

Why We Have Assessment Data And What To Do With It
Assessment Day 2012 (August 7)
Karen Bendersky, Psychological Science
Jason H. Stover, Mathematics

Instructions:

Please discuss the topic below and record any ideas, solutions, or questions the topic elicits.
Return this packet to Karen or Jason at the end of the session.

We will have the GC Assessment Team compile responses and post them on an accessible web site.

RESPONSES to Discussion Packet

1. What are our program standards/goals?

Do all students need to meet a minimum standard? What is average, poor?

1. Yes. This standard should be set within a department/program.
2. For some a specific GPA is required, for others grades of C or better, etc.
3. It should vary on the basis of department goals/objects.
4. Theoretically, there is a course/program goal, it implies students have/can met/meet it. But typically we recognize “success” not with all students, but a portion (statistically significant, or substantial proportion). Likewise, some would argue with diverse types of students/learners, that there is diversity in capability in learning. So is it possible that some cannot meet the standard? Depends on the standard and the student.
5. Average, poor, etc. is dependent on discipline/program—may be partially dictated by outside authorities.
6. Students will exhibit critical thinking skills through the proper application of the scientific method. Will identify the best ways to present data. Develop skills for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Present scientific ideas in oral format. Will learn the foundational concepts of biology.
7. Yes, minimum 70%. Average is 80%, poor is under 70%.
8. According to whatever assessment means are used.

2. How do we show continuous improvement?

Readjust goals to reflect room for improvement? Do we set the bar higher?

1. Outcomes readjust—not bar higher but shift.
2. Before we change/readjust goals, there has to be confidence in the data collected—i.e., there needs to be a cycle of data collection that shows a consistent trend. Then, either readjust the goals or set the bar higher as needed—based upon that particular assessment.
3. I guess I feel dishonest about adjusting goals with the purpose of showing improvement. If goals are adjusted, there should be a program/departmental justification besides just making us “look good.”
4. Set the bar higher or add other, more complex, innovative goals.

3. What changes are we willing to make if data reflect problems?

Stop assessing students (“customers”) who do not “take advantage of the service” (e.g., those who don’t study, who do not attend class, ...)

1. I wonder if (when appropriate) sharing some data/research with students themselves my help address some issues. For example, I not only show grade distributions after exams/assignments but also talk about research on how texting in class or attendance contributes to grades, etc. Student involvement can be often powerful.
2. A better approach is to find out why the problem exists and what the problem means for the class/program. Is the problem causing the program/class to be ineffective with meeting goals? If so, it’s those not taking advantage of the service that maybe we need to target more. So create a new goal of reaching those students.
3. Some of these answers are systemic and institutional. Don’t stop assessing just because goals aren’t met.
4. We must change delivery/content/pace etc

4. Can we quantify our discipline?

Some disciplines might not want to quantify outcomes.

1. Yes. MT as a profession has methods for quantifying subjecting topics such as self-esteem—what is observable and measurable that represents self esteem.
 - a. -eye contact
 - b. -positive statements about self
 - c. -engagement level, etc!
2. To some extent, yes. But with qualifications. This quantification is limited in its use.
3. We cannot always quantify an outcome; for those that can’t, they need to examine qualitative methods.
4. I think well documented qualitative data can be just as informative. If it is assessing goals appropriately and shows student learning I do not think all/any assessment measures must be quantitative.

5. Are we willing to advise the administration to make unpopular adjustments?

Learning issues may be systemic not departmental (cell phones in classrooms, Facebook, too much emphasis on extracurricular activities). Do we want to recommend campus changes?

1. I would imagine that it would be helpful to address these issues as a department, and as a collective unit seek change at the admin level—this shows not only support for change but also collegiality.
2. Yes, our mission is upheld by many of our goals. Ultimately student learning is our job. Why would we exist if we couldn’t meet that goal? In this political/economic atmosphere—we’d have to make adjustments to survive and justify our existence.
3. Yes!!
4. No

6. Other considerations...

List alternative considerations and your discussion points below.

-No responses