

Assessing Student Learning and Development



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Presentation Overview

- Overview of Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA)
- Purpose and Importance of OBA
- Components of OBA
- Questions



Ask Yourself These Questions

- What decision did you make about your program last year?
- What evidence did you use to inform that decision?
- What was it that you were trying to influence about your program when making that decision with the stated evidence?

That is Outcomes-Based Assessment

- Most people do capitalize on their innate intellectually curiosity to find out what works
- Most people just don't articulate their intended end results (e.g., outcomes) ahead of time
- Most people don't document the decisions made based on their results
- Most people don't follow up later to see if their decisions made the intended improvement



The Assessment Cycle (Bresciani, 2003)

- The key questions...
 - What are we trying to do and why? or
 - What is my program supposed to accomplish?
 - How well are we doing it?
 - How do we know?
 - How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
 - Do the improvements we make work?

The Iterative Systematic Assessment Cycle

Adapted from
Peggy Maki, Ph.D. by
Marilee J. Bresciani, Ph.D.





Assessment (Bresciani, 2006)

- Most importantly, it should be
 - Understood = by professionals and students
 - Inclusive = involve as many professionals as possible
 - Meaningful = professional (i.e., expert) driven
 - Manageable = takes into account varying resources
 - Flexible = takes into account assessment learning curves
 - Truth-seeking/objective/ethical
 - Iterative and systematic
- Inform decisions for continuous improvement or provides evidence of proof
- Promote a culture of accountability, of learning, and of improvement

What are you already doing that could be considered outcomes-based assessment?

Why is outcomes-based assessment important?



The Purpose

- Outcomes-Based assessment does not exist for assessment's sake
- It is taking what most of us already do, and making it systematic
- It is NOT personnel evaluation



The Purpose, Cont.

- Its purpose is to reflect on the end result of doing - - are we accomplishing that which we say we are?
- All types of assessment have value (e.g., needs, utilization, satisfaction, learning and development) but we have to pay attention to evaluating student learning



Purpose of Assessment, Cont.

(Bresciani, 2002)

- 1) Reinforce or emphasize the mission of your unit
- 2) Improve programs and/or performance
(formative)
- 3) Compare a program's quality or value to the
program's previously defined principles
(summative)
- 4) Inform planning
- 5) Inform decision making



Purpose of Assessment, Cont.

(Bresciani, 2002)

- 6) Inform policy discussions at the local, state, regional, and national level
- 7) Evaluate programs, not personnel
- 8) Assist in the request for additional funds from the University and external community
- 9) Assist in the re-allocation of resources
- 10) Assist in meeting accreditation requirements, models of best practices, and national benchmarks



Purpose of Assessment, Cont.

(Bresciani, 2002)

- 12) Celebrate successes
- 13) Manage expectations
- 14) Reflect on the attitudes and approach we take in improving teaching and learning
- 15) Create a culture of continuous improvement
– a culture of accountability, of learning, and of improvement

Drivers of Outcomes-Based Assessment (Ewell, 2001)

- To improve the underperforming student
 - Competency Movement in Business and Industry
 - International Trade Agreements
 - Affecting higher Education - Competition for new providers in Postsecondary or Tertiary Education
 - Transnational Education or Globalism
 - Massification of Education



Drivers, Cont.

- Federal Government Conversation, 1985
 - The Higher Education Re-authorization Act Testimonies in USA, 2002 and 2006
 - Response to NCLB Legislation
 - Regional Accreditation – flexibility
 - CRAC – 2003, 2004
 - Both documents focus on student learning
- National Commission on the Future of Higher Education
- Public Information about Performance
 - Transparency of outcomes and results



Drivers, Cont.

- Bologna Declaration of 1999
- Other Research on Collaborative/Integrated Learning
 - NSSE Deep Learning Project
 - National Research Council
 - AAC&U Greater Expectations
 - NASPA/ACPA Learning Reconsidered
 - Sweden and Norway

What purposes resonate most effectively with you and your colleagues?



Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Plan

(Bresciani, 2006)

- Program Name
- Program Mission or Purpose
- Goals
 - Align with your strategic plan, college goals, division goals, or department goals
- Outcomes (**Intended Outcome**)
 - Student Learning and program
 - (**Link to the Division Strategic Plan**)
- Planning for Delivery of Outcomes
 - Concept Mapping
 - Your strategic plan objectives
- Evaluation Methods (**Measure or method of Assessment**)
 - With criteria for each outcomes (**Criteria for Success or Target**)
 - Add Limitations, if necessary
 - **Link to Division Indicators**



Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Plan, Cont.

- Implementation of Assessment Process
 - Identify who is responsible for doing each step in the evaluation process (list all of the people involved in the assessment process at each step of the process)
 - Outline the timeline for implementation
 - Identify who will be evaluated
 - Identify other programs who are assisting with the evaluation
 - Identify who will be participating in interpreting the data and making recommendations and decisions

Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Report

- Program Name
- Outcomes
- Results (**Findings or Assessment Results**)
 - Summarize the results for each outcome
 - Summarize the process to verify/validate the results
- Decisions and Recommendations (**Action Plan or Use of Results**)
 - Summarize the decisions/recommendations made for each outcome

Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Report, Cont.

- Decisions and Recommendations, Cont.
 - Identify the groups who participated in the discussion of the evidence that led to the recommendations and decisions
 - Summarize the suggestions for improving the assessment process
 - Identify when each outcome will be evaluated again (if the outcome is to be retained)
 - Identify those responsible for implementing the recommended changes



What parts of an assessment plan
do you already have in place?

What portions do you need
to refine?



Mission Statement

- “In just a few sentences, a mission statement needs to communicate the essence of your organization to your stakeholders and to the general public.” - Fund Raising Made Simple
- It can come from your strategic planning initiatives or from your Division, institution, or unit plan
- It can also come from your professional organization (e.g., ACUHO-I, ACU-I, CAS)

Goals



- They are broad, general statements of [1] what the program wants students to be able to do and to know or [2] what the program will do to ensure what students will be able to do and to know.
- They are evaluated directly or indirectly by measuring specific outcomes related to the objective.
- They are related to the mission and objectives of the department and college in which the program resides, and to the mission and objectives of the University.



Example Program Goal

- To provide students with opportunities to develop their leadership skills



Other Examples

1. Expand the academic emphasis in the residence halls
2. To encourage life long learning
3. Students will appreciate their diverse environment
4. Students will learn sound study skills



Other Examples, Cont.

- To provide students with opportunities to develop their communication skills.
- To provide students with opportunities to develop ethical decision making systems.
- To provide students with opportunities to develop global and cultural awareness.



Other Examples, Cont.

- To provide quality services
- To provide responsive services
- To provide excellent customer service
- To be attentive to parental requests

Ask these Questions about your Goals

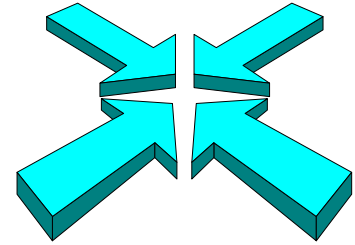
- Is it meaningful?
- Is it important?
- Is it a broad, general statement of either what the program wants students to be able to do and to know or what the program will do to ensure what students will be able to do and to know?
- Is it related to my department or program mission and objectives?
- Is there an accompanying outcome to measure this objective?



Write Down or Refine an
Appropriate

Goal for
Your Program

Outcomes



- Outcomes are more detailed and specific statements derived from the goals.
- These are specifically about what you want the **end result** of your efforts to be. **It is not what you are going to do to the student**, but rather it describes how you want the student to demonstrate what he or she knows or can do.
- They use active verbs such as articulate, illustrate, conduct, synthesize, analyze, etc.

Additional Assistance

Constructing Learning Outcomes: Bloom's Taxonomy

- <http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/researchskills/dalton.htm>
- http://www.kent.wednet.edu/KSD/MA/resources/blooms/teachers_blooms.html
- <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/handouts/bloom.html>
- Terms: construct, locate, dissect, categorize, compose, invent.....



Outcomes, Cont.

- Make a conscious decision to articulate outcomes that infer pre- and post-tests
- Make a conscious decision to be held responsible for behavior
- Remember that your outcomes may look different for your various constituents - - you may want to start with your more manageable population first, such as your Para-professionals



Outcomes, Cont.

- Regardless of whether your goals are top down (**Division Strategic Plan**) – the outcome is where you operationalize the goal. Therefore, the outcome or end result of the doing allows you to “personalize” the goal to your own program.



Example Outcome

Students will demonstrate responsible leadership by organizing a successful event that their group's membership deems important and relevant to the residential community .



Examples of Outcomes

1. Students will be able to compare and contrast various leadership styles.
2. Students will be able to identify when students are cheating.
3. Students will be able to locate all of the items they need for a balanced diet.
4. Students will demonstrate care when using the recreation center equipment.



Other Example Outcomes

1. Resident advisors will apply conflict resolution skills in halls.
2. Resident advisors will facilitate the steps in decision making among residents who demonstrate an inability to make responsible choices.
3. Students that live in the residence halls will articulate an understanding of personal safety practices.



Other Example Outcomes

1. Students who are greeted at the front counter will report that they received accurate information delivered in a friendly manner.
2. Students who read the monthly newsletter report that it contains accurate and timely information.
3. Students will be seen two hours after walk-in.

Questions to Ask Yourself About Outcomes

- Is it measurable/identifiable?
- Is it meaningful?
- Is it manageable?
- Who is the target audience of my outcome?
- Who would know if my outcome has been met?
- How will I know if it has been met?
- Will it provide me with evidence that will lead me to make a decision for continuous improvement?



Write or Refine one of

Your Learning Outcomes

After you have articulated your outcomes...

- Make sure that you have a program that can actually deliver the outcome (e.g., planning)
 - Also known as curriculum or project alignment or outcome/concept mapping

Before Choosing an Assessment Method...

- Think about what meeting the outcome looks like
 - Be sure to describe the end result of the outcome by using active verbs
 - This helps articulate the criteria for identifying when the outcome has been met
- Describe how your program is delivering the outcome
 - There may be clues in the delivery of the outcome that help you determine how to evaluate it




Another Approach...

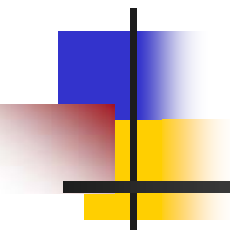
- Diagram or map which activity, program, project, or workshop is delivering or is producing each intended outcome.
 - Once you have identified how you are delivering each outcome, you can list out the activities and literally map them to the outcomes, which they are delivering.

An Example of an Outcome Delivery Map

	Activity/Project/Workshop 1	Activity/Project/Workshop 2	Etc.	Etc.
Outcome 1				
Outcome 2				
Outcome 3				
Etc.				



**Determine if the activities,
workshops, and/or projects,
are useful and appropriate in
achieving your stated
outcome.**



Identify the embedded artifact or naturally occurring assessment technique in the delivery of the activities, workshops, and/or projects.



Choose an Outcome and

Work through this Process



Before Choosing an Assessment Method, Cont.

- Think about collecting data
 - from different sources to make more meaningful and informed decisions for continuous improvement (*e.g., surveys, observations, self-assessment*) and for triangulation of data
 - that you believe will be useful in answering the important questions you have raised
 - that will appeal to your primary constituents or to those with whom you are trying to influence

Measurement Methods

(Palomba and Banta, 1999)

- Evidence of learning- basically two types
 - Direct-methods of collecting information that require the students to display their knowledge and skills
 - Indirect- methods that ask students or some one else to reflect on the student learning rather than to demonstrate it

Another Way to Look at It (Ewell, 2003)

- There are **naturally occurring assessment techniques** (e.g. project-embedded assessment methods such as essays, observed behavior, student interactions, student debates)
- There are those **designed** as a means to evaluate (e.g., surveys)

Some Methods That Provide Direct Evidence



- Student work samples
- Collections of student work (e.g. Portfolios)
- Capstone projects
- Project-embedded assessment
- Course-embedded assessment
- Observations of student behavior
- Internal juried review of student projects
- External evaluations of student performance
- Document analysis (e.g., meeting minutes, policies, handbooks)

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Direct Evidence Cont.

from Peggy Maki, Ph.D.

- External juried review of student projects
- Externally reviewed internship
- Performance on a case study/problem
- Performance on problem and analysis (Student explains how he or she solved a problem)
- Performance on national licensure examinations
- Locally developed tests
- Standardized tests
- Pre-and post-tests
- Essay tests blind scored across units

Some Methods That Provide Indirect Evidence

adapted from Peggy Maki, Ph.D.

- Alumni, Employer, Student Surveys
- Focus groups (depending on the interview protocol, this could be used as direct evidence)
- Exit Interviews with Graduates
- Graduate Follow-up Studies
- Percentage of students who go on to graduate school
- Retention and Transfer Studies
- Job Placement Statistics

Indirect Evidence Cont.

- Faculty/Student ratios
- Percentage of students who study abroad
- Enrollment trends
- Percentage of students who graduate within five-six years
- Diversity of student body
- CAS Standards



Choosing A Tool

- It is important to choose tools based on what you are trying to assess, not on what tool is most appealing to you
- Consider what will influence your constituents
- Consider what will provide you with information to make decisions
- Be able to justify your choice of tool and method



Things to Consider When Choosing an Instrument

- What outcome(s) are you measuring?
- What criteria will determine if the outcome is met?
- Who is being assessed? How often do I have access to them? Do I know who they are?
- What is my budget?
- What is my timeline?
- What type of data is most meaningful to me: direct/indirect and qualitative/quantitative



Things to Consider, Cont.

- Who will analyze the data and how?
- Who needs to see this data?
- How easily can I fit this method into my regular responsibilities? (every day, week, semester, year)
- Who needs to make decisions with this data?
- How will I document the evidence and the decisions made from that evidence?



Choose an Outcome and

Work through this Process



Re-Casting Services

- In some cases, you may need to re-cast your services so that you can provide that which delivers the end result or provides the opportunities to assess student development and learning.
- Or you may just need to sit down and articulate the criteria that describes that which you want the student to demonstrate (i.e. What does problem solving look like?)



Closing the OBA Loop

- Briefly report methodology for each outcome
- Document where the students are meeting the intended outcome
- Document where they are not meeting the outcome
- Document decisions made to improve the program and assessment plan
- Refine assessment method and repeat process after proper time for implementation

Take-Home Messages

- You do not have to assess everything you do every year.
- You don't have to do everything at once-start with 2 or 3 learning outcomes
 - Think baby steps
 - Be flexible
 - Acknowledge and use what you have already done.
 - Assessment expertise is available to help you evaluate your program better - -not to evaluate your program for you
 - Borrow examples from other institutions to modify as appropriate
 - Time for this must be re-allocated
 - We allocate time according to our values and priorities

Resources

- Each Other
- University Planning and Analysis (UPA) Assessment website
 - <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/>
- Undergraduate Assessment website
http://www.ncsu.edu/undergrad_affairs/assessment/assess.htm
- Higher Learning Commission Website
<http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/>



One Minute Evaluation

- What is the most valuable lesson that you learned from this workshop?
- What is one question that you still have?
- What do you think is the next step that your division/program needs to take in order to implement systematic program assessment?

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