

Assessment 101:

Measuring Student Learning as
an Act of Curiosity and Care

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Introductions



- Who are you?
- What department?
- How many years have you been at APU?
- What do you hope to gain from today's workshop?

Workshop Learning Outcomes

Faculty will be able to:

1. Understand the key elements of good student learning assessment.
2. Apply course design strategies and techniques that will lead to deeper student learning and good assessment practices.
3. Be conversant about assessment best practices and share this knowledge with other faculty colleagues.





What is Good Assessment?

“Good assessment leads to collective reflection and action.” (Allen, 2004, p. 11)

I think assessment means...

- Turn to your neighbor and discuss what assessment means to you.
- What are some of your assumptions about the assessment of student learning?



Assessment Defined

- “Assessment is part of a process that identifies what we want students to learn, provides them with good opportunities to learn those things, and then assesses whether they have learned those things.”



(Suskie, 2009, p. 11)

Assessment is NOT Rocket Science!



- “ Assessment, for most faculty, requires a major change in how they view course and curriculum design – focusing on the learner, rather than the instructor. Assessment is not rocket science, and it does not have to be the tail that wags the dog.”

(Allen, 2005, ix)

Assessment is a Learner-Centered Process of:

- Establishing **clear, measurable expected outcomes** of student learning.
- Ensuring that all students have **sufficient opportunities** to achieve those outcomes.
- Systematically **gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence** to determine how well student learning matches our expectations.
- Using the resulting information to understand and **improve student learning**.

(Suskie, 2009, p. 4)



Haven't We Always Assessed Student Learning?



- Oral and written exams have been part of education for education for hundreds of years.
- Only in the past century has there been a systematic study of the theory and science of assessment.
- Assessment is still being defined today.

Perfect Assessment Does Not Exist



- We can not determine with complete confidence exactly what students have and have not learned.
- We can look at samples of their behavior – what they say, write, produce, perform – and estimate what they truly know.
- We must strive to make assessment as truthful and reasonable as we are able.

(Suskie, 2009)

Course-Level Assessment



- **Not just assigning grades** but reflecting on how students as a whole are achieving the course learning goals.
- Multiple sections of the same course might consider developing common criteria to evaluate common goals.
- Rubrics are helpful for course assessment.

Assessment and Grades

- “Grades alone are usually insufficient evidence of student learning for assessment purposes.”



(Johnstone, Ewell, & Paulson, 2001, as cited in Suskie, 2004)

Assessment and Grades



- Grades alone **do not usually provide meaningful information** on what students have learned and not learned.
 - Criteria for a “B” for one student may differ than criteria for another student.
- Grading and **assessment criteria may (appropriately) differ.**
 - Grades may be based on evidence of learning and/or student behaviors not related to course learning goals.

Assessment and Grades



- Grading **standards may be vague or inconsistent.**
 - Faculty may want students to think critically but base grades largely on factual recall.
- Grades **do not reflect all learning experiences.**
 - Grades can be based on performance but not on critical thinking or writing skills.
- Grades can be useful if they are based on direct evidence of student learning (exams, projects, papers, rubrics).

(Suskie, 2009, pp. 10-11)

Program-Level Assessment



- **Embedded Course Assessment:**
Course assignments can be used to assess course and program goals.
- **Portfolios and Capstone Experiences:** Provide a holistic view of what students have learned throughout the program.

University-Level Assessment

APU's Nine University Student Learning Goals:

1. Explain the relevance of Jesus Christ and His teachings to their major discipline, personal and professional values, ethics, and commitments.
2. Demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills.
3. Critically evaluate, integrate, and apply knowledge.
4. Achieve quantitative, technical, linguistic, and information literacy.
5. Demonstrate competence in the content and methods of their chosen discipline or professional program.



University-Level Assessment (continued)


6. Practice skillful collaboration within small group settings.

7. Apply acquired competencies through service in various community contexts.

8. Articulate their own intellectually informed values and cultural perspectives as well as those of others.

9. Demonstrate respectful and equitable relationships with persons from diverse backgrounds in a manner that values differences.



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Why is Student
Learning
Assessment
Important?

It's About the Heart



- “Since student learning is at the **heart of most college missions**, the assessment of student learning is a major component of the assessment of institutional effectiveness.”

(Suskie, 2009, p. 15)

New Expectations for Student Learning



- Faculty are **focusing more on process than content** to consider new ways of student learning.
- Faculty are examining the **effects of changes in curriculum**.
- Faculty are **engaging and reflecting** on what they and their students are accomplishing.
- Faculty **value student mastery of learning objectives** and assessment gives evidence of this value.

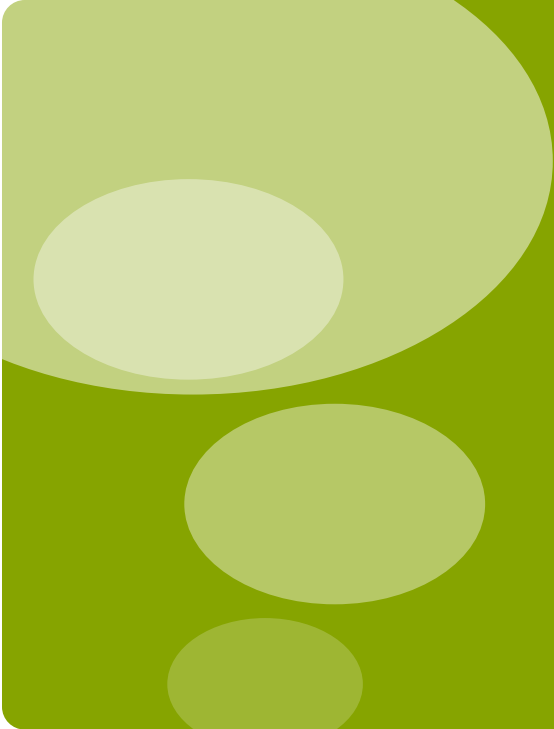
(Allen, 2005)

Discussion

- **Think of an assignment in a course you have taught.**



- Did the assignment help students learn important goals or relatively unimportant goals of the course?
- What would you do the same or differently to ensure that the assignment reflected a desired learning goal?



Strategies for Making Student Learning Assessment Manageable

Assessment Planning



- Assessment plans **take time to develop.**
- Once developed, they should **save faculty time** in the long-run.
- They should be **meaningful, manageable, and sustainable.**
- They should be **ongoing, not episodic.**
- They should focus on important learning goals that **lead to the improvement of student learning.**

(Allen, 2004)

Four Characteristics of Useful Assessment



1. They **yield reasonably accurate and truthful information on what students have learned**, so that we can use the assessment results with confidence to make plans and decisions.
2. They have a **clear purpose**, so that assessment results are valued and don't end up sitting on a shelf.
3. They **engage faculty** and staff, so assessment **becomes a useful** part of the fabric of campus life.
4. They **flow from and focus on clear and important student learning goals**, so the results provide information on matters the university cares about.

(Suskie, 2009, p. 37)

Where Do I Start?



- It is important to clarify the relationship between faculty learning expectations and what students do in their courses.
- Begin with one or two learning outcomes that you believe your students are already mastering.
- By clearly aligning desired outcomes with course assignments, faculty can identify and correct the gaps.

Begin With the End in Mind



- Developing quality Student Learning Outcomes is critical.
- What do you want your students to know, do, or value as a result of your course/program?
- How will you know that a student has learned what you intended them to learn?
- At the end of your course/program, what does a successful student “look” like?

Highly Developed Student Learning Outcomes



- Clearly stated in terms of the learner.
- Use action verbs.
- Observable and measurable.
- Are written at appropriate level of rigor for type of program.

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Cycle



Assessment as an Integrated, Collaborative Learning Experience



- Learning is deeper and longer-lasting when students can see connections among their learning experiences.
- **Integrated Learning Goals:** relationship among program and course goals.
- **Curricular Alignment:** students should have opportunity to reach learning goals.
- **Collaboration:** Learning goals, curricula, and assignments designed by faculty and students.
- **Embedded Assessment:** Assignments embedded into individual courses.

Intentional Course Design



- Intentionality is key to meeting desired student learning outcomes.
- Connect course assignments to maximize desired learning outcomes.
- You can not assess what you do not design.
- Use a variety of assignments and assessments to tap into the various learning styles of your students.
- Provide opportunity to give feedback to students on their progress on the SLOs.

Aligning Course Design



- “Aligning teaching and grading with course objectives reinforces the alignment with program objectives with the curriculum, promotes student development in agreed-upon directions, and provides opportunities for embedded assessment.”

(Allen, 2004, p. 50)

Learning Outcomes/ Curriculum Rubric



	SLO 1	SLO 2	SLO 3	SLO 4
Self-awareness Paper	x		x	
Mid-term Exam		x		x
Group Project		x	x	
Final Presentation	x	x	x	x

Course Planning Grid for One Objective



Course Objective	Activity	Assessment
<p>Students can write research reports in APA style.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will work in groups to apply the APA style manual to a set of simulated research report sections created to include APA style violations. Whole-class discussion will ensure that all violations have been identified.• Students will conduct a research project and will iterate drafts of the sections of their research reports, based on peer feedback collected on checklists specifying APA style requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objective exam questions on the second quiz and the final will examine student knowledge of APA style guidelines.• The grade for student research reports will include a measurement of conformity to APA style.

Formative and Summative Assessment



- **Formative assessment** seeks evidence of student learning along the progression of students' studies.
- **Summative assessment** seeks for evidence of student learning at the end of students' studies.
- A drawback of summative assessment is that it occurs at the end of the course or program and students may not receive the feedback they need to improve their performance.

Embedded vs. Add-on Assessments



- Assessment embedded in courses provide evidence of student learning and their progress in achieving learning desired learning goals if evidence is collected.
- They require less work than add-on assessments.
- Examples include:
 - Service learning
 - Senior theses and capstones
 - Group projects and presentations
 - In-class writing assignments and presentations
 - Senior recitals

Direct Evidence of Student Learning



- “Direct methods prompt students to represent or **demonstrate their learning** or produce work so that observers can assess how well students’ work or responses fit institutional or program-level expectations.”

(Maki, 2010, p. 158)

Examples of Direct Evidence of Student Learning



- Capstone experiences and portfolios scored with a rubric.
- Written work, performances, and presentations scored with a rubric.
- Summaries and assessments of electronic class discussion threads.
- Classroom response systems (clickers).

Indirect Evidence of Student Learning



- “Indirect methods, such as inventories, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and focus group meetings, **capture students’ perceptions of their learning** and the efficacy of educational practices and the educational environment that supports student learning.”

(Maki, 2010, p. 159)

Examples of Indirect Evidence of Student Learning



- Course grades (without a rubric)
- Assignment grades if not accompanied by a rubric
- Placement rates
- Alumni perceptions
- Student ratings of their knowledge
- Student, alumni, employer satisfaction
- Honors, awards, and scholarships earned by students and alumni

Making Sense of Assessment Data



- Rubrics are versatile tools that can be used to provide formative feedback and grade to students and assess courses or programs.
- Utilizing scoring rubrics helps to make assessment manageable.

Rubric Advantage



- “Rubrics allow faculty to assign grades based on the achievement of objectives rather than on how well students perform compared to each other, so their use encourages students to help each other learn.”

(Allen, 2004, p. 143)

Holistic Rubric for Assessing Student Essays



Rating	Description
Inadequate	The essay had at least one serious weakness. It may be unfocused, underdeveloped or rambling. Problems with the use of language seriously interfere with the reader's ability to understand what is being communicated.
Developing Competence	The essay may be somewhat unfocused, underdeveloped, or rambling, but it does have some coherence. Problems with the use of language occasionally interfere with the reader's ability to understand what is being communicated.
Acceptable	The essay is generally focused and contains some development of ideas, but the discussion may be simplistic or repetitive. The language lacks syntactic complexity and may contain occasional grammatical errors, but the reader is able to understand what is being communicated.
Sophisticated	The essay is focused and clearly organized, and it shows depth of development. The language is precise and shows syntactic variety, and ideas are clearly communicated to the reader.

Analytic Rubric for Peer Assessment of Team Member Projects



	Below Expectations	Good	Exceptional
Project Contributions	Made few substantive contributions to the team's final product	Contributed a "fair share" of substance to the team's final product	Contributed considerable substance to the team's final product
Leadership	Rarely or never exercised leadership	Accepted a "fair share" of leadership responsibilities	Routinely provided excellent leadership
Collaboration	Undermined group discussions or often failed to participate	Respected others' opinions and contributed to the group's discussion	Respected others' opinions and made major contributions to the group's discussion

(Allen, 2004, p. 139)

Analytic Rubric for Grading Oral Presentations



	Below Expectation	Satisfactory	Exemplary	Score
Organization	No apparent organization. Evidence is not used to support assertions. (0-2)	The presentation has a focus and provides some evidence that supports conclusions. (3-5)	The presentation is carefully organized and provides convincing evidence to support conclusions. (6-8)	
Content	The content is inaccurate or overly general. Listeners are unlikely to learn anything or be misled. (0-2)	The content is generally accurate, but incomplete. Listeners may learn some isolated facts, but they are unlikely to gain new insights about the topic. (3-5)	The content is accurate and complete. Listeners are likely to gain new insights about the topic. (6-8)	
Style	The speaker appears anxious and uncomfortable, and reads notes rather than speaks. Listeners are largely ignored. (0-2)	The speaker is generally relaxed and comfortable, but too often relies on notes. Listeners are sometimes ignored or misunderstood. (3-5)	The speaker is relaxed and comfortable, speaks without undue reliance on notes, and interacts effectively with listeners. (6-8)	
Total Score				

Rubric Tips



- It might be easier to adopt an existing rubric and make it your own.
- Rubrics should be tested before you finalize them.
- If two faculty apply the rubric to an assignment, inter-rater reliability can be determined.
- Once the data has been collected and analyzed, it can be used to make changes to improve student learning.

Suggestions for Using Rubrics in Courses



- **Hand out the grading rubric with the assignment** so students will know your expectations and how they will be graded. This should help your students master your learning objectives by guiding their work in appropriate directions.
- **Use a rubric for grading student work and return the rubric with the grading on it.** You'll save time writing extensive comments!
- **Develop a rubric with your students for an assignment.** Students usually create higher standards for themselves!

Suggestions for Using Rubrics in Course (cont.)



- **Have students apply your rubric to some sample products before they create their own.** The ability to evaluate is an important skill for them to learn!
- **Have students exchange paper drafts and give peer feedback using the rubric;** then give students a few days before the final drafts are turned in to you.
- **Have students self-assess their products using the grading rubric and hand in the self-assessment with the product;** then faculty and students can compare evaluations.

(Allen, 2004, p. 144)

Summary



- Defined good assessment
- Talked about learner-centered education
- Examined assessment vs. grades
- Explored planning for assessment
- Developing and aligning course design to meet learning goals
- Understanding direct and indirect measures
- Utilizing rubrics for embedded assessment

Student Learning Assessment as a Act of Curiosity and Care



What's Next?

- What is your primary takeaway from today's workshop?
- What do you plan to do differently as a result of what you've learned?



Helpful Resources

Allen, M. J. (2004). *Assessing academic programs in higher education*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.

Angelo, T. A. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.

Maki, P. L. (2010). *Assessing for Learning*. Stylus: Sterling, VA.

Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing Student Learning*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.



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