

Assessment at Indiana State University: A Conceptual Framework

Approved by the University Assessment Council 10.16.15

The mission of the University Assessment Council is to guide and support ongoing assessment activities that promote and support continuous improvement of programs across the university, with the goal of improving student learning and support services. The Council is charged with identifying assessment issues, developing policy recommendations, facilitating and monitoring assessment activities, and promoting the adoption of best practices in assessment.

Assessment

Assessment is defined as one or more processes that identify, collect, and prepare data to evaluate and improve the attainment of student outcomes and program/unit objectives. Effective assessment uses relevant direct, indirect, quantitative and qualitative measures as appropriate to the objective or outcome being measured. Appropriate sampling methods may be used as part of an assessment process.

Guiding Principles

ISU is committed to realizing a culture of assessment that includes:

- A unified, coherent and systematic program that includes clearly defined objectives and outcomes developed by the faculty and staff and is consistent with the institutional mission.
- A recognition that responsibility for the development of assessment procedures, methods, and intervention/alterations based on results is held by the faculty and staff of ISU and should be consistent with and complementary to broader institutional efforts.
- A recognition that assessment is intended to assess student learning, not individual faculty and staff performance.
- An emphasis on continuous improvement through a process of gathering, interpreting and using information to improve student achievement and support services.
- Assessment efforts are expected to focus on program quality as well as related activities that contribute to the development of students
- Data-driven feedback for academic and student support programs, while recognizing the need for different approaches.
- For example, individual classroom assessment provides information that is useful in understanding the instructional environment and may contribute and help inform broader departmental assessment efforts.
- Assessment data aggregated at the program/office level will form the most basic unit used for quality assessment and improvement.
- Attention to cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity.

Purposes of Assessment

Indiana State University has established the following statement of purposes to support a shared understanding of student outcomes assessment. The purposes of assessment include,

but are not limited to, the following:

- To increase student achievement in both curricular and co-curricular areas.
- To ensure the integrity of awarded degrees.
- To evaluate and document the competence of graduates of Indiana State University, with competence defined not only as expertise within a discipline, but also defined as the attainment of learning outcomes defined in the University's program of Foundational Studies (undergraduate) and Graduate Council Student Learning Outcomes (master's and doctoral).
- To focus the institutional mission on quality and level of student achievement.
- To improve instruction, curriculum, and other teaching-related activities.
- To improve service delivery, effectiveness, and other operational activities.
- To promote faculty and staff development and to improve programs, program planning, and development.
- To facilitate articulation of the University's core learning outcomes.

Stages of Assessment

The Assessment Council has established four categories to describe the various stages of assessment development in order to evaluate program progress and determine how best to provide support:

1. Formative – the program/office is in the early phases of assessment: the unit may or may not have learning objectives documented; the unit has assigned assessment efforts only to an individual; assessment work has been limited to episodic activity, typically in response to external demands.
2. Emerging – the program/office is working on assessment: the unit has created learning objectives and mapped courses or activities to those objectives; the unit has identified the types of evidence to be collected and may have collected some data; assessment work involves only a couple of faculty or staff members.
3. Mature – the program/office has been working on assessment for some time: the unit has identified and is collecting evidence; there is some indication of using findings to make changes; assessment work involves multiple faculty or staff; the program/office is moving toward a culture of assessment.
4. Exemplary – the program/office has a well-established and effective assessment process: assessment data are being used to refine and improve programs and activities; assessment work includes all or most of the faculty or staff members; there is clear indication of a culture of assessment.

Assessment Goals and Instruments

- Programs and offices will be responsible for the development of individual mission statements and statements of program goals and student learning objectives.
- Programs/offices should employ appropriate measures of student achievement that will yield information its faculty or staff can use to evaluate and improve its program.
- Programs/offices will be the sole arbiter of which data and/or instruments will be used to

establish the quality of their respective units.

- Academic programs are encouraged to use both direct measures (performance appraisals, portfolios, exams, etc.) of student learning as well as indirect measures (student satisfaction, retention, grades, etc.). Student support units are encouraged to use both direct measures (e.g., usage statistics) of program effectiveness as well as indirect measures (e.g., user satisfaction surveys).
- As a general statement such data/instruments may include, but are not limited to, the following: surveys of or interviews with employers of recent graduates; rates of admission to graduate or professional schools; student portfolios; capstone courses; senior theses or projects; and visits by external committees. Data/instruments for nonacademic units may include skill development inventories; cost/benefit analyses; and external reviews.

Appendix A Terms and Definitions

Recognizing the need for a common language to facilitate discussion on, and work related to, assessment, the following terms have been defined:

Assessment -one or more collaborative processes that identify, collect, and prepare data to evaluate the attainment of student outcomes and program objectives. Effective assessment uses relevant direct, indirect, quantitative, and qualitative measures as appropriate to the objective or outcome being measured. Appropriate sampling methods may be used as part of an assessment process.

Evaluation – One or more processes for interpreting the data and evidence accumulated through assessment processes. Evaluation determines the extent to which student outcomes and program objectives are being attained. Evaluation results in decisions and actions regarding program improvement.

Performance Criteria – Specific measurable statements identifying the performance(s) required to meet the outcome; confirmable through evidence.

Program Educational Objectives – Broad statements that describe what graduates are expected to attain within a few years after graduation.

Student Outcomes – A description of what students are expected to know and able to do by the time of graduation. These relate to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that students acquire as they progress through the program.

Appendix B Roles & Responsibilities

All university constituents contribute to improving student learning. Their roles and responsibilities are delineated below:

Students

- Be aware of the expectations for learning in their courses and programs
- Participate in institutional and course/program-specific assessment activities

- Provide feedback on assessment practices and processes through the student representative to the Assessment Council.

Faculty/Staff

- Identify student learning outcomes for courses in their discipline/area
- Devise and assess activities that enable students to demonstrate mastery of course outcomes
- Use the results of assessment to continuously improve student learning
- Communicate course and program outcomes to students (by, for example, including them in syllabi, handbooks, websites, and so on).
- Participate in the development and implementation of assessment plans for their programs, including the activities listed as “Assessment Committee” responsibilities

Department/Unit Assessment Committee

- Develop and implement the assessment plan for their respective discipline/area, including:
- Identifying appropriate student learning and other outcomes for programs in their discipline/area
- Determining the schedule for assessing each outcome
- Devising and assessing activities that enable students to demonstrate mastery of the outcomes
- Analyzing the results of these activities and using them to devise means to continuously improve student learning/the student experience
- Ensure that required information is entered into Taskstream by established deadlines
- Communicate assessment findings to all members of the department/unit

Department/Unit Chairs

- Facilitate regular conversations about student learning, including success stories and best practices, as well as actions to improve performance
- Ensure that student learning outcomes link to departmental goals and to the university mission and priorities
- Ensure that expectations for student learning are accessible on departmental websites and in appropriate publications
- Identify a point person(s) who can provide assessment assistance to faculty/staff, ensure that activities are completed in a timely manner, and ensure that all required information is entered into Taskstream by established deadlines
- Communicate assessment findings to all members of the department/unit
- Monitor the assessment requirements of any specialized accreditors

Deans/Directors

- Request regular updates on efforts to assess and improve student learning
- Ensure that student learning outcomes link to college goals and to the university mission and priorities

- Ensure that expectations for student learning are accessible on college websites and in appropriate publications
- Identify a point person(s) who can provide assessment assistance to chairs, ensure that activities are completed in a timely manner, and ensure that all required information entered into Taskstream by established deadlines
- Develop and implement a recognition program to encourage attention to improving student learning
- Ensure that processes are in place to meet the needs of any specialized accreditors.

Assessment Coordinator

- Help cultivate a culture that embraces assessment as a key to improving student learning
- Provide assessment guidance and support to the campus community
- Provide regular and accessible communications about assessment requirements, deadlines, resources, and progress
- Oversee the Taskstream repository of assessment reports
- Assist the university in understanding and meeting accreditors' requirements for the assessment of student learning

Vice Presidents

- Hold units accountable for developing and implementing assessment plans in the major/program and Foundational Studies by established deadlines
- Ensure that outcomes link to division goals and to the university mission and priorities
- Request regular updates on efforts to assess and improve outcomes, particularly those related to student learning
- Provide necessary resources to faculty and staff so they may accomplish the work of assessment
- Develop and implement a recognition program to encourage attention to improving outcomes

President

- Provide regular opportunities for vice presidents to discuss outcomes in their areas, particularly those related to student learning
- Hold direct reports accountable for having appropriate assessment processes in place, for collecting reliable evidence of performance, and for continuously improving assessment results
- Disseminate information about student and institutional performance to the university's constituents

Board of Trustees

- Facilitate regular conversations about academic quality, including student learning outcomes
- Hold the university accountable for having processes in place to improve learning and other outcomes