

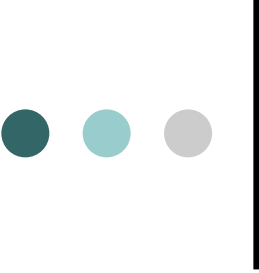


An Assessment Primer + A Preview

Virginia Assessment Group

Spring Workshop

March 18, 2005



With gratitude to Linda Suskie,
author of a wonderful resource
used to prepare this primer –

*Assessing Student Learning:
A Common Sense Guide*

Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing (2004)



A Quick Look at...

- What assessment is (and isn't)
- Who/what is driving assessment
- What good practices are
- What forms assessment may take

- Concepts we need to understand
- Language we need to grasp and use



Evaluation vs. Assessment

Evaluation:

- Using information to make an informed judgment

Assessment:

- Judgment as part of the assessment process

Evaluation:

- Determining the quality or worth of a program

Assessment:

- Using outcomes for accountability and continuous improvement



Grading vs. Assessment

- Grading and assessment **criteria** appropriately differ (e.g., attendance)
- Grading **standards** may be vague or inconsistent (or, at best, idiosyncratic)
- Grades alone may give insufficient **information** on student strengths and weaknesses
- Grades do not reflect all learning experiences (whole curriculum)



Research vs. Assessment

Action research:

1. Plan →
2. Act →
3. Observe →
4. Reflect →

Academic assessment:

1. Establish outcomes
2. Provide learning opportunities
3. Assess learning
4. Use results to improve future cycles



Assessment is the ongoing process of:

- Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning (or service).
- Ensuring that students (or service users) have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes.



as well as...

- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning (or service) matches our expectations.
- Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning (or service).



Goals express...

- What you aim to achieve
- Your destination, not your path.

Examples

- Help students become better writers.
- Prepare students to become leaders.
- Increase educational opportunities for deserving students.



Learning Outcomes state...

- The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that students take with them from a learning experience.

Examples

- Write with clarity, unity, coherence, and correctness.
- Conduct and present sound research on metropolitan issues.



Objectives articulate...

- Detailed aspects of goals or tasks to be accomplished to achieve a goal
- The means to the end, using concrete action words.

Examples

- Raise \$8 million in alumni gifts.
- Explain why each planet except Earth cannot support human life.



Problem & Suggestion

The Problem

There is still no standard language for assessment terms.

The Suggestion

Until there is more consensus, align with definitions from SACCS, disciplinary accreditors, and your own institution.



Drivers of Assessment

- A true revolution in education:
learning-centered paradigm
- Federal requirements for regional accreditation
- Disciplinary accreditation
- Calls for accountability
- Supports for faculty and students to improve their performance



Good assessments...

- Give us **useful** information
- Give us **reasonably accurate, truthful** information
- Are **fair** to all students
- Are **ethical** and protect the privacy and dignity of those involved
- Are **systematized**
- Are **cost effective**, yielding value that justifies the time and expense we put into them



Good Assessment Practices

- Focus on teaching and learning (or service and satisfaction) rather than on assessment
- Set clear expectations
- Be flexible
- Minimize the burden of assessment
- Start small
- Start with successes
- Involve students (or service clients)
- Use assessment results appropriately



Reasons for Assessment

Formative

- Improve teaching and learning (or service and satisfaction)
- Used while learning is taking place
- Focus on **feedback** and adjustment

Summative

- Document learning or service and satisfaction
- Occur **at the end** of the course or service period
- Focus on sum/total, with little feedback



Types of Evidence

Direct

- Tangible, visible, self-explanatory
- Scores and pass rates on licensure / certification exams
- Portfolios of student work
- Capstone experiences

Indirect

- Signs, indicators, less convincing
- Grades
- Student self-ratings
- Student / alumni satisfaction with learning
- Honors, awards, and scholarships



Types of Assessment

Objective

- No professional judgment to score correctly – usually one correct answer
- Multiple-choice test
- Matching items
- True-false questions

Subjective

- Need professional judgment to score – many possible answers of varying quality
- More assessments are of this type



Subjective Assessments...

- Assess many important skills that objective tests cannot.
- Assess skills directly.
- Promote deep, lasting learning.
- Allow for nuances in scoring.
- Can capture a lot of information on a broad range of learning goals in a relatively short time.



Types of Assessment

Traditional

- Have been around for a long time
- Usually controlled, timed exam setting
- Objective tests
- “Blue book” essay questions
- Oral examinations

Performance

- Ask students to demonstrate skills
- If “real life” tasks, are called authentic
- Field experiences
- Studio assignments
- Projects
- Term papers



Types of Assessment

Quantitative

- Structured, pre-determined response options that can be summarized into meaningful numbers and analyzed statistically
- Some audiences find quantitative results more convincing

Qualitative

- Flexible, naturalistic methods that are usually analyzed by looking for recurring patterns and themes
- Often underused, underappreciated
- Can give fresh insight and help discover problems and solutions



Other Terms You May Hear

- **Embedded** – program assessments embedded into coursework – no need to convince students to participate
- **Local** – created by faculty and/or staff at the institution
- **Published** – published by an organization external to the institution and used by other institutions



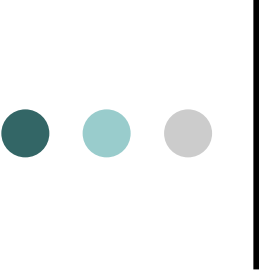
Assessment Perspectives

- Competency-based (or criterion-referenced) – compare results to an established standard
- Benchmarking – compare results to those of peers
- Best-practice (or best-in-class) – compare results to the best of peers



Assessment Perspectives

- Value-added (or pre-post) – compare results to performance at program (or course/experience) entry
- Longitudinal – compare results of current students against peers in prior classes
- Capability (or potential) – compares results against student's capability

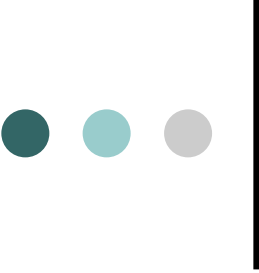


Enough of the primer ...
On to the preview!



Dr. Ephraim Schechter – Administrative Assessment

- Morning session – Part I
 - The Basics: Definitions, Measures, and Objectives
- Afternoon session – Part II
 - Making It Work: Hints, Tips, and Tools



Morning Choices for Academic Assessment

- Writing Measurable Objectives
 - Steve Zerwas and Jim Calliotte, Old Dominion University
- Creating Rubrics and Prompts
 - Worth Pickering, Old Dominion University, and Jean Yerian, Virginia Commonwealth University



Afternoon Choices for Academic Assessment

- Using Embedded Assessment Techniques

- Karen Gentemann and Ying Zhou, George Mason University

- Communicating Assessment Results

- Keston Fulcher and Amy Thek, Eastern Shore Community College



Other details of the day...