Assessment in a Learning Systems Paradigm

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NILOA’s mission is to discover and disseminate effective use of assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education and support institutions in their assessment efforts.

- Surveys
- Web Scans
- Case Studies
- Focus Groups
- Occasional Papers
- Website
- Resources
- Newsletter
- Presentations
- Transparency Framework
- Featured Websites
- Accreditation Resources
- Assessment Event Calendar
- Assessment News
- Measuring Quality Inventory
- Policy Analysis
- Environmental Scan
- Degree Qualifications Profile
- Tuning

www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment  
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

We are pleased to announce the release of a new NILOA book, Degrees that Matter: Moving Higher Education to a Learning System Paradigm. The book is available now.

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Bucknell University

The Bucknell University's Assessment website is this month's Featured Website in the categories of Communication and Creativity.

Congratulations to the 2017 Excellence in Assessment (EIA) Designees!

Mon, Aug 21, 2017 - 08:30 am

Five colleges and universities were named the 2017 Excellence in Assessment (EIA) designees, recognizing their commitment to the comprehensive assessment of student learning outcomes as a means to drive internal improvement and advance student success: Bowling Green State University; James Madison University; Middlesex Community College; Rio Salado College; and Southern Connecticut State University. One institution, James Madison University, received the designation of Sustained Excellence in Assessment. Please join us in congratulating the 2017 EIA Designees! Application materials for the 2018 EIA Designation will be available in November.

New Issue of Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning

Mon, Aug 21, 2017 - 08:00 am

We invite you to peruse the most recent issues of Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, volume 48 issue 2 and issue 3. Included in these issues are Symbolic Translation and What Our Work Requires by Clifford Adelman, and Reframing Student Success in College: Advancing Know-What and Know-How by Jillian Kinzie and George Kuh, respectively.

Summer 2017 issue of Research & Practice in Assessment

Mon, Aug 21, 2017 - 08:00 am

The Summer 2017 issue of Research & Practice in Assessment is now available. Included in this issue are the articles "Examining Construct Validity of the Quantitative..."
CURRENT STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
HOW WE WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION
INITIATIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Courses
- Assignments
- Programs
- General Ed
- Employment
- Co-Curriculum
- Starting Institution
- Transfer Institution

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CURRENT STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Chat Box

Which initiatives are your institution currently involved in to better align and support student learning and assessment?
Role of Assessment Professionals

FIG. 1 Representation of assessment practitioner roles.
Assessment Cube of Misunderstandings

Definitions

Uses/Questions

Levels/Focus

Purposes/Value
Added Layers

Behind each side of the cube there are:

1. Theories about how students learn
2. Beliefs around what can be assessed
3. The “best” or “proper” means to assess student learning
4. How to warrant arguments about what students know and can do as a result of education

All with no agreements, leading to disputes built around unclear assumptions that impact practice with people dismissing other sides – remember assessment is a field and it’s a field that moves.
Three Schools of Thought

Measurement

Compliance (Reporting)

Teaching and Learning (Improvement)
Measurement

Built upon scientific principles or empirical research, objective, rational, validity, and reliability

*The Multi-State Collaborative: A Preliminary Examination of Convergent Validation Evidence* ~Mark Nicholas, John Hathcoat, & Brittany Brown

- Testing and standardization
- Must be measureable
- Argue narrowing of curriculum
- Goal driven
- Focused on process
- Interventions
- Pre/post
- Comparisons
VALUE report
Compliance

Documenting institutional quality assurance through reporting frameworks

Is assessment destroying the liberal arts? ~Karin Brown

- Bureaucratic
- Laborious
- Time consuming
- Separated from teaching and learning
- Add on
- Accountability and quality assurance
- Reporting and archive
- Lots of data collection, minimal use
But where are the students...?
Teaching and Learning

Focus on pedagogy, understanding of student experience, informing program improvement, embedded in curricular design and feedback, builds student agency

*Does continuous assessment in higher education support student learning?*
~Rosario Hernandez

- Driven by faculty questions regarding their praxis – is what I am doing working for my students?
- Improvement oriented
- Focus on individual students
- Students as active participants – not something done to them
- Formative
- Feedback
- Collaborative
- Assessment for learning
- Adaptive and embedded
Strategize New Student Success Plans

Determine Extent of Learning

Collect Student Work

Communicate Expectations to Learners

Name Expectations for Learning

IMPROVEMENT
What does good assessment look like for us here?

Why do we think that what we are doing, for these students, will lead to enhanced learning, at this time?

“I think you should be more explicit here in step two.”
The Learning Systems Paradigm

DEGREES THAT MATTER
Moving Higher Education to a Learning Systems Paradigm

Natasha A. Jankowski and David W. Marshall
Consensus-based

Through faculty-led conversations, reflections, and explorations with employers, alumni, and others, a shared understanding and consensus is reached on learning outcomes. This shared understanding serves as the foundation for revising outcomes for enhanced clarity and designing educational experiences.
Alignment

Using the agreed upon learning outcomes, faculty and staff align educational experiences throughout the institution for intentional integration, coherence, and fostering of multiple pathways. Alignment involves curriculum mapping, scaffolding, assignment design, mapping of career pathways, and co-curricular engagement.
Learner-Centered

The educational system reorganizes educational experiences around all students and their learning. Taking a student view includes consideration of issues of equity, learning-focused transfer, alternative delivery models, flexibility in offerings, integration of prior-learning assessment, ensuring stackable credentials, and building multiple pathways.
Communication and collaboration with students and other audiences through transparent discussions around the outcomes and educational system works to make the implicit explicit. Communication involves exploration and integration with advising, alternative transcripts, admissions, and employers.
The NILOA Initiative

An online library of high-quality peer-endorsed assignments linked to DQP outcomes.

Designed by faculty, part of the intellectual work they already do, course embedded.

Building on campus efforts already underway

Reflecting a conception of assessment as integral to teaching and learning vs “exoskeleton” (Ewell 2013).
Chat Box

Please share your experiences with assignment design conversations on your own campus.
What’s a “charrette”? 

"Charrette" (Fr.) means a small cart. Because architecture students once deposited their assignments in it as the cart was rolled through the studio, architects now use the word to refer to an intense creative effort in a limited time period.
In the tradition of the “atelier,” architecture students progress through the curriculum in the company of their mentors and peers. This approach offers an interesting model for an integrated education.

The tradition rests on the assumption that much of your learning will come from one another.
Small Group Process

25-30 minute segments per person/assignment

- Present assignment briefly—which outcomes, what course, which students, how does it work....
- Discussion with group (focus on questions on feedback form)
- Save 5 minutes for written feedback
- Breath
- Start again...
- Debrief at end
76% of participants said “it helped me more clearly see my assignment through my students’ eyes.

59%: I’m more aware of aligning my assignments with desired institutional outcomes.

38%: helped to lead or facilitate an event about assignment design on their campus
Organizing Assignment-Design Work
On Your Campus

Unfacilitated Guide

A Tool Kit of Resources and Materials

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent
A Way Forward

A question we routinely receive regarding working with faculty on assignment design is how to get started. What if assignments have never been shared and faculty are reluctant to do so? What if there isn’t safe space to talk about assignments? What if we can’t start conversations with assignments and need another way in? Fortunately, Karen Ford from the University of Sheffield addresses these issues by providing a means to initiate conversations with faculty about assessment ranging from the value and purpose of learning outcomes, assessments, and rubrics to issues of assignment design. In her interactive presentation, “Let’s Face It”, Karen outlines a faculty development workshop that is backward designed to create a space to openly discuss issues of teaching, learning, and assignment design. The collaborative workshop allows faculty to make connections between assessment practices in specific courses with the learning outcomes of a program and institution. The approach raises faculty assessment literacy by engaging them in assessing an assignment as a group, working their way through uncovering the value of learning outcomes, assignment prompts, and rubrics. The work is trans-disciplinary in that it takes an issue-based approach to problem solving as opposed to a disciplinary lens. Karen (2016) states in a paper accompanying a presentation given at the Assessment in Higher Education Seminar on the activity,

I suspect we are all so busy getting on with the business of assessment, that taking the time to scrutinize what we collectively know about assessment and how it is applied in practice beyond our sphere is perhaps something we feel unable to justify. After all, assessment is taking place and students are graduating, so an assumption is easily made that all those involved in the assessment process are cognizant of underlying principles and processes and explicitly operating in light of them. I am not convinced this assumption is a sound one.

Karen designed the faculty-led activity to use a staged approach, immersing participants into the grading an assignment with intentional issues built into its design, providing a safe space by using an example already developed. She writes of the experience working with faculty from different universities, colleges, and disciplines that the conversations were candid, frank, practice-based, and created space for dialogue. We are delighted to share her resource as part of the assignment toolkit and hope you find it as useful as the faculty who have participated in the activities.

Natasha Jankowski
Director, NILOA

Additional Resources

ROADMAP TO ENHANCED STUDENT LEARNING
Implementing the DQP and Tuning

Using the Degree Qualifications Profile
To Foster Meaningful Change

DQP Assignment Library
Search for an assignment by a keyword using the search box or by clicking on any specific tag.

Academic Disciplines and Assignment Characteristics

DQP Proficiencies

Degree and Course Levels

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Learning Systems Paradigm

Why do we need each of the four elements of the paradigm?
Transparency

Awareness of Learning Outcome Statements
Alignment

How do courses build towards mastery through repetition and increasing expectations for particular outcomes?

How do assignments and activities elicit student demonstrations of a specific learning outcome?

How do individual faculty contribute to this collective work in their courses?
Equity and Assessment: Moving Towards Culturally Responsive Assessment

Erick Montenegro and Natasha A. Jankowski
Alignment within courses

- Scaffolding Learning
- Assignment
- Learning Outcomes
- Evaluative Criteria
How assignments connect

- Assignment
  - Scaffolding Learning
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Evaluative Criteria
- Assignment
  - Scaffolding Learning
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Evaluative Criteria
- Assignment
  - Scaffolding Learning
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Evaluative Criteria
Transparency in Assignments

Transparency in Teaching and Learning: https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning

Purpose
Skills you’ll practice by doing this assignment
Content knowledge you’ll gain from doing this assignment
How you can use these in your life beyond the context of this course, in and beyond college

Task
What to do
How to do it (Are there recommended steps? What roadblocks/mistakes should you avoid?)

Criteria
(Are you on the right track? How to know you’re doing what’s expected?)

Annotated examples of successful work
(What’s good about these examples? Use the checklist to identify the successful parts.)
Rubrics

Do we share our rubrics or criteria with students and actively engage them in the review process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Criteria</th>
<th>Student Evaluation</th>
<th>Faculty Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rubric Content</td>
<td>Stipulate why gave score did</td>
<td>Faculty stipulate why gave score did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stipulate what they need to do to advance</td>
<td>Targeted feedback to improve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chat Box

How might the learning systems paradigm integrated approach impact or change your work with current initiatives on campus?
Developed more fully in...
Discussion

Thank you!

niloa@education.illinois.edu
www.degreeprofile.org
www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
Bookends of Assessment: Connecting the Institutional Dots

September 14, 2:00pm ET

PRESENTER

SUSAN WARNER TAYLOR
Director of Institutional Research & Assessment
Baldwin Wallace University

For more information about Taskstream-Tk20 or to request a demonstration, contact: events@taskstream.com or 800-311-5656
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https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/39Q25X7

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