Creating an Assessment-for-Student-Learning-Improvement Plan and Report

**Measures**

Measures are opportunities for programs to collect information about how well students are demonstrating or performing the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Well-chosen measures will yield information that is relevant, useful, and actionable. Measures should be consistently administered to help ensure that data are reliable and that issues of faculty bias are addressed. Measures should directly assess the intended outcome to help ensure data are valid and represent the phenomenon.

There should be at least two measures for every SLO because multiple assessment measures provide a convergence of evidence. This convergence promotes the use of results for decision making. Each measure should incorporate the majority of students in the program or a representative sample. At least one of the measures should be a direct measure of student learning which requires the evaluation of student work samples.

**Common Assessment Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you want to…</th>
<th>Use these sources of information</th>
<th>And assess them using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess knowledge and conceptual understanding</td>
<td>Multiple-choice tests</td>
<td>Item scores that are mapped back to test blueprints</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess thinking and performance skills</td>
<td>Papers, projects, performances, essays, exhibitions, field experiences, and other learning activities</td>
<td>Program level rubrics, rubrics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess attitudes and values</td>
<td>Reflective writing</td>
<td>Qualitative analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-assessments and surveys</td>
<td>Item scores that are mapped back to outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draw an overall picture of student learning, including thinking and performance skills as well as attitudes, values, and habits of mind</td>
<td>Portfolios</td>
<td>Rubrics and reflective writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compare your students against peers</td>
<td>Published instruments, national or certification exams</td>
<td>Item scores and instrument sub-scores that are mapped back to key learning outcomes</td>
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Adapted from “Assessing Student Learning” by Suskie, L. 2018, p. 96.
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Types of Measures

Direct Measures assess actual samples of student work. Direct measures are regularly employed to assess learning in the classroom. They provide evidence of student learning that is tangible, visible, and measureable. Direct measures are assessed by faculty, professionals in the field, or experts regarding what a student learned and how well they learned it.

Examples: Essays, performances, presentations, course projects, capstone projects, exams, final papers, research paper, regional or national tests, ratings or evaluation from field or clinical supervisors, comprehensive exams, etc.

Indirect Measures provide signs, high-level indicators, or perceptions of learning. Indirect measures often assess opinions or thoughts about students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, and perceptions. These measures provide information that students are probably learning and help to substantiate instances of student learning.

Examples: Surveys (student, department, student evaluation of instruction, alumni, employer, faculty), self-assessments, focus groups, interviews, advisory board feedback, employment or placement rates of graduating students into appropriate career positions, graduation or completion rates, number or rate of students involved in faculty research, collaborative publications and/or presentations, service learning, or extension of learning in the larger community, etc.

Direct vs Indirect Measures: Both types of measures have strengths and weaknesses. Each have their own limitations and contain some bias. A meaningful assessment plan should use both direct and indirect measures from a variety of sources (students, alumni, faculty, employers, etc.).

What about course grades? The use of course grades as the sole measure of student learning are insufficient in achieving assessment’s main purposes of educational quality and improvement. They can be a useful indirect measure of student learning to help substantiate evidence from direct measures.

How to Create Meaningful Measures

Measures should address the following questions:

1. Where or when are students demonstrating their skills or abilities?
2. Who will be evaluated?
3. How are students demonstrating their skills or abilities (project, presentation, portfolio, paper, final exam, etc.)?
4. How are these demonstrations of student learning evaluated (rubric, faculty panel, answer key, survey, etc.)?
5. What scale, criteria, or standard is used to evaluate student learning?
6. How is this consistently measured across administrations?
7. What makes this measure trustworthy and useful?
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Meets Standard Criteria on Academic Assessment Rubric:

☑ Measures directly assess intended SLO (validity); measures are consistently evaluated across administrations (reliable); results will yield meaningful information for improvement; includes multiple types of measures; includes 1 direct measure for each SLO

Just Getting Started? Here’s a template to follow

In [1. course or program requirement], [2. student population], will complete a [3. test, portfolio, presentation, performance, assignment, survey, etc.]. This is evaluated by [4. evaluation process] on a scale of [5. criteria or standard]. The program addresses the consistent application of the [rubric, faculty panel, answer key, etc.] across administrations with the use of [6. reliability strategy]. This measure is considered to be trustworthy and useful because [7. validity strategy].

Examples

Example 1: Research project rubric
In [1] ODUU 389W, [2] all graduating seniors will successfully complete a [3] research project on a topic of their choosing. Students are asked to write and present this research project. Written projects are evaluated by [4] a rubric, with one rubric area directly evaluating the student’s ability to articulate in written form the social, historical, and cultural dimensions of the topic. Rubric sections are scored on a scale of [5] 1 - 4, with 4 for Exceeds Standard, 3 for Meets Standard, 2 for Approaches Standard, and 1 for Needs Attention. The program addresses the consistent application of the rubric across administrations with [6] the use of a shared program rubric for the final project. All faculty members teaching this course use the program rubric. This measure is considered to be trustworthy and useful because [7] it was collaboratively developed by program faculty and adopted from ODU’s Improving Disciplinary Writing rubric, which was based on a nationally developed rubric for written communication by AAC&U.

Example 2: Panel review of ePortfolio with rubric
In [1] ODUU 470, [2] all seniors will successfully complete an [3] ePortfolio. Sections of the ePortfolio (section 2 and 5) are specifically related to written communication. ePortfolios are evaluated by three faculty using [4] a program-level rubric, with two rubric areas directly evaluating to written communication and the rubrics are given to students along with the ePortfolio assignment. Rubric sections are scored on a scale of [5] 1 - 4, with 4 for Exemplary, 3 for Good, 2 for Acceptable, and 1 for Unacceptable. The program addresses the consistent application of the rubric across administrations by [6] holding a short norming session at the start of the fall semester. All faculty who teach ODUU 470 attend. Samples of student work are shared and rated on the rubric. Faculty share their ratings, discuss applications of the rubric, and pose questions to each other based on previous experience. This
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ePortfolio evaluations are considered to be trustworthy and useful because the rubric was collaboratively developed by faculty in the program and informed by educational best practices in our field.

Example 3: Capstone test developed by the program
In ODUU 480, all seniors take the capstone test. The test is 50 multiple choice questions. Specific questions on the test were developed to measure this student learning outcome. Students must score 80% or higher on items related to this outcome. If students do not score 80% or higher they are asked to retake the test. The program addresses the consistent application of the test across administrations by adopting a common capstone test. This measure is considered to be trustworthy and useful because the test counts for 10% of the final grade. Additionally, the test was created by two faculty members within the department in 2015. The test was piloted and reviewed to ensure that each question corresponded with the subsequent outcomes.

Example 4: Test developed nationally
In ODUU 490, all seniors will take the capstone test. The test is 100 multiple choice questions. Specific questions on the test are used to measure this student learning outcome. Sub scores should be at or above the national average on questions related to this outcome. The program addresses the consistent application of the test across administrations by using the Major Field Test administered by ETS. This measure is considered to be trustworthy because it was created and validated by ETS. Students are motivated to do well on the test as it counts for 10% of the final grade. Additionally, this measure is considered useful because course curriculum is mapped to the outcomes tested in the major field test.

For more information, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment

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