

Benefits and Common Concerns of Assessment



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Benefits of Assessment

Assessment can facilitate improvement through a variety of venues. When faculty members are directly involved in the development, implementation, and analysis of assessment activities, a number of specific benefits result.

BECAUSE ASSESSMENT CAN	FACULTY CAN
Because assessment can provide information about the knowledge and skills students have as they enter a course...	Faculty can design instruction to target the knowledge and skills students should have upon finishing a course and better determine the levels of thinking or reasoning appropriate for the course
Because assessment can provide reliable data on student learning...	Faculty can rely less on the comments that appear on student evaluations as indicators of their success in teaching
Because assessment can make available richer data about the effects of the curriculum or teaching methods...	Faculty can engage in more productive conversations about the status of student achievement and make better decisions about how it might be improved.
Because assessment can provide evidence that faculty make a difference in student learning...	Faculty can enjoy greater satisfaction in their work as educators.
Because assessment can offer a larger view of student needs and accomplishments...	Faculty can identify directions for future instructional development

* Adapted from *Program-based Review and Assessment, (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) Fall 2001*



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Common Concerns in the Implementation of Assessment

Concern	Answer
Does assessment effect my academic freedom?	No it does not. Assessing outcomes is about faculty determining whether students are learning in areas they deem most important, and then using the information to make changes where appropriate. WCC does not dictate how faculty choose to deliver content or grade students.
Will this be more work for faculty?	In the beginning it can be. As we work to set up efficient systems, the goal is to spend the majority of the time committed to meaningful discussions on results and what improvements if any can be implemented based on the results.
Will assessment results be used to evaluate faculty?	Absolutely not. This process is about assessing the effectiveness of programs and courses not individuals.
Is the purpose of Assessment to find fault?	No, this is not about finding fault with programs or courses; It is about continuous improvement for student learning. It is about agreeing on what is most important in our courses, communicating that to all stakeholders, and finding out what's working and what's not. Good assessment results can and should be used to celebrate success, market programs, motivate faculty and students. Less than satisfactory assessment results should lead to improvements in programs and courses.
Will the results have complete statistical validity and will they be useful?	The short answers are no and yes. While the results will not have the kind of statistical validity or reliability that would make a statistics professor happy, they will most certainly be useful to give faculty members meaningful information about how their courses are doing at achieving the goals they themselves defined. Achieving greater validity and reliability would require that a carefully selected random sample of papers be scored by a team of trained evaluators, thus minimizing the direct participation in the process by the vast majority of faculty.

Adapted from Common Concerns About Outcomes Assessment, (Antelope Valley Community College, Lancaster, California)



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