

Assessment Terminology



GREENSBORO

Division of
Student Affairs

Office of Assessment

ASSESSMENT

Any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness.⁴

RESEARCH VS. ASSESSMENT

In the 1960s and 1970s it was routine to use the term “student affairs research” to refer to both assessment and evaluation efforts. The term proved to be confusing, mainly to faculty, who had a more narrow definition of research.⁴ Although they share many processes in common, they differ in at least two major respects:

Assessment

- Guides good practice
- Has implications for a single institution
- Can accommodate limited time and resources

Research

- Guides theory and conceptual foundations
- Has broader implications for student affairs and higher education
- Requires extensive time, resources, and expertise

RETENTION

A measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. For four-year institutions, this is the percentage of first-time bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall.⁶

ATTRITION

Loss of students through a means other than graduation.

PERSISTENCE

Refers to the act of continuing towards an educational goal (i.e., earning a degree or staying enrolled).

EVALUATION

Any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness.⁴

Formative Evaluations

Those used to improve organizational or institutional effectiveness and may also be used to help solve problems and to enhance decision making directed toward improvement (focuses on feedback).

Summative Evaluations

Used to determine if a particular organizational activity or function should be continued, enhanced, curtailed, or eliminated. In other words, summative evaluations are conducted for purposes of accountability and strategic planning (makes decisions on quality, worth).

CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT

An environment focused on continuous improvement and where assessment is valued and regular part of business processes.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

The systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning.⁵

MULTIPLE MEASURES

The assessment technique of using more than one assessment to measure impact.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME

Student centered language that documents what students will learn as part of the experience.

VALUE ADDED

The effect of programming on students. It is focused on the knowledge, skills, and ability gained through an experience over time.

STUDENT LEARNING

A comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development, processes that have often been considered separate, and even independent of each other. Learning, then, does not mean exclusively or primarily academic instruction, the acquisition of disciplinary content or classroom learning – though the rich definition of learning certainly incorporates and includes all of those things.³

Direct Methods

Any process employed to gather data that requires students to **display** their knowledge, behavior, or thought processes.¹

Indirect Methods

Any process employed to gather data that asks students to **reflect upon** their knowledge, behaviors, or thought processes.¹

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Examine what a program or process is to do, achieve, or accomplish for its own improvement and/or in support of institutional or divisional goals; generally numbers, needs, or satisfaction driven.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Examine cognitive skills that students develop through department interactions; measurable, transferable skill development. These are statements that indicate what students (participants) will know, think, or be able to do as a result of an event, activity, or program.

USE OF RESULTS

Detailed explanation of how assessment will be used to make improvements.

CO-CURRICULAR

Activities that occur outside of the formal academic curriculum.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

Objectives

Reflect important administrative initiatives or improvements a department has identified for the academic year; describe specific ways by which division goals will be accomplished.

Activities

Support an objective or a division goal; an activity is not measured; it is a task that contributes to meeting an objective.

Measures

Identify the evidence and methods you will use to determine whether you are achieving objectives.

Findings

The quantifiable data that result when measures are completed.

Action Plans

Strategy for improvement and potential tasks based on the results of findings for the following year.

THE COUNCIL FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF STANDARDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (CAS)

A consortium of professional associations concerned with the development and promulgation of professional standards and guidelines for student support programs and services in institutions of higher learning.²

CAS STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Published criteria and related statements designed to provide college and university support service providers with established measures against which to evaluate programs and services. A standard uses the auxiliary verbs “must” and “shall,” while a guideline uses the

verbs “should” and “may.” Standards are essentials and printed in bold, guidelines are not.²

SELF-STUDY (OR PROGRAM REVIEW)

An internal process by which institutions and programs evaluate their quality and effectiveness in reference to established criteria such as the CAS standards. This process, often used for institutional and specialty accreditation purposes, results in a formal report presenting the findings of the internal evaluation implemented by institutional employees. For accreditation purposes, this report is then validated by a visiting, external committee of peers from comparable institutions or programs.²

SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE (SAG)

An operational version of the CAS Standards and Guidelines designed to provide users with an assessment tool that can be used for self-study or self-assessment purposes. A SAG is available for each functional area for which a CAS standard exists.²

For additional information about assessment in Student Affairs contact **George Still, Director of Assessment** at phone: **336.334.4961**, email: g_still@uncg.edu or visit the Student Affairs Assessment Website: sa.uncg.edu/assessment.

¹Direct Measures of Learning. (n.d.) *Baseline powered by CampusLabs*. Retrieved from baselinesupport.campuslabs.com/entries/22125917-Direct-Measures-of-Learning

²Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2014). *Glossary of CAS terms*. Retrieved from cas.edu/glossary

³National Association of Student Personnel Administrators & Association of College Student Educators International (2004). *Learning reconsidered A campus-wide focus on the student experience*. Washington, DC NASPA/ACPA

⁴Schuh, J. H. & Upcraft, M. L. (1996). *Assessment in student affairs A guide for practitioners*. San Francisco Jossey-Bass.

⁵Walvoord, B. E. (2004). *Assessment clear and simple A practical guide for institutions, departments, and general education*. San Francisco Jossey-Bass.

⁶National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d). *Glossary retention rate*. Retrieved from nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/index.asp?id=772

Assessment Types



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AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT/ PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

the use of real-world tasks to measure learning/impact

BENCHMARKING

using baseline comparative data to compare performance against existing best practice data or use of aspirant institutions

Norm

a criterion that is established to which data is compared

COMPARATIVE DATA

data source using two or more comparable groups (race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) for data analysis; most often used with a control and experimental design assessment

COMPETENCY

use of specific skill/ability to measure student growth or development

CONTENT ANALYSIS

using existing documentation (letters, manuals, forms, etc.) to conduct data analysis of meaning, perspective, and/or change

COST EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

determining the longevity of a program based on the cost of administering the program against benefit to students

FOCUS GROUPS

uses a small group 6–10 people to discuss a specific topic/series of questions to gather information or confirm findings from another instrument

INTERVIEW

in person form of data collection where one person asks questions of another person

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

pre-determined goals for an office that measures impact/success

LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

measuring the impact our services, programs and facilities have on students' learning, development, and student success

LONGITUDINAL ASSESSMENT

collecting data on the same individuals over time to demonstrate long-term impacts

META-ANALYSIS

combining multiple data collections into on dataset and conducting analysis

MIXED METHODS

the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in research

NATIONAL STANDARDS ASSESSMENT

using nationally accepted standards to assess our programs and services (e.g. national assessment inventory–EBI, CAS standard self-assessment, departmental review by consulting group)

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

identifying needs of our students (e.g. student perceived, research supported).

OBSERVATIONS

the process of monitoring/watching students growth and progress toward learning outcomes

PORTFOLIO

compilation of students work sample to demonstrate growth and development

PRE/POST TEST

measuring student knowledge entering an experience against their knowledge after that experience

QUALITATIVE DATA

data collection style focused on using open-ended questions

QUANTITATIVE DATA

data collection style focused on likert scale/closed response questions

REFLECTIONS

practice where students record their thoughts and feelings about an experience

RUBRIC

scoring tool that using gradations of quality to measure quality (poor to excellent)

SATISFACTION ASSESSMENT

measuring the level of student satisfaction with our programs, services, and facilities

STUDENT CULTURES AND CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS ASSESSMENT

assessing the collective perception of campus and student experience (e.g. campus climate, academic environment, residential quality of life)

TRACKING

monitoring who uses our programs, services and facilities (e.g. raw numbers, frequency, age, class standing, gender, race, and residence)

Measurement Terminology



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DEPENDENT VARIABLE

the comparison variable or object of comparison in data analysis

EFFECT SIZE

the difference between mean of experimental group and control group

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

the object that is stable or point of comparison for data analysis

INTER-RATER RELIABILITY

the standard where two raters review the same data and reach the same results/conclusions

GENERALIZABILITY

Does the results from an assessment be generalized to other participants in other situations

MEAN

the average computed by summing all data points and dividing by number of observations

MEDIAN

determining the middle case and ranking scores around that number

RANDOM SAMPLE

sample drawn from the population where everyone in the population has sample chance of being included

STRATIFIED SAMPLE

sample drawn in a way where inclusion is based on specific group memberships/demographics

BIASED SAMPLE

increasing the likelihood of specific members of the population to be included in the sample

RELIABILITY

the consistency, precision, and dependability of measurements

VALIDITY

determining where the assessment measures what it was designed to measure

Construct validity

does construction of the assessment measurement offer valid interpretation for variances in performance

Content validity

content analysis that demonstrated that the claimed content and actual content align

Internal validity

does measures in an assessment that measure similar things provide similar results

RESPONSE RATE

the number of people who completed a survey

SATURATION

the point in qualitative research where a researcher determines there is no new data information to be gathered

STANDARD DEVIATION

the measured difference from the mean where 68% of cases fall within one standard deviation

STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

the degree that relationships are unlikely to occur based on sampling error