



# Assessment Overview

---



# What is assessment?

---

- Assessment is the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning.



# Assessment asks you to think about the following questions:

---

- What should students be learning and in what ways should they be growing?
- What are students actually learning and in what ways are they actually growing?
- What should you be doing to facilitate student learning and growth?
- How would you measure student learning and growth?



# Defining Goals and Objectives

---

- A clear statement of learning goals and objectives serves as the foundation for the entire plan -
  - shaping the kinds of questions you will ask,
  - Shaping the assessment methods you will employ,
  - determining how useful your assessment results are for making programmatic changes.



# What are Department Goals and Objectives?

---

- **Goals** describe broad learning outcomes and concepts (what you want students to learn) expressed in general terms (e.g., clear communication, problem-solving skills, etc.).
- **Objectives** are the specific skills, values, and attitudes students should exhibit that reflect the broader goals (e.g., for students in a freshman writing course, this might be "students are able to develop a cogent argument to support a position").



# Writing Department Goals: Where do you start?

---

Goals can focus on:

- general outcomes for graduates
- discipline-specific outcomes relevant to the department or program itself.



# Writing Department Goals

---

Examples include:

- "Students should develop a critical understanding of a significant portion of the field of psychology."
- "Students who complete the degree major in Organizational Communication should feel that it is important to exercise ethical responsibility in their communication with others."
- "Students will develop skills useful to functioning as a professional in their field of study."



# Developing Program Objectives:

---

- Program objectives transform the general program goals into specific student performance and behaviors that demonstrate student learning and skill development along these goals.



# Developing Program

## Objectives: Ask 3 Questions

---

- For each of your stated goals, what are the specific student behaviors, skills, or abilities that would tell you this goal is being achieved?
- Ideally and briefly, what would a skeptic need (evidence, behavior, etc.), in order to see that your students are achieving the major goals you have set out for them?
- In your experience, what evidence tells you when students have met these goals - how do you know when they're "getting" it?



# Developing Program Objectives: Another Perspective

---

- Describe your ideal student in terms of strengths, skills, knowledge and values, and identify which of these characteristics are the result of the program experience.
- Keeping this student in mind, ask what the student knows, can do, cares about.



# Developing Program Objectives: 3 Types

---

Three types of learning objectives, which reflect different aspects of student learning:

- **Cognitive Objectives** -- What do you want your graduates to know?
- **Affective Objectives** -- What do you want your graduates to care about?
- **Behavioral Objectives** -- What do you want your graduates to be able to do?



# Writing program objectives: Where do you start?

---

- When writing program objectives, describe realistic and achievable outcomes in simple language.
- Even if a learning objective that is important to you seems difficult to measure, try to word the objective into language that focuses on student behavior.



# Writing program objectives:

---

Effectively worded objectives:

- Use action verbs that describe definite, observable actions
- Include a description under which the action takes place: *"when given x, the student will be able to..."*
- Indicate an appropriate level of competency that is assessable through one or more indicators



# Writing program objectives:

---

- **Verb Power**

Concrete verbs such as "define," "argue," or "create" are more helpful for assessment than vague verbs such as "know," "understand," or passive verbs such as "be exposed to" or "acquire."



# How do you develop “good” learning objectives?

---

- At both the course and program level, it is critical that they be *measurable* and *actionable*
- Unacceptable: “Students will acquire a knowledge of ...”
- Better: “Students will evaluate the ethical dimensions of a given decision situation...”
- We must also be keenly aware of the *level* of outcome – masters should be higher than BA
- A good guide is Bloom’s Taxonomy.



# Examples of Goals and Objectives

---

## **Social Science Department Goal**

- Students who major in one of the social sciences will demonstrate that they have responsibilities to themselves, their families, peer groups, communities, and society.



# Examples of Goals and Objectives

---

## **Social Science Program Objectives**

- Students can identify the role that cultural diversity plays in defining what it means to be a social being.
- Students can identify the origins, workings, and ramifications of social and cultural change in their own identity.
- Students can compare the distinctive methods and perspectives of two or more social science disciplines.



# Examples of Goals and Objectives

---

## **Natural Science Department Goal**

- Students who major in the natural sciences will become critical thinkers who are able to judge scientific arguments created by others and see relationships between science and societal problems.



# Examples of Goals and Objectives

---

## **Natural Science Program Objectives**

- Students can apply scientific methodology.
- Students can evaluate the validity and limitations of theories and scientific claims in experimental results.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic scientific principles by restating the principle in their own words and giving a real-world example of the principle in action.



# Assessment Methods and Strategies:

---

- By what measure(s) will you know that students are meeting program learning objectives?
- From whom, and at what points, will you gather data?
- How will the information be collected, analyzed, and used to improve the program?



# Assessment Methods and Strategies:

---

Make sure your assessment methods:

- answer questions that are important to you
- are manageable, given available resources (including time and money)
- result in useful feedback that highlights accomplishments and identifies areas requiring attention.



# Assessment Methods and Strategies:

---

## Relevant Existing Information

- existing exams, assignments, or projects common to a group of student in the major
- writing samples completed for UWR
- senior assignments accomplished as a part of a capstone experience
- faculty teaching evaluations
- graduating senior surveys



# Assessment Methods and Strategies:

---

## Relevant New Information

- student internships or performance
- capstone courses for graduating seniors (summary course for major)
- portfolio analysis (collection of student work)
- standardized tests (nationally-constructed or department-based)
- surveys, interviews, or focus groups of students at entrance and exit, alumni, faculty, employers or related to course content



# Assessment Methods and Strategies:

---

- Use Multiple Methods
- Use Multiple Raters (where possible)
- Include Direct and Indirect Measures
- Assess Strengths and Weaknesses
- Include qualitative as well as quantitative measures



# Assessment Methods and Strategies:

---

- **Direct methods** require students to display their knowledge and skills as they respond to the instrument itself. Objective tests, essays, presentations, and classroom assignments all meet this criterion.
- **Indirect methods** such as surveys and interviews ask students to reflect on their learning rather than to demonstrate it (Palomba and Banta, 1999, pp. 11-12).



# Assessment and Grading

---

- Course grades are seldom directly linked one-to-one to specific end-of-program learning objectives.
- Grades are global evaluations that represent the overall proficiency of students in a particular course.
- They provide little information on the overall success of the program in helping students attain specific and distinct learning objectives of interest.



# Assessment Methods and Strategies:

---

**Be selective about what you choose to observe or measure**

- comprehensive does not mean assessing everything
- select a manageable number of methods that do not drain resources



# Assessment Methods and Strategies:

---

- Include direct as well as indirect methods of assessment
- Use capstone courses or senior assignments, summative test and portfolios to directly assess student learning objectives
- If none of these exist, adopt one or more of them in the near future. For now, employ a *faculty assessment panel* as a temporary direct measure.



# Glossary of Assessment Methods

---

- Culminating Assignments
- Course-Embedded Assessment
- Employer Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Performance Assessment
- Portfolio Evaluations
- Pre-Test/Post-Test Evaluation
- Reflective Essays
- Scoring Rubrics
- Standardized and Local Tests Instruments
- Student Surveys and Exit Interviews



# Summary: Framework for Good Assessment Practice

---

1. Each academic program must have end-of-program learning objectives with the following characteristics:
  - a. Linked to EKU's statement of mission and strategic directions
  - b. Developed by faculty
  - c. Measurable
  - d. Actionable
  - e. Built on existing course-specific outcomes



# Framework for Good Assessment Practice

---

2. Each program must employ direct measures of student learning objectives with the following characteristics:
  - a. A one-to-one relationship to each program learning objective
  - b. Developed and used by faculty and other appropriate persons (e.g., internship/practicum supervisor)
  - c. Must relate to one or more of the following: cognitive learning (knowledge acquisition), behavioral learning (skill acquisition), and affective learning (attitudinal development)
  - d. Must make sense vis-à-vis the outcome being measured
  - e. Must include multiple raters/evaluators



# Framework for Good Assessment Practice

---

3. Each program must employ multiple measures of student learning objectives with the following characteristics:
  - a. Both direct and indirect measures are used in concert to “triangulate” and corroborate the findings
  - b. Each measure can be related back to program learning objectives and be used to improve teaching and learning
  - c. Multiple raters are used where possible
  - d. New measures are introduced periodically to determine efficacy and relationship to other measures so as to keep assessment program relevant and up-to-date



# Framework for Good Assessment Practice

---

4. Each program must analyze the results of its assessment measures, and the analysis must have the following characteristics:
  - a. Faculty-driven and faculty-owned
  - b. Relates results back to specific program learning objectives
  - c. Thoroughly and thoughtfully documented
  - d. Evaluative as well as descriptive
  - e. Criteria for success are developed and used
  - f. Needs to be able to result in corrective actions



# Framework for Good Assessment Practice

---

5. Feedback from the assessment process is used to improve the program and the teaching and learning processes within the program. This feedback has the following characteristics:
  - a. Developed by faculty and department head
  - b. Relates back to specific program learning objectives
  - c. Relates both to “what we teach” (curriculum) and “how we teach” (pedagogy)
  - d. Maps feedback on outcomes back to specific courses
  - e. Actions taken based on feedback are reflected in program planning and budgeting processes