

Brushing Up on Assessment: Developing Plans for Success

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A Definition of “Assessment”

Assessment: The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning, academic achievement, and institutional effectiveness (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Types of assessment include university, general, liberal, program, course, and classroom.

Benefits of Assessment—

Focusing on Improvement First

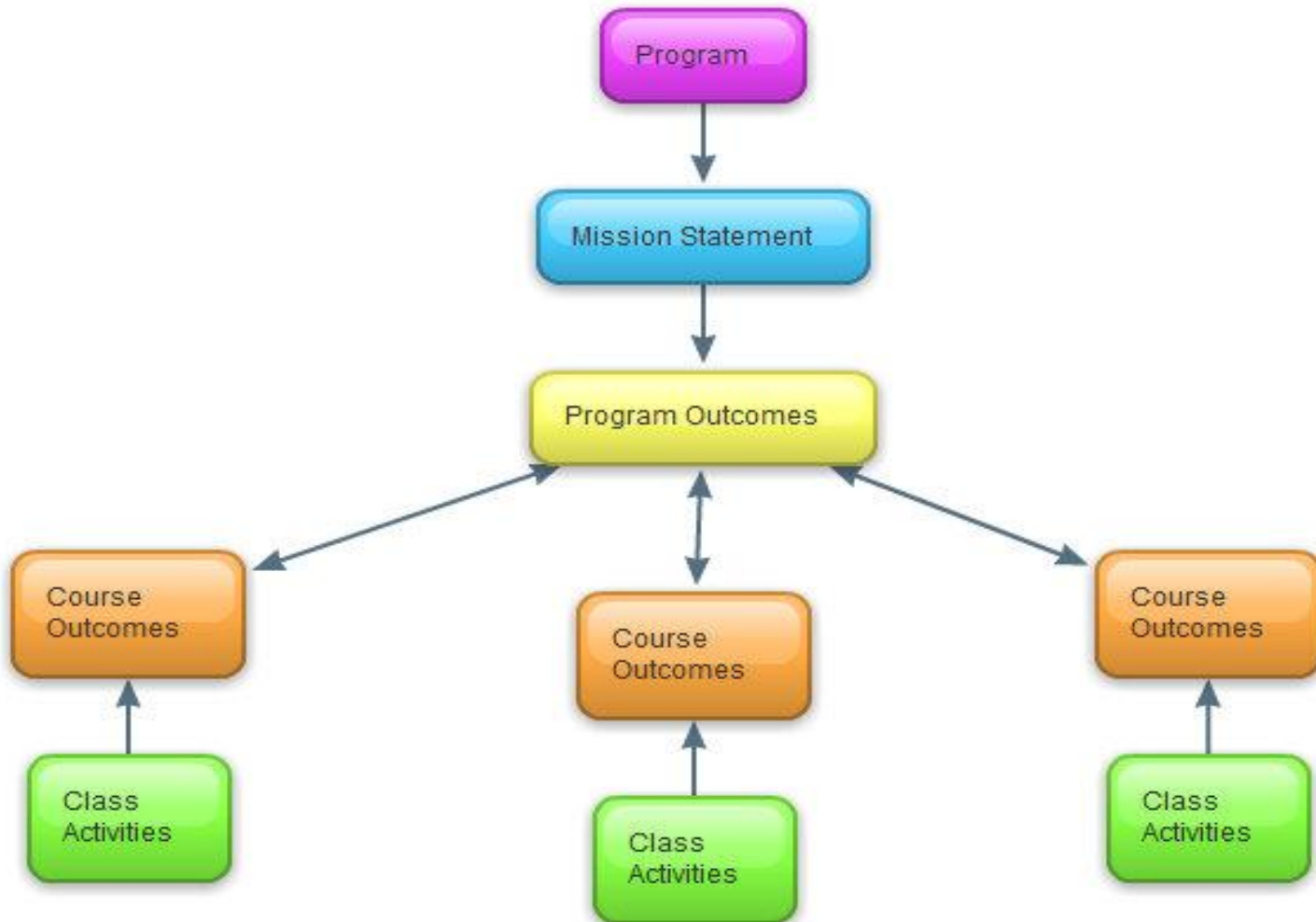
- A powerful tool for improvement and potentially a powerful tool for change—basis for planning, budgeting, curriculum change, student support
- A way to help students achieve your vision for them
- A way to help students take control of their learning
- A way to create a climate of caring, learner-centered engagement, and creativity

Assessment—A Tool to Answer Questions About Student Learning

“Therein lies the well spring of an institutional commitment to assessment—intellectual curiosity about what and how well our students learn...Assessment is the means of answering those questions of curiosity about our work as educators.”

Peggy L. Maki, *Assessing for Learning*,
2010

Picturing Your Program



The Assessment Plan--Step #1: Mission and Outcomes

- Academic Program Mission—Identifies the specific purpose of a program and what it hopes to do for students
- Program Student Learning Outcomes—4 to 6 general statements that identify the knowledge, skills, or values that students should possess after completing the program; these should map to course outcomes

Mission Statement Basics: Content

- Should represent the ideals and values of the faculty teaching the courses in the program
- Should state the purpose of the program
- Should identify who the program will serve (occupational students, transfer students, baccalaureate students, etc)
- Should identify how the unit will function to achieve its purpose
- Should identify what students will be prepared for when they complete the program

Mission Statement Basics: Form

- The final version begins, “The mission of the _____ program is ...”
- The first sentence identifies the students and purpose of the program, reflecting the faculty’s values and goals for students
- The second and possibly third sentences identify how the particular program will function (what learning experiences it will offer, in general but program specific terms), what students will be prepared for as a result, and possibly, other special program features.

VU's Definition of an Outcome

Outcomes: Statements of expectation written in measurable terms that express what a student will know, be able to do, or value at the end of a learning experience, course, or program.

While goals and objectives are more focused on what a program offers to students and more faculty-centric (what the faculty does or offers), outcomes are student-centric. Outcomes can be written for various levels of learning: university or general or liberal, major program, course, and project/activity.

Outcomes Statement Basics-- Content

Program outcomes should:

- Describe students upon completion of the program, not during the program
- Describe students knowledge, skills, and values, expressed in terms of what students should be able to demonstrate, represent, produce or evaluate. Imagine these demonstrations, representations, productions or evaluations as activities measured using exams, rubrics or other tools, such as surveys.

Outcomes Statement Basics-- Content

Program outcomes should:

- Identify the essential, cumulative learning that distinguishes the program and reflects the mission
- Map to course student learning outcomes, which identify specific, measurable tasks that enable students to display learning
- Reflect the core or essential learning collaboratively identified and agreed to by all program faculty

Outcomes Statement Basics-- Form

Roughly 4-6 program outcomes statements are:

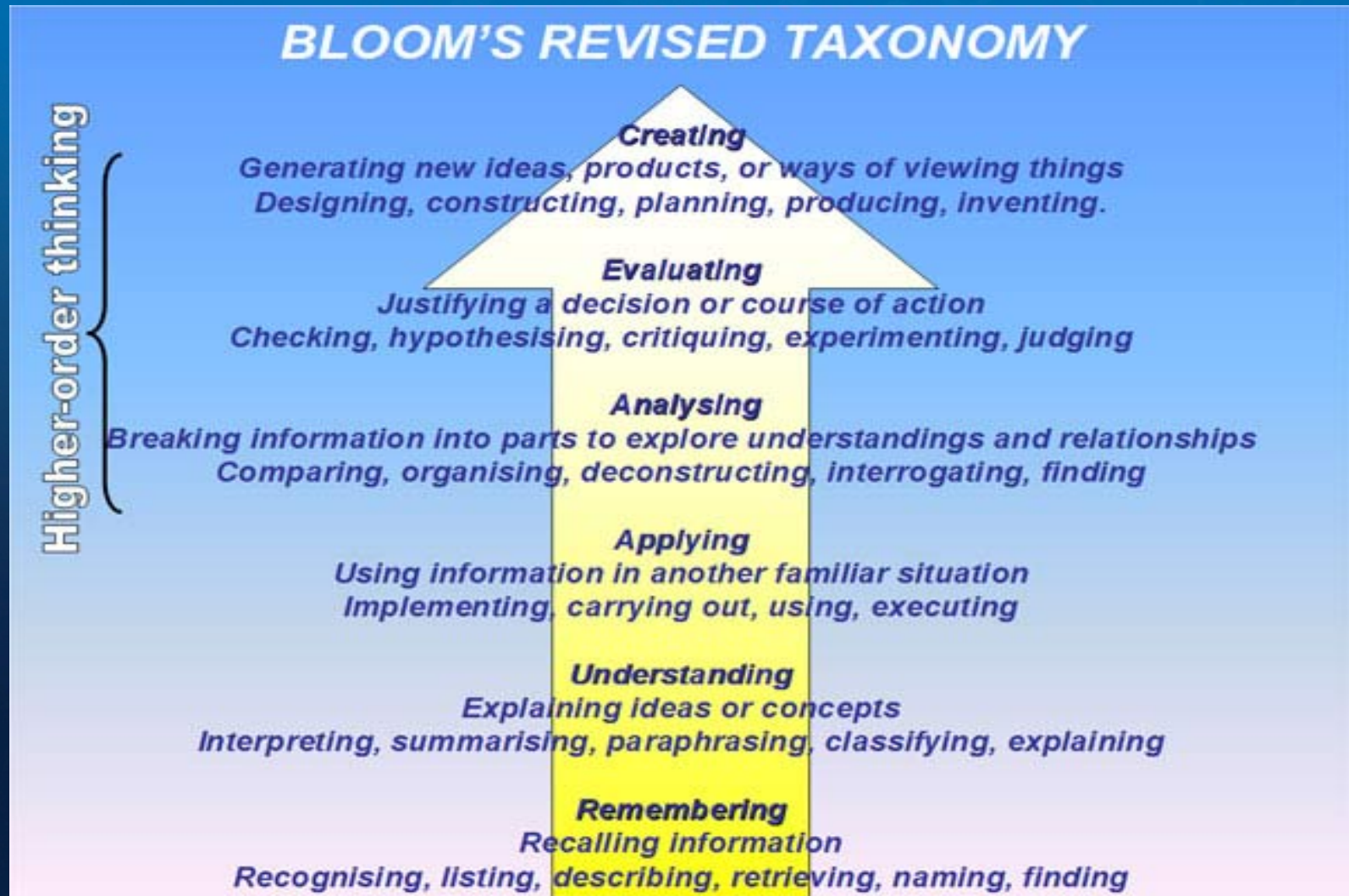
- Listed after the standard opening: “Students who complete the _____ program will be able to:”
- Written specifically enough to describe identifiable, measurable learning
- Written in general terms and reflect many possible student activities, not one specific activity

Outcomes Statement Basics-- Form

Outcomes statements:

- Begin with active verbs from Bloom's taxonomy, verbs that suggest students' demonstrations, representations, productions, or evaluations
- Employ only one verb per outcome
- Present a range of cognitive skill levels
- Employ the verb that reflects the highest level of cognitive skill of multiple possible skill levels

Bloom's Verbs/Cognitive Levels



Reasons to Change Mission or Outcomes

- Significant program curriculum changes, for instance reducing a program to 60 hours to meet the State's new expectations
- Recognition that the mission or outcomes do not fully or correctly express program goals
- Recognition that outcomes might be better expressed to reflect higher order cognitive skills of the program
- Wanting a new outcome to reflect VU's liberal education goals such as critical thinking

Mission or Outcomes Changes?

Be sure to “X” either
“Yes” or “No” so
that IE records
new changes on
website:
improve.vinu.edu



The Assessment Plan--Step #2: Learning to Be Assessed--Four Sub- Steps

1. Identify two program outcomes to be assessed. Think about:
 - ✓ Learning that seems to challenge students
 - ✓ Gateway skills that students must master
 - ✓ Advisory committee feedback or employer surveys
 - ✓ Depth of learning that you want students to have

Identify Specific Learning to Be Assessed

2. Knowledge, Skill, or Value to be assessed

Program outcomes are very general. For this section, move to a level of greater specificity: identify the course specific outcomes and the specific knowledge, skills, or values that will be assessed.

Identify Specific Learning to Be Assessed

For example: Program outcome—students in Collision Repair will “perform automotive repairs in order to return damaged vehicles to ‘Pre-Accident Condition’”

For “Learning Skill/Knowledge to be assessed,” a course outcome addressing correcting panel damage might be listed, and the specific skill being assessed will be the students’ ability to perform proper front quarter panel removal and replacement

Significance of Assessment

3. Identify why the assessment is significant

Present evidence of importance from:

- Advisory Committee feedback
- Discipline literature
- Specialized accreditation visitor comments
- Graduate or employer surveys

Present the Reason Why the Assessment Is Significant

Describe importance for student learning or implementing the curriculum

- Intro., developing, or capstone learning
- Learning progress from introduction to advanced levels

Consider the history of student learning

- Knowledge, skills, values that typically challenge students in the major
- History of subpopulations of students.

What the “Why” Is Not

Avoid circular reasoning:

“We are assessing argumentation skills because these are important skills for writers and for success in college.”

“This assessment is important because collision repairs students need to know how to estimate costs to be successful in the business.”

Faculty Collaborators

4. Faculty Collaborators

Who should collaborate?

- All program faculty
- All faculty teaching the course where the assessment takes place—fulltime or adjunct
- All faculty who will teach the assessed knowledge or skill at some other level—fulltime or adjunct
- Jasper and Vincennes faculty

Why Is Collaboration Important?

- Ensures common understanding of the goals of the curriculum and the emphasis being placed on certain skills
- Facilitates discussion about how the curriculum is best taught and best learned
- Increases clarity about faculty roles in the curriculum

The Assessment Plan--Step #3: Project Details—11 Sub-Steps

The mechanical steps:

1. Identify, again, the outcomes to be assessed—in the order identified in Step #2; simply cut and paste from #2
2. Title or name the project using a brief phrase: “Panel replacement process assessed with a rubric” or “Social theory analysis using essay questions” or “Reflection questions about panel project”

Project Details

3. Year of the Project

- First year—baseline data
- Second or Third year—improvement data

Continue projects to check impact of improvement plans, changes in curriculum or pedagogy

Discontinue projects when learning is predictably good or not likely to change or if project is a “clunker”

Project Details

4. Brief Project Description--More detail than the title:

- Identify and describe the knowledge, skills, or values that you are assessing
- Identify each project for an outcome as a Direct or Indirect assessment?
- Identify the type of activity that the student will participate in, in what setting, at what point in the learning development

Project Details

Direct Assessment: assessment tasks that ask students to demonstrate what they know or can do. It is “tangible, visible, self-explanatory and compelling evidence” of learning (Suskie). VU’s assessment requires a minimum of one direct measure per outcome assessment.

Project Details

Some Common Types of *Direct* Assessments:

- Papers
- Speeches
- Exams, both objective and essay/short answer (especially if blue printed and tied to course and program outcomes)
- Lab work
- Group Projects

Project Details

Indirect Assessment: assessments that include self-reporting measures or perceptions of learning from others. Evidence that consists of “proxy signs that students are probably learning” (Suskie)

Describe the indirect assessment that students will participate in, for instance a reflection or survey or focus group. Or, identify the data taken from national surveys or advisory committee, or other group(s)

Project Details

5. Assessment Tools:

Identify how the *direct* measure will be assessed, for instance using a rubric, or a blue print for the exam and the source or who is developing these

Or, identify the specific *indirect* measure to be used (survey, reflection, alumni or advisory committee data, focused group study, national survey, etc.) and how it will be analyzed and reported

Project Details

6. Success Standard:

Be challenging but realistic--100% of students are not likely to achieve desired learning

Consider where you want students to be in later courses, on national exams, at transfer institutions

Project Details

Success Standard:

Write a success standard that lends itself to improvement planning

“80% of the students will correctly answer test questions 8-15 on the Social theory”

“75 % of students will achieve a rubric dimension score of ‘adequate’ on their use counter-argumentation and refutation in their argumentation paper”

Project Details

Effective Success Standards, continued

“100% of students will score an “Acceptable” on the quarter panel replacement project after 3 attempts.”

Ineffective Success Standards:

“80% of the students will achieve an 80% on the final exam.”

“75% of the students will receive an ‘Adequate’ for the oral report.”

Project Details

7. Course(s): Connect Project A and Project B; make sure the two projects are related in order to triangulate results and produce more meaningful claims about learning:
- Two direct assessments, one early and one later in the same course
 - One direct and one indirect assessment in the same course
 - Same skill assessed at introductory and advanced level in different courses

Common Project Problems

- Two unrelated projects in the same course; might assess same outcome, but triangulation is not possible
- Two unrelated projects in two different courses; often unrelated skills and none of the students are the same
- Direct and indirect projects do not clearly support each other (not metacognitively linked)—usually a limited survey or reflection task

Project Details

8. Faculty Assessing Course(s) and Location

- Identify all the faculty responsible for cooperating in and contributing to the assessment
- Identify the location (Vincennes, Jasper, ATC, Distance Education, Early College, etc.) who are responsible for cooperating in and contributing to the assessment

Project Details

9. Sample Size: Identify the number of students being assessed:

“23 students in one section of ECON 240”

“All sections of PSYC 142, approximately 345 students”

“Every 3rd, 6th, and 9th student in all sections of MATH 013”

Project Details

10. Tools Use Date: Identify the specific semester that the assessment will occur—Fall, Spring, or Both Fall and Spring
11. Faculty Responsible for Oversight and Compiling Results”: Identify the faculty person who will be responsible to see assessment is completed and collect the raw data and send raw data and tools (rubrics, test questions, reflection questions, paper assignments, project assignments) to IE Office—Step #4

Brushing Up on Assessment

- Questions?
- Rubric Discussion and Review of Biology Plan
- Review of Program Plans

Further Questions or Help—Liaison or Mike Gress (4275) or Rene LaMontagna (5706)