University Assessment Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 27, 2012

Attendees: Chris Dudley, Fernando Perez, Heather Garrison, Mary Kay Lavelle, Jennifer White, John Robinson, Kelly Harrison, Nancy Jo Greenawalt, Paul Creamer, Bonnie Green, Debra Ballinger, Kelsey Paciotti, Mary Tod Gray, Mike Jochen, Yun Kim, Adam McGlynn, Joann Stryker, Laura Waters

This is the last committee meeting of this academic year.

- Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed and approved as is.
  - The information collected from the last meeting will be incorporated in the communication plan.

- Laura Waters did a presentation at the academic department chairs meeting April 26th. The presentation was well received by the chairs. Presentation will be posted to the website.

- Program Level Workgroup – Adam McGlynn
  Presented draft of the Program Assessment Manual to the UAC. The workgroup went with a “less is more” concept and has worked to keep the manual clear and concise. This manual is meant to be very general and user friendly. The manual addresses program level assessment generically for all programs. This manual does not dictate how a program is to assess their program. As this is reviewed be cognizant of the fact that this manual is to be used as a guide.

  ✓ The focus of the manual is academic programs. How can non-academic units be incorporated? Or should they be a whole separate manual?
  ✓ Present information in a more bulleted list-like fashion.
    Add a table of contents.
  ✓ For the in-text references, refer to these at section end as further readings. Update references to include more recent ones. Add some journal articles as well as websites.
  ✓ Add formats, templates, and examples. As appendices to manual that will be links for online version.
  ✓ Once this manual is done, Professional Development will be designed about the manual.
  ✓ Add a glossary including: Direct Measures, Indirect Measures, Normed, Criterion Referenced, Formal, Informal, Formative, Summative, etc.
  ✓ How do you know that a measure has been validated? Maybe refer to the Assessment Consulting Team as an aid in validating measures.
  ✓ There could be some type of diagram of the steps; something that gives a real visual of the assessment process. For the online version you can click on the diagram and have it take you to that section of the manual.
  ✓ Include discussion of setting standards - what result is good enough?
  ✓ Include links by topic area to further resources. The Middles States website has a lot of good links.
  ✓ Add a page on helpful tips.
  ✓ Add more detail on measures.
The manual’s framework is developed; the workgroup can work to enhance the manual over time. The Program Assessment Workgroup is not being asked to do the web work involved with posting this manual online. Please email Adam McGlynn with any additional suggestions for the manual.

- **Professional Development Workgroup – Bonnie Green**
  The workgroup is continuing to work on the Assessment Consulting Team concept. Chris Dudley will be serving as the ACT director and contact person. Everyone will be getting contacted about volunteering for ACT. If you know anyone with assessment experience, reach out to them about volunteering to be on the team. Not everyone is going to have the same skill set.

- **Institutional Workgroup – Joann Stryker**
  At the last workgroup meeting, the alumni, employer and graduating senior surveys were discussed. The workgroup is planning to start off the semester with review of collected institutional assessment data. The workgroup picked the same measures as were picked for performance measures.

  ✓ National Survey of Student Engagement is being revised this year.

  ✓ Is there a group within the institution that should serve as a screening for surveys?
    o The Survey Coordination Team. Due to availability of technology, surveys are relatively easy to do and prolific. Because the people involved have been involved with Banner implementation this academic year, the team has been on hiatus. The Survey Coordination Team will be reconvened with the fall 2012 semester. Faculty are needed on this team. If you are interested contact Joann Stryker.

- **University Assessment Committee Communication Plan – Joann Stryker**
  The working document was reviewed with the UAC. This document lists all of the brainstorming ideas from UAC. This Communication Plan will continue to be a focus of the co-chairs.

  ✓ Add Parents to audiences.

All committee members were thanked for their service this year.

Meeting time/day for 2012-2013 was discussed. Mondays and Fridays were recommended.
East Stroudsburg University
Guide to Program and Departmental Assessment

***DRAFT***

Developed by the University Assessment Committee’s Subcommittee on Program Level Assessment

Spring 2012

UAC Program Level Assessment Subcommittee Members:

   Warren Anderson
   Debra Ballinger
   Douglas Friedman
   Mary Tod Gray
   Mike Jochen
   Yun Kim
   Adam McGlynn, Chair
   Kelsey Paciotti
   Justin Potts
Part 1-Introduction to Assessment in Higher Education

Although it is unlikely anyone working in Higher Education and at East Stroudsburg hasn’t dealt extensively with Assessment, discourse regarding the topic often finds individuals working from diverse backgrounds and assumptions on the subject. Therefore, as an introduction to the use of Assessment at ESU, the Program Level Sub-Committee of the UAC proposes the adoption of some basic assumptions and definitions to begin the dialogue about “best practice” in assessment of Student Learning and Program Assessments.

What is Assessment?

An *assessment system* is typically defined as the process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information to aid in educational decision making (Airasian, 2000; Mertler, 2003). Assessment can be seen as a systematic collection and analysis of information for the main purpose of improving student learning. This includes having a list of desired outcomes to assess (Stassen 5).

During the assessment process, *tests* are typical instruments used to gather information or to measure factors. Tests can be created to measure cognition (knowledge), skill (technical or physical activities), or affect (values, beliefs, emotions, social constructs). Tests are typically used to gather information for three distinct purposes: diagnosis of current conditions (diagnostic tests), informational feedback (formative tests), or summary scoring (summative tests - used determine accomplishment of goals or learning outcomes).

Just as *diagnostic* tests provide the practitioner with information related to the current condition of a patient, a diagnostic test for teachers provides information related to the present level of performance of students. In each situation, the diagnostic information becomes the starting point for a plan of change. In the learning environment, effective teachers perform diagnostic testing prior to working with their students in order to plan lesson activities that are developmentally appropriate for the readiness of the learner. In settings where physical skills or affective emotions, values and belief are the focus, diagnostic tests are necessary in order to plan appropriate and safe (physically or emotionally) programs and interventions to guide the client as well as the practitioner in the development of activities and programs that lead to skill acquisition and behavioral change.

*Formative* assessment is regularly included in quality education to check for understanding, progress toward learning outcomes or goals, and to inform the teacher or practitioner about changes occurring in the students. Without ongoing, regular information, effective teachers are unable to adjust the pace or learning experiences to match the speed at which students are learning.

*Summative* assessment typically refers to the measurement of learning at the end of a unit of instruction. Summative data has typically been used to assign a final score, rating, ranking, or grade for students. When used in this manner summative assessment leads to
the evaluation phase of teaching. However, just as diagnostic and formative tests provide information to plan and revise, the summative data is useful to not only evaluate student progress toward desired learning outcomes, but also as a source of information that leads effective teachers to the revision of their practice. Summative test scores may provide data for issuing a grade, but this is not the end of instruction. It is the beginning of a new cycle of reflection used to inform professionals about the future teaching and learning process. Reflective teachers use summative data to make changes in course content, program or curricular offerings, and the improvement of teaching (praxis).

Thus a comprehensive assessment process is actually a cycle – where tests inform practitioners about student progress, and where reflection leads to improved practice. In essence the teacher and student are interdependent, and learning from each other. Effective teaching is a dynamic process, and effective teachers are lifelong learners. Teachers must adjust, based on the assessment process, to the needs and readiness of the learner. The assessment process is never ending, but rather ever acting - leading to better educational outcomes and processes.

For the purposes of this guidebook, the term assessment will refer to the entire assessment process; tests will refer to the instruments used to collect data (noun), and the analysis or evaluation of the data will refer to the interpretation phase of the assessment process. In other words, the assessment system will be defined as the methods used to collect data, processes used to provide feedback to practitioners, and the interpretation and evaluation of information to inform educational decision-making.

What is “new” in this process?

Testing is a great way to assess a student. However, it does not quite assess a student’s learning on individual outcomes but sums the performance across a multitude of outcomes (Stassen 6). The terms alternative and authentic measurement or testing have become staples in effective teaching practice. Alternative tests are described as methods for gathering data that use instruments other than standardized paper and pencil tests. Activities, projects, simulations, journals, portfolios, logs, debates, demonstrations, posters, or exhibitions are all used across campus to demonstrate student learning toward identified outcomes. Alternative measurements become authentic measurements when the student is observed, measured, or evaluated in real-life situations and environments. Performance-based assessment is another alternative type of assessment, and the term is often used interchangeably with authentic assessment. Typically, performance-based assessment processes isolate specific critical elements deemed by experts in a profession to be essential to technical mastery of skills. Performance tests are often scored using rubrics that identify specific behaviors, and that can quantify the student behaviors as being mastered or not achieved.

For a musician, performance in front of a juried panel is an alternative form of assessment, and more authentic than a written test on the names and notation of a musical
piece. But to be even more authentic, the music student would perform in front of an audience during a concert. They are now truly being held accountable to their ability to perform beyond the classroom. A teacher education major can be evaluated on their ability to write developmentally appropriate lesson plans, but the authenticity is enhanced when they are observed working with children, applying their knowledge, communication skills, and pedagogical behaviors to a classroom of children. So, what is new, for many, is not new at all. Authentic assessment has been used in most of our professional preparation programs during internships, auditions, performances, and application courses for many years.

Many experienced educators and practitioners have been using alternative and authentic tests for years. What may be different, however, is that effective practice integrates authentic and alternative testing strategies across the scope (breadth) and sequence (progressive depth) of programs in higher education.

References:


Part 2-Creating & Assessing Student Learning Outcomes & Academic Programs

Describe the Program

The first step in creating a departmental or program assessment plan should be to provide a succinct statement describing the program. Your program’s marketing brochure(s) already contains this statement, but as disciplines change, you should examine whether the existing statement correctly explains the purpose of your program. If it does not, this would be a worthwhile topic during a department meeting. You may also want to look to your national organization’s website which may discuss the mission of the discipline which you can adapt to your program(s). How well you can succinctly explain the program’s purpose will allow both current and potential majors to understand what type of education they are receiving. Further, “Clearly stating the mission of the program ensures that faculty members and students are working effectively toward the same purpose” (Bridgewater State University, 2010).

At the same time, you can use the development of your mission statement to take stock of where your department is and where you want it to go. Are there additional programs you want to add or accreditations you want to obtain? By creating your mission statement and Student Learning Outcome (SLOs) you can begin to assess what your department needs to do to accomplish its future goals.

Create Program-Specific Student Learning Outcomes (Educational Objectives)

Mission statements are general explanations of your program. Establishing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) is a more specific task. To begin to identify SLOs, your department should focus on three questions (Bridgewater State University 2010):

1) What do your students need to know? What is the essential base of knowledge that all graduates must leave the university possessing?
2) What do your students need to be able to do? Are there specific tasks or skills that they need to accomplish by the time they graduate?
3) Are there values or attitudes you want to instill in your students?

In developing SLOs there should be both collective and individual processes. As a collective you should be able to identify key points of knowledge and vital tasks/skills that are relevant to all areas of your program. From there individual or small groups of faculty should develop SLOs specific to their subfields. For larger departments, it may be beneficial to formalize the process and establish a departmental assessment committee (with the goal of having all subfields represented) to develop these SLOs. Once again, national organization websites as well as accrediting bodies could prove useful here in identifying learning outcomes.

Your department should work to achieve a consensus on the set of SLOs that are established. You may want to create a pool of SLOs and have department members rank order them to identify those learning outcomes which the department deems most important. There is no set rule for the number of SLOs or how they are organized, but they should all be adopted based on the premise of the three questions above. When
adopting SLOs also consider two factors; first all of the outcomes chosen must be clear and measurable and second, the outcomes “should focus on what students in the major can demonstrate rather than on what faculty members teach” (Bridgewater State University 2010).

Curriculum Mapping

One potential pitfall of developing these SLOs are outcomes which can fall through the cracks and wind up not getting addressed in the curriculum given the belief among faculty that specific SLOs are being covered in other courses. Again, many of your SLOs (especially those you deem most important) will be covered in multiple courses, but some may not. Therefore, one important task to undertake is to examine the curriculum and identify which courses will cover each SLO. Again some courses may cover three another may only cover one. However, this activity will allow you to conduct a self-assessment of two key questions:

1) Do the required courses in our program ensure that students can meet all SLOs?
2) Do we need to change our course offerings to ensure the curriculum reflects the SLOs we have adopted?

Based on the answers to these questions you may find it necessary to change your program requirements and/or adopt new courses for your curriculum. This serves to ensure your SLOs are being achieved but also provides the useful opportunity to review and revise your curriculum. It may be helpful to map your curriculum graphically as done below. Based on the hypothetical depiction below, a department may ask how they can get an additional course(s) to address Outcome E or how whether Course 4 should be changed to address more of the outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO*</th>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
<th>Course 4</th>
<th>Course 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome A</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome B</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome C</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome D</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Bridgewater State University Assessment Manual.

Identifying Direct and Indirect Measures of Student Performance

The data obtained for assessing your SLOs should come from both direct and indirect measures. Direct measures can consist of coursework including exams, student portfolios (both professional e.g. for prospective teachers or summative e.g. portfolios of a student’s coursework, including projects and/or papers). Additional examples include the achievement of professional licenses or certifications and pre-test/post-test evaluations to assess baseline knowledge and the value added of a course or program (see table below for more examples). Indirect measures do not directly assess student work but examine measures indicative of the quality of the education a student has received. These can include student surveys which ask students how well their course of study prepared them
for their current job or how well specific skills were developed through their education. Note that East Stroudsburg University already conducts university wide indirect assessments such as the Proficiency Profile and the National Survey of Student Engagement. Your department should consult with the Office of Academic and Institutional Effectiveness to gauge whether data from these studies could be useful for your department.

Your department should strive to collect data from both indirect and direct measures. This data can be both qualitative and quantitative. Faculty should work to ensure all measures chosen demonstrate validity in that they truly assess that students possess the knowledge, skills and/or attitudes you want them to have. While ensuring the validity of department created assessments shouldn’t be difficult, standardized tests or other non-departmental measures should be examined for validity in relation the department’s SLOs.

Sample of Direct and Indirect Learning Outcomes Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Measures</th>
<th>Indirect Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certifications/Licensure exams</td>
<td>Student surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone experience</td>
<td>Exit interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio assessment</td>
<td>Retention and transfer rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized tests</td>
<td>Graduation rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally developed (validated) exams</td>
<td>Job placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay exams blind scored by multiple scorers</td>
<td>Graduate school acceptance rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juried review of student performances and projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External evaluation of student performance in internships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment Cycles & Timelines

After choosing the assessment measures your department will employ, you should develop a timeline for the collection and reporting of this data. Many pieces of data lend themselves to be collected yearly such as pre-test/post-test data for incoming freshman and graduating seniors or results from capstone courses. However, some indirect measures such as job placement information or student surveys are better assessed at three year intervals. Overall, you should ensure that every three years data is collected on all assessment measures for every SLO. Your departmental assessment plan should then layout how data for each SLO will be obtained, when that data will be collected and how it should be analyzed and presented to the program’s faculty. It is to this latter requirement that we will turn to in the next chapter.

On a final note, your department should attempt to find existing mechanisms that can be used to obtain your data without dedicating significant departmental resources to this effort. Further, before collecting any new information, take an inventory of existing program, departmental and institutional data. Again, assessments already in use by ESU
may prove useful in assessing your SLOs and thus negate the need to increase faculty workloads.

References:

http://www.bridgew.edu/AssessmentGuidebook/

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Publications: Guidelines for Institutional Improvement.  
http://www.msche.org/publications_view.asp?idPublicationType=5&txtPublicationType=Guidelines+for+Institutional+Improvement

Office of Academic and Institutional Effectiveness. Outcomes Assessment.  
http://www4.esu.edu/faculty_staff/campus_info/oaie/outcomes.cfm

Part 3-Assessment Analysis Reporting and Feedback

At this point, the members of your academic program or department have developed good program goals and meaningful student learning outcomes. Through various direct and indirect measures, you have collected data on how well your program is enabling students to achieve those goals and outcomes. The question now becomes, "What should we do with all of this data?" Note that the main purpose the collected assessment data should serve is to inform the program on how to improve. There may exist additional purposes, for example, to fulfill institutional, statutory or accreditation body requirements, but at the program level, this sort of assessment activity exists to facilitate continuous improvement for the program itself. Note further, that program assessment is not, nor should not be, an appropriate forum for the evaluation of individual faculty teaching ability (other methods exist solely for these purposes). Program assessment is a reflection on how well the program is meeting the specified student goals and outcomes.

This last phase of the assessment cycle, to analyze and report assessment findings, provides feedback that can be used to adjust the curriculum, improve course content, or perhaps, improve the assessment process itself. This feedback "closes the loop" on the assessment cycle. Without thoughtful analysis and reporting of the assessment results, the entirety of the assessment process is a practice in futility. Thus, the results from the assessment cycle should drive potential changes to curriculum, courses, teaching, assignments, program goals, student learning objectives, and even methods of assessment & the tools/techniques to collect, process, and analyze assessment data.

What follows are a few pointers to guide the analysis of your assessment data (Chico, 1998):

1) Present data in relation to the identified goals and objectives for your program
2) Select and use appropriate procedures for data analysis
3) Use qualitative and quantitative methods to present a well-balanced picture of the program
4) Keep in mind the audiences who will access and use the data, and vary your analysis and reporting procedures according to the identified audience
5) Prepare written statements that identify and elaborate on the pros and cons of the academic program
6) Develop recommendations based on the analysis of data, and use the identified goals as a framework within which to accomplish these changes

Ultimately, your analysis should help you to answer the following questions (SMSU, 1997):

1) What do the data say about your students’ mastery of subject matter, of research skills, or of writing and speaking?
2) What do the data say about your students’ preparation for taking the next step in their careers?
3) Are there areas where your students are outstanding? Are there areas where your students are consistently weak?
4) Are graduates of your program getting good jobs, accepted into reputable graduate schools, reporting satisfaction with their undergraduate education?
5) Do you see indications in student performance that point to weakness in any particular skills, such as research, writing, or critical thinking skills?
6) Do you see areas where performance is okay, but not outstanding, and where you would like to see a higher level of performance?

To facilitate the analysis process, you may find it helpful (during the outcome and goal development process) to link program goals to student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes can be mapped to individual courses and perhaps even individual assignments (depending on how far down your program wants/needs to go with assessment, or how far down your assessment/accreditation governing body requires). Mapping these goals/outcomes will enable data aggregation, thus one form of direct assessment, student performance on a specific assignment or problem, can be used to show direct impact on student learning outcomes and program goals.

As discussed earlier for previous steps in the assessment process, you may want to consider forming a department/program assessment committee, which reviews annual assessment data. This committee could aggregate the program assessment data, conduct the appropriate analysis of the data, and then make recommendations to the Faculty for consideration on program changes. This information can be very helpful while deliberating over program curriculum changes. The discussion during the analysis of the assessment data could follow the themes in the questions listed above. The final outcome of the analysis should be a written summation of the assessment data, providing a picture of where the program stands, and possible recommendations for future improvement.

References:

Southeast Missouri State University (1997). *Busy chairperson’s guide to assessment*. [http://www2.semo.edu/provost/assmt/guide.htm](http://www2.semo.edu/provost/assmt/guide.htm)
University Assessment Committee Communication Plan

Conduct a communication audit. Evaluate UAC’s current communications. What is working and what is not working?

Define objectives. Armed with information from your audit, define your overall communication objectives-the results you want to achieve. What are the key messages that we want to convey? Key messages should be simple and clear.

2. Work of UAC is Transparent.
3. Assessment Results Known
4. Requirements/Requests Clear
5. Encourage discourse and build consensus.

Define audiences. List all the audiences that your association might contact, attempt to influence, or serve. Who are the stakeholders? What are their needs and expectations?

1. Faculty
2. Students
3. Administration
4. University Assessment Committee
5. Other ESU Committees
6. ESU Council of Trustees
7. Alumni
8. PASSHE
9. State Legislature
10. Middle States Commission for Higher Education
11. General Public
12. Others?

Define goals. With stated objectives, and considering available human and financial resources, define goals, in other words, a program of work for each objective.

*ARCI. For each assessment identify who is Accountable, Responsible, Consulted and Informed

*Incorporate in ESU Strategic Plan.


2. Objective: Work of UAC is Transparent

3. Objective: Assessment Results Known

4. Objective: Requirements /Requests Clear
   a. Use a consistent message format
      i. Action: You need to xxxx by xxxx. Clear and concise – no confusion.
      ii. Background: Give the background or history of the issue.
iii. Rationale/Reason: Explain why they should do this.
iv. Include labels for each section. Spell it out. Take out the interpretation and guess work.
b. Email is the best method for relaying direct requests.
c. UAC email account. Messages come from University Assessment Committee and no individual. Signature is the UAC in general or co-chairs.
d. Expectations of UAC members – they play a role in passing along requests to their constituents.
e. OAIE will track who has complied with request and alert deans or appropriate party for follow-up.

5. Objective: Encourage Discourse and Build Consensus.

**Identify tools.** Decide what tools will be used to accomplish stated goals. These tools can be anything from a simple flyer to a glossy magazine. Don’t overlook less obvious tools such as posters, report covers, Rolodex cards, and Web sites. Brainstorm ideas.

- Website
- Class assignment to visit site
- Create videos
- PASSHE Academy
- Data Reports posted online
- Collaborate with the Student Senate
- Self Study On-line
- In service workshops
- Collaboration with CETL
- Presentations to “Captive Audience”
- Pamphlet
- Assessment Team Consultants
- Required Training Visit
- New Faculty Orientation
- Easy to read written documents that are non threatening – i.e. more white space/ look “official” provided in both email and hard copy formats.
- Faculty advisors should share information with students – i.e., incoming advisee
- Student Government Association meetings and student newspaper
- College meetings
- University Meetings
- University Senate
- Members of UAC Report Out
- Develop something consistent to talk about (talking points; bullet list; key info, etc.)
- UAC should work with Public relations to create a something glossy to share annually about the work of the UAC

**Establish a timetable.** Create a calendar grid that outlines roughly what projects will be accomplished and when.

**Evaluate the result.** Build into your plan a method for measuring results.