ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

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Are students learning….

…what we think we are teaching?

How do we know?

What is Assessment?

Assessment is "the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development." (Palomba and Banta 1999)

Course-level vs. program-level assessment

Assessment begins with real questions you would like to answer about student learning in a program and ends with action.

Steps in the assessment cycle

- Define program goals/mission
- Establish learning outcomes
- Determine opportunities for students to demonstrate learning
- Establish a research question or goal and collect pertinent evidence
- Evaluate and interpret student evidence
- Based on results, create and implement a plan to improve the program and student learning
- Communicate results in an annual assessment report (due November 15)

Cycle of Assessment

Some guiding principles…

- Assessment is a natural, scholarly act
- Assessment should be simple, sustainable, and meaningful to those involved
- Assessment consists of three main steps: setting goals, gathering information, and taking action
- Center efforts around student classroom work
- Consider how best to communicate your assessment efforts to those outside of the particular culture of your department
- Build on what you are already doing

…and some pitfalls

- Avoid making the process overly complicated.
- Avoid focusing on collecting data no one is using.
- Avoid thinking about assessment in terms of compliance.

Develop Learning Outcomes

What do we want students to be able to do when they complete our course of study?

Use language that focuses on what students will demonstrate.

Consult relevant professional organizations (see the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment website for examples)

http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/collegesuniversityprograms.html

Consult the Provost's PLOA website for examples from other BU programs

http://www.bu.edu/provost/resources/program-learning-outcomes-assessment/learning-outcomes-by-program/

Identify Assessment Measures

Direct measures: Senior theses, final papers, or other graded projects, comprehensive exams, certification or licensure exams, capstone courses, portfolio evaluations, writing proficiency exams, performance assessments for graduating seniors, locally developed pre- and post- tests, GRE subject exams.

Indirect measures: Student surveys, focus group discussions, job placement data, exit interviews, alumni surveys, tracking of alumni awards and achievements, employer surveys, graduate school acceptance rates.

Deciding where to begin

- Always begin with genuine questions you would like to answer about the program.

- Feedback from APR

- Recent curricular changes, pedagogical innovations, or faculty development efforts you would like to evaluate

- Other evidence (NSSE survey results, student or alumni focus group, anecdotal information)

Gathering evidence and setting criteria

Which student work / evidence will you consider? All students, or a significant sample?

Who will evaluate the work? According to what criteria?

How will results be shared with the department to decide on appropriate action?

Devise a simple organizational structure or make use of existing faculty structures and regular meetings in the department
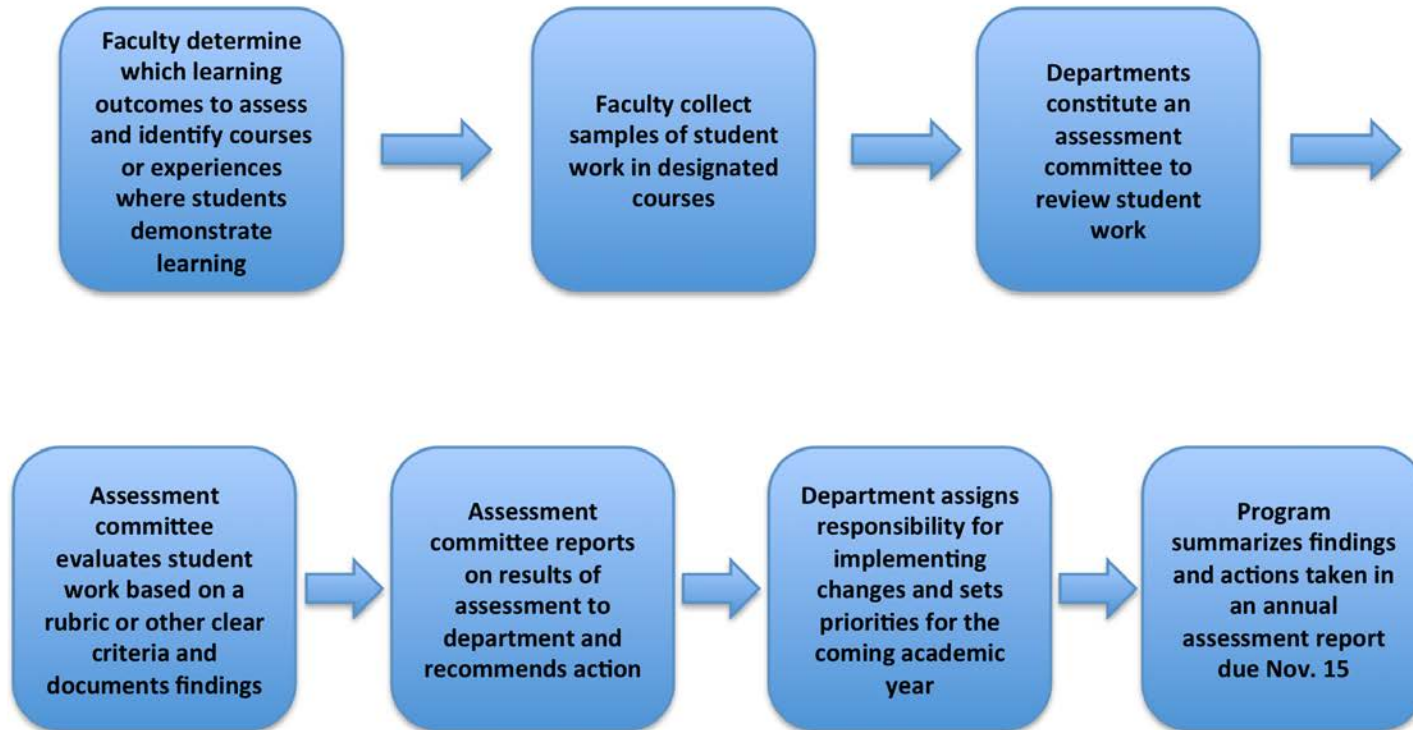
Taking action

- "closing the loop"

- Ask: is additional information or evidence needed to make an informed decision?

- Is curricular change warranted?

- Could changes in teaching approaches make a difference?

- What kinds of faculty development might help?

- Assign responsibility for implementing changes and follow up on their impact

Reporting

- Consider multiple audiences when communicating about assessment
- BU report template
- Summarize assessment activities and results, but include a description of the group assessed, a description of the student work reviewed, how the review process took place, findings, and who interpreted those findings. Finally, describe actions taken based on this information.
- Reports due annually on November 15

http://www.bu.edu/provost/resources/program-learning-outcomes-assessment/resources-for-assessment/

Timeline
Spring-Fall 2015

Faculty determine which learning outcomes to assess and identify courses or experiences where students demonstrate learning	**Faculty collect samples of student work in designated courses**	**Departments constitute an assessment committee to review student work**

Assessment committee evaluates student work based on a rubric or other clear criteria and documents findings	**Assessment committee reports on results of assessment to department and recommends action**	**Department assigns responsibility for implementing changes and sets priorities for the coming academic year**	**Program summarizes findings and actions taken in an annual assessment report due Nov. 15**

http://www.bu.edu/provost/resources/program-learning-outcomes-assessment/

Further Reading

Palomba, C. and Banta, T., eds. *Assessing Student Competence in Accredited Disciplines*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2001.

Suskie, Linda. *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Walvoord, Barbara. *Assessment Clear and Simple*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.