
  - Portfolios

- Direct assessments are preferable for accountability and accreditation.
Indirect vs. Direct

- Indirect assessments often provide a snapshot of students’ perspectives on various programs.

- Direct assessments, however, are a means by which students can demonstrate the knowledge they have obtained.

  - For example, indirect assessments might ask students whether they think they learned certain principles at a workshop, whereas a direct assessment would test them on these principles.
My institution uses a sufficient number of direct assessments.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don’t Know/Not Applicable
I am aware of an area or program at my institution where I could incorporate direct assessments.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don’t Know/Not Applicable

- Strongly Agree: 69%
- Agree: 29%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 1%
- Disagree: 0%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%
- Don’t Know/Not Applicable: 0%
Three student affairs offices have conducted significant direct assessment initiatives:

- Housing and Residence Life
- CROSSROADS (Substance abuse prevention and education)
- Leadership UNCW
Direct Assessment #1: Housing and Residence Life

- The Residence Life staff used a series of direct learning outcome assessments (i.e., quizzes) to gauge learning on a variety of training topics including:
  - Crisis response, programming knowledge, diversity education, and student conduct procedures.

- RAs were given a 30 question test—four separate times—before, during, and after their training.

- The object of providing multiple post-tests was to gauge the RA’s retention of vital knowledge surrounding the training topics throughout the year.
Direct Assessment #1: Housing and Residence Life Results

- The following results were observed
  - RA’s scored an average of 9.8 points higher from pre-test to the initial post test
  - The second and third post-test results were slightly lower but consistent
    - Indicating a relatively strong retention of information
Direct Assessment #1: Housing and Residence Life Results

Results (cont.):

- RA’s from various staffs were scoring low from the beginning of the year to the end of the year on a consistent group of questions.

- Returning staff members scored significantly higher on the pre-test (+12.6 on average), but the average difference on all post-tests was very similar between the two groups.
Direct Assessment #1: Housing and Residence Life Action Steps

- Outcomes from the direct assessment:
  - The Residence Life staff used this information to redesign and strengthen Resident Assistant training by:
    - Focusing on improving individual training sessions, and providing feedback to returning presenters
    - Creating more consistent messages between full departmental training sessions and individual staff training sessions
    - Choosing better methods of instruction in some areas of training.
As a result of direct assessment, numerous improvements are being made in the RA training and retention process.

The direct learning outcomes are being used again this year with the hopes of beginning some on-line training modules geared towards returning staff members in the future.
CROSSROADS is dedicated to a harm reduction approach. It uses assessment and collaboration with on and off-campus partners to address substance abuse from an environmental management perspective.

CROSSROADS hires students as peer educators to promote substance abuse prevention on campus through educational programming, service, and outreach.

These students develop and execute comprehensive educational programs, facilitate presentations for classes, residence halls, and student organizations, advocate for a healthy campus environment, and act as a role model for other students.
Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS Assessments

- We evaluate the peer educators’ achievement of these goals through:
  - A direct assessment of content knowledge and behavior change
  - Presentation rubrics
  - Self-reports and peer rating of their skills
  - Observation and focus groups.
Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS Results

Findings Indicate:

- Peer educators learned most of the material covered during training, but we identified specific areas that needed more attention.
- The average overall score was 70%, with individual averages ranging from 50% to 86%.
- The most frequently missed questions were related to campus norms statistics, which were reinforced in additional trainings throughout the year.
Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS Action Steps

- After reviewing these data, the August 2010 peer educator training included a more in-depth training on drugs, as well as an interactive game to reinforce their knowledge.

- These learning activities supplement the training the peers receive through reading articles and developing programs.
A rubric is a “set of criteria and a scoring scale that is used to assess and evaluate students’ work” (Cambell, Melenzer, Nettles, & Wyman, 2000).

Rubrics can:
- ensure fidelity to intervention design
- formalize expectations for behavior
- evaluate the intended learning outcomes for peer educators.

Assesses facilitation skills, body language, non-judgmental approach, and content knowledge

Used to assist in training peer educators, provide immediate feedback to individual presenters and to evaluate and reflect on their growth over the semester.
# Direct Assessment #2: CROSSROADS

**Rubric for Facilitation Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Asks yes/no questions</td>
<td>• Asks open-ended questions</td>
<td>• Summarizes answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Asks questions that are too long or too complicated</td>
<td>• Gives class time to think/answer</td>
<td>• Makes connections to other students’ answers, video, previous discussion, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doesn’t wait for class to think/answer</td>
<td>• Re-phrases questions as needed</td>
<td>• Asks relevant follow up questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doesn’t repeat students’ answers</td>
<td>• Repeats students’ answers</td>
<td>• Asks follow-up questions which generate additional responses from audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speaks too quietly</td>
<td>• Maintains audience’s attention</td>
<td>• Engages audience by asking questions to explain content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reads from outline</td>
<td>• Explains content (signs/symptoms, protective strategies, etc)</td>
<td></td>
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Direct Assessment #3: Leadership UNCW Overview

- The Leadership UNCW program provides intentional learning opportunities for students to become engaged, ethical citizens by promoting inclusivity and self-empowerment.

- Incorporates collaboration among departments within Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.

- Increases the depth and breadth of co-curricular leadership education opportunities available to UNCW students.
Direct Assessment #3: Leadership UNCW

- Students have the choice to participate in one of over 25 different leadership workshops, or in a defined series of workshops, to work towards earning one of nine Leadership UNCW certificates.

- Direct assessments have been implemented in the workshop evaluation process.

- In 2009-2010, each workshop evaluation asked two direct assessment questions to specifically address the learning outcomes and key concepts of the workshop.
Direct Assessment #3: Leadership UNCW Results

- Overall, these direct assessment questions yielded responses that closely aligned with the material presented in the workshop.

- The only variations appeared between workshops in which different facilitators were in charge.

- While students seemed to understand the key concepts of the workshop curriculum presented, it is possible that the delivery of the curriculum varied for different presenters.
Direct Assessment #3: Leadership UNCW Action Steps

These findings resulted in two goals for the current program year:

1. Address the minor inconsistencies in responses based on the presenter, to ensure that students are receiving a common message

2. Improve the dissemination and completion of evaluations in each workshop
I am aware of an area or program at my institution where I could incorporate direct assessment.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don’t Know/Not Applicable

70%
29%
0%
0%
0%
2%
Sharing Best Practices…

- In what other ways have you conducted direct assessments on your campus?

- What are some possibilities that you have considered for other direct assessments?

- How can student affairs professionals be encouraged to conduct more direct assessments?
