

Assessment Resource

Celebrating Success—Building for the Future

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Office of Institutional Research,
Eastern Kentucky University

Assessment Tips

Developing and Implementing Assessment Measures

While well-written program objectives are the foundation of a good assessment plan, those objectives must be measured if we are to have useful information with which to make improvements in student learning or administrative operations. Once a set of measurable objectives is in place for a unit, multiple measures must be developed and implemented to determine to what extent the desired objectives are being achieved.

For **academic programs**, these measures must include at least one direct measure, and should include other measures to help "triangulate" findings and results. A **direct measure** is one that links each student learning objective to a level of expected student performance that is assessed by faculty and other experts (such as practicum or internship supervisors). Typical direct measures come from:

- comprehensive exams
- licensure or certification exams
- portfolios of student work

The key is to relate the measure directly and specifically to each student learning objective so that the level to which students are achieving the desired result is readily assessable by faculty.

Indirect measures ask students to *reflect* on their learning rather than to demonstrate it (Palomba & Banta, 1999), and include surveys of alumni, students, and employers, as well as retention studies, course performance analysis, end-of-course evaluations, and career/graduate school placement data. Indirect measures such as these do not relate directly to specific student learning objectives and therefore are not sufficient by themselves for academic program assessment, but should be used in concert with direct measures to provide more complete insight into student learning.

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Schedule of Upcoming Events

TracDat Trainings	
Basics	July 7
Closing the Loop	
Poster Session and Reception	October-Dates to be determined
See www.ir.eku.edu for more information	

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Did You Know?

- Of EKU Fall 2003 freshman respondents to the CIRP freshman survey, 35% reported applying only to EKU and to no other institutions, versus 20% of all public four-year freshmen applying to no other schools besides the ones at which they enrolled.

- More than 35% of EKU freshmen cited offers of financial assistance as "very important" in their decision to attend EKU, versus only 27% of all public four-year freshmen.
- More than 92% of EKU freshmen planned to live in

residence halls in the Fall of 2003, versus only 63% of all public four-year freshmen.

- Only 27% of EKU freshmen considered developing a meaningful philosophy of life as "essential" or

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Assessment Tips, continued

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For **administrative and educational support (AES) units**, direct measures of achieving unit objectives are often very difficult to develop and implement, and so indirect measures are often the only available option. Measures that are most appropriate for AES units include:

- Counts and ratios
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Informal one-on-one meetings with key clients
- Analysis of service use
- Outputs per budget \$ calculations
- Observations of clients using services

The key for AES units is to have a very close relationship between each unit objective and the measure(s) associated with it. For example, if an AES unit has an objective that specifies what kind of service the unit will provide and how its clients will use or benefit from the service, then that objective should have at least two measures: one measuring the *level of service provided* (e.g., count, ratio,

output per budget dollars), and another showing the *level of benefit derived by clients* (e.g., client survey, focus group).

In all cases - academic or administrative unit, direct or indirect measures - remember that it is okay to sample! Please do not feel that *all* students, clients, outputs, etc., must be measured. In assessment, a thoughtful, random sample is often the best way to use resources wisely and efficiently, and also to obtain enough information to be useful for improvement.

If you have any questions on this or other topics, or would like assistance in developing and implementing measures, or in any phase of the assessment process, please contact the Office of Institutional Research for timely assistance and support.

Did You Know?, continued

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"very important," versus 36% of all public four-year freshmen.

- Only 39% of EKU freshmen believed the chances were "very good" of working while in college, versus 49% of all public four-year freshmen.

- Only 48% of EKU freshmen believed the chances were "very good" of socializing with someone of another racial/ethnic group, versus 64% of all public four-year freshmen.

Spotlight On:

Closing the Loop Poster Session and Reception

In October 2004 the University Assessment Committee will host a *Closing the Loop Poster Session and Reception* highlighting the many ways that EKU departments and offices are using assessment results for improvement.

This poster session and reception will be an opportunity to:

- show off the hard work you and your colleagues have been doing in assessment
- gather practical ideas from right here at EKU about how to conduct assessment and take the important step to using the results for improvement.

Details concerning how, when and to whom to submit poster proposals will be available in August.

TracDat Tips

Entering Results into TracDat

Enter the results obtained from your assessment measures into TracDat on the "Results/Observations" screen which can be found under "Plan & Document". Don't actually put the raw data into the results section — enter a summary of the results. You can attach a spreadsheet of the data on the "related data" screen.

Be sure to document how you have used the results for improvement (if appropriate) on the "Use of Results" screen.