The Assessment Cycle and Our “Why”

What is our "Why?" This question motivates and explains everything we do at Idaho State University, from academics to the non-academic support units. The answer is simple: students are our "Why." The ISU faculty community is committed to student learning and success and assessment is one of the ways we evaluate learning and use what we found to make changes.

The assessment cycle is shown below and involves faculty in all our programs working together. As a new faculty your program or the general education courses you teach may already have an assessment, curriculum map, and actionable data that is being used to make changes. Departments may have someone who serves as an assessment coordinator or it may be the chair or faculty colleagues who help design and implement the plan. Assessment involves continuous improvement and your participation is a valuable part of planning, collecting, and using data.

This document will provide you with the basics but there is more information available at the assessment website. In addition, the Office of Assessment provides workshops each semester for all faculty and, if requested, for individual departments.

Terminology and be confusing and this document provides you with a glossary on some of the language used to describe the assessment process.
Your department may be at any one of these steps. You can support assessment by learning which steps your department is working on.

If you teach a required class in the curriculum, it is important to review the department’s curriculum map so you know which objectives and their accompanying student learning outcomes are covered in your courses.

If you teach a General Education class, access and review the website for the General Education Requirements Committee (GERC) to find out more about the Gen Ed program at ISU.

Departments regularly review not only their data but also the assessment plan and curriculum maps.

Once a program completes all 8 steps, it will always return to step 6 and then re-assess changes. Programs also regularly review, if not revise, items in steps 1 – 5.

Examples of changes programs made in response to their assessment data is shown on the next page.
How Programs Used Assessment Results at Idaho State University

| Changed the Curriculum 82% | Revised the Process 62% |
| Updated Equipment or Materials 56% | Revised Advising Procedures 49% |
| Changed Pedagogy 47% | Revised Learning Outcomes 44% |
| Reorganized the program 0% | Revised Strategic Plan 0% |

**SOURCE:** University Assessment Review Committee (UARC) Annual Report 2017 results from 68 programs

**CREATED BY**

Idaho State University Office of Assessment

assessment@isu.edu
Anatomy of Assessment-the Program Level

There are three kinds of programs at Idaho State University: those with external accreditation, the General Education program, and programs without external accreditation. Data is collected to be used for change but programs also have minimal reporting at the University level. Annual reports are due November 1 each year for all programs with and without external accreditation. GERC also requires a separate annual report which is also due on November 1.

Coordinate with your assessment coordinator or department chair to provide them with information and data. Only one report per program is required. If there are multiple sections of a Gen Ed class, only one report should be submitted for all sections and instructors. The diagram on the next page will help you understand the category for your assessment efforts. You may find that you fit in two categories if you teach in the General Education program and teach required courses in your program. The Program-Level Assessment Handbook can help.

Anatomy of Assessment-Accreditation and Program Reviews

The courses you teach may or may not be part of the curriculum map that encompasses all the required courses. If your course is required, you will need to communicate with your department to understand the expectations for assessment. Often, new faculty provide new ideas that can be incorporated into classes. Departments should support new faculty with examples of activities along with the objectives and student learning outcomes.

New faculty should also ask where their department is within the accreditation cycle for their program, if it is accredited. If your program does not have external accreditation, it will help to see when the self-study period is for the program. The institution provides a template for programs without external accreditation to help them prepare a self-study report, bring in external reviewers, and respond thoughtfully to the ideas from the self-study and review.

Anatomy of Assessment-the Course-Level

Faculty have objectives and student learning outcomes for the courses they teach. If more than one faculty teach the course, the objectives, student learning outcomes, activities, data collection, and use of the data for changes is a collaborative effort. The Course-Level Assessment Handbook can help.

Conclusion

Committed faculty engage in assessment because it helps us achieve our “why.” The Office of Assessment is here to help you at any stage. The Office of Assessment’s philosophy is that the best assessment is the one we use to make change. This means you may need help streamlining your work, interpreting your data, or determining, or building skills via a workshop. The students are our “why” and our faculty are the “how” we achieve quality programs and education.
ANATOMY OF ASSESSMENT

Accredited Programs
- Objectives Based on Accreditation Standards
- Student Learning Outcomes Created for All Objectives
- Curriculum Map for Required Classes Shows where Each objective and SLO is Evaluated

General Education Program
- Objectives 1-6 Determined by State Board Faculty Group
- ISU Objectives 7-9 Determined by Campus Faculty Group
- State Board of Education and ISU Faculty Create SLOs

Programs without External Accreditation
- Objectives Determined by Program Faculty
- Student Learning Outcomes Created for All Objectives
- Curriculum Map for Required Classes Shows where Each objective and SLO is Evaluated

Collect assessment data and complete annual reporting: Programs upload a brief annual report to the assessment website, and General Ed classes are uploaded to General Education Requirements Committee.

All programs and General Education courses use assessment results to implement changes to improve student learning & then assess the changes and start the cycle again.
## Appendix A: Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Assessment is deciding what we want our students to learn and making sure they learn it. (Suskie, p 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment: Add-On</td>
<td>Add-on assessment refers to any ungraded assessment activity. Except for licensure or certification exams, add-on assessments should never be the centerpiece of an assessment program. (Suskie, 279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment: Analytic</td>
<td>Analytic assessment involves assessing different aspects of student performance, such as mechanics, grammar, style, organization, and voice in student writing. (Jönsson et al)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment: Holistic</td>
<td>Holistic assessment means making an overall assessment, considering all criteria simultaneously. (Jönsson et al)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing the Loop/Using Assessment Results</td>
<td>Closing the Loop&quot; encompasses analyzing results from outcome assessments, using results to make changes to improve student learning, and re-assessing outcomes in order to determine the effect those changes had on student learning. (NOVA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Assessment</td>
<td>Direct assessment involves looking at actual samples of student work produced in our programs. These include capstone projects, senior theses, exhibits or performances. (Skidmore College)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Assessments</td>
<td>Embedded assessments are course assignments and learning activities that can provide evidence of student achievement of program, general education, or institutional learning goals. (Suskie, p157)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Formative Assessment** | The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. More specifically, formative assessments help:
- students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work
- faculty recognize where students are struggling and address problems immediately
Formative assessments are generally low stakes, which means that they have low or no point value. (Carnegie Mellon University Eberly Center) |
| **Indirect Assessment** | Indirect assessment is gathering information through means other than looking at actual samples of student work. These include surveys, exit interviews, and focus groups. (Skidmore College) |
| **Objectives** | Objectives describe broad learning goals and concepts (what you want students to learn) which are expressed in general terms (e.g., clear communication, problem-solving skills, etc.) (ISU, p 9) |
| **Objectives: State Board of Education & ISU** | The Idaho State Board of Education developed six state-wide learning objectives (GEM 1 – 6) with input from faculty representing their institutions as Gen Ed State-Wide Reps. Idaho State University developed ISU Objectives seven through 9 for the institution. |
| **Rubric** | A rubric is a written guide for assessing student work. At a minimum, it lists the things you are looking for when you assess student work. (Suskie, p 190) |
| **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)** | Outcomes are the specific skills, values, and attitudes students should exhibit that reflect the broader objectives (e.g., for students in a freshman writing course, this might be “students are able to develop a cogent argument to support a position. (ISU, p 9) |
Summative Assessment

The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.

Summative assessments are often high stakes, which means that they have a high point value. Examples of summative assessments include:

- a midterm exam
- a final project
- a paper
- a senior recital

Information from summative assessments can be used formatively when students or faculty use it to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent courses. (Carnegie Mellon University Eberly Center)

References


Carnegie Mellon University Eberly Center (n.d.). Formative vs Summative Assessment
Retrieved February 17, 2022, from https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/formative-summative.html


