Introduction to Assessment for New Faculty

Idaho State University

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ISU Assessment Website

The Assessment Cycle and Our "Why"

What is our "Why?" This question motivates and explains everything we do at Idaho State University, from academics to the non-academic support units. The answer is simple: students are our "Why." The ISU faculty community is committed to student learning and success and assessment is one of the ways we evaluate learning and use what we found to make changes.

The assessment cycle is shown below and involves faculty in all our programs working together. As a new faculty your program or the general education courses you teach may already have an assessment, curriculum map, and actionable data that is being used to make changes. Departments may have someone who serves as an assessment coordinator or it may be the chair or faculty colleagues who help design and implement the plan. Assessment involves continuous improvement and your participation is a valuable part of planning, collecting, and using data.
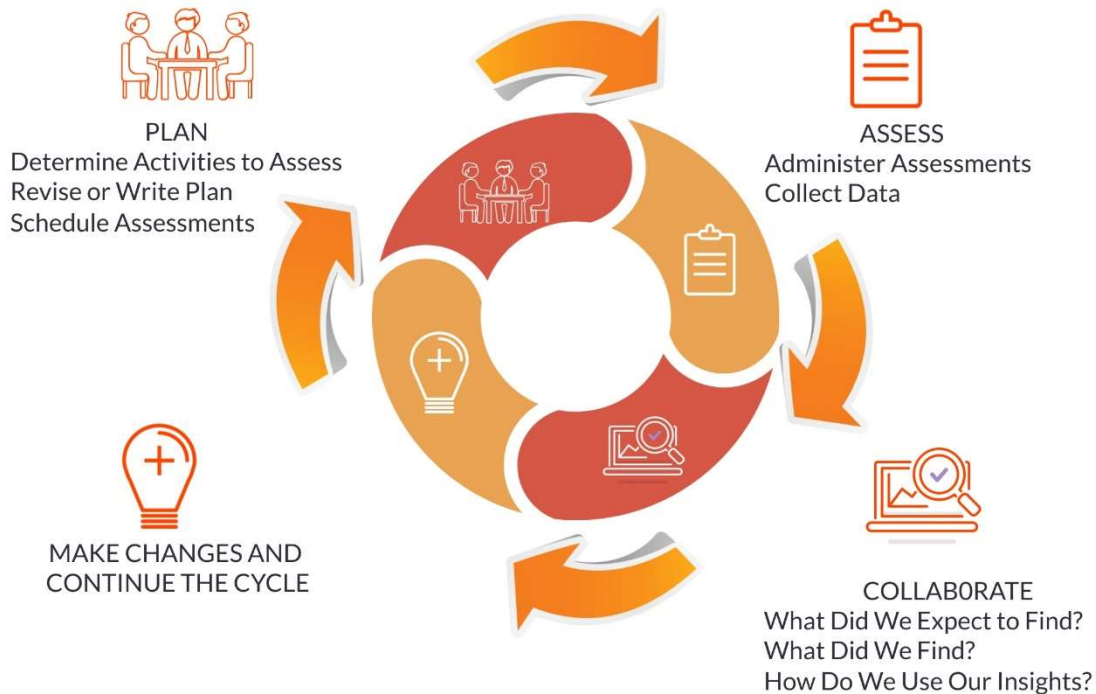
This document will provide you with the basics but there is more information available at the assessment website. In addition, the Office of Assessment provides workshops each semester for all faculty and, if requested, for individual departments.

Terminology and be confusing and this document provides you with a glossary on some of the language used to describe the assessment process.

IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY

8 Steps to assessment success

Start with a conversation about learning.

01 Assessment Plans
- What do we want students to learn and be able to do?
- How can we include all who teach, from tenured faculty to adjuncts?
- How can we be inclusive of all types of faculty and all the places and ways we teach from online to high schools?
- Do we have a curriculum map showing all our required course in the program?

02 Program Objectives (Goals)
- What information does your accreditor or national professional organization provide about assessment?
- Does our program have objectives in a plan we use or can revise?
- For General Education Classes: The State Board of Education Gen Ed classes for Objectives 1 - 6 and ISU Gen Eds 7-9 already have objectives

03 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
- Make measurable & framed using action verbs from Bloom's taxonomy
- Include on course syllabi and the program's internet site
- Incorporate program goals and SLOs into the program's curriculum map
- General Education classes already have Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

04 Creating assignments & activities to assess
- What kinds of student work will we collect? Projects, observations, test questions, assignments?
- How can we have a consistent process in our required program classes?
- Can we all use the same question or other work in all sections?

05 Writing and using rubrics
Rubrics are guidelines or standards faculty use to decide if student work evaluated for assessment exceeds, meets or does not meet the expectations for the work. Having written descriptions of the criteria and discussing them helps consistency. The State Board of Education Gen Ed SLOs include SLO rubrics

06 Collecting Assessment Data
If your program already has data, use it. Data may be direct or indirect. Indirect data is collected from focus groups, surveys or the perceptions of students and alumni, or data including placement and internships. Direct data is created when you evaluate student work. Decide how to collect the data so all faculty, locations, and online/in-person, hybrid or hyperflex are included.

07 Organizing and Analyzing Data
When it is time to assess, faculty can pick a random sample or assess each student. Deciding to assess each student means you can then match their outcomes with demographic and other data available from the institution. That analysis can pinpoint groups that might need extra support.

08 Using Results to Make Changes
Meet as a group and talk about the results. Ask questions:
- Why do you think the results occurred?
- What do they tell us about student learning?
- What could we change? Close the loop by assessing the changes.
- When will we re-assess students to see if the changes had an impact?

Your department may be at any one of these steps. You can support assessment by learning which steps your department is working on.

If you teach a required class in the curriculum, it is important to review the department's curriculum map so you know which objectives and their accompanying student learning outcomes are covered in your courses.

If you teach a General Education class, access and review the website for the General Education Requirements Committee (GERC) to find out more about the Gen Ed program at ISU.

Departments regularly review not only their data but also the assessment plan and curriculum maps.

Once a program completes all 8 steps, it will always return to step 6 and then re-assess changes. Programs also regularly review, if not revise, items in steps 1 – 5.

Examples of changes programs made in response to their assessment data is shown on the next page.

How Programs Used Assessment Results at Idaho State University

Results
2017 Survey

82% Changed the Curriculum

62% Revised the Process

56% Updated Equipment or Materials

49% Revised Advising Procedures

47% Changed Pedagogy

44% Revised Learning Outcomes

0% Reorganized the program

0% Revised Strategic Plan

Anatomy of Assessment-the Program Level

There are three kinds of programs at Idaho State University: those with external accreditation, the General Education program, and programs without external accreditation. Data is collected to be used for change but programs also have minimal reporting at the University level. Annual reports are due November 1 each year for all programs with and without external accreditation. GERC also requires a separate annual report which is also due on November 1.

Coordinate with your assessment coordinator or department chair to provide them with information and data. Only one report per program is required. If there are multiple sections of a Gen Ed class, only one report should be submitted for all sections and instructors. The diagram on the next page will help you understand the category for your assessment efforts. You may find that you fit in two categories if you teach in the General Education program and teach required courses in your program. The Program-Level Assessment Handbook can help.

Anatomy of Assessment-Accreditation and Program Reviews

The courses you teach may or may not be part of the curriculum map that encompasses all the required courses. If your course is required, you will need to communicate with your department to understand the expectations for assessment. Often, new faculty provide new ideas that can be incorporated into classes. Departments should support new faculty with examples of activities along with the objectives and student learning outcomes.

New faculty should also ask where their department is within the accreditation cycle for their program, if it is accredited. If your program does not have external accreditation, it will help to see when the self-study period is for the program. The institution provides a template for programs without external accreditation to help them prepare a self-study report, bring in external reviewers, and respond thoughtfully to the ideas from the self-study and review.

Anatomy of Assessment-the Course-Level

Faculty have objectives and student learning outcomes for the courses they teach. If more than one faculty teach the course, the objectives, student learning outcomes, activities, data collection, and use of the data for changes is a collaborative effort. The Course-Level Assessment Handbook can help.

Conclusion

Committed faculty engage in assessment because it helps us achieve our "why." The Office of Assessment is here to help you at any stage. The Office of Assessment's philosophy is that the best assessment is the one we use to make change. This means you may need help streamlining your work, interpreting your data, or determining, or building skills via a workshop. The students are our "why" and our faculty are the "how" we achieve quality programs and education.

ANATOMY OF ASSESSMENT

Accredited Programs	General Education Program	Programs without External Accreditation
Objectives Based on Accredititation Standards	Objectives 1-6 Determined by State Board Faculty Group	Objectives Determined by Program Faculty
	ISU Objectives 7-9 Determined by Campus Faculty Group	
Student Learning Outcomes Created for All Objectives	State Board of Education and ISU Faculty Create SLOs	Student Learning Outcomes Created for All Objectives
Curriculum Map for Required Classes Shows where Each objective and SLO is Evaluated		Curriculum Map for Required Classes Shows where Each objective and SLO is Evaluated

Collect assessment data and complete annual reporting: Programs upload a brief annual report to the assessment website, and General Ed classes are uploaded to General Education Requirments Committee.

All programs and General Education courses use assessment results to implement changes to improve student learning & then assess the changes and start the cycle again.

Appendix A: Glossary

Term	Definition
Assessment	Assessment is deciding what we want our students to learn and making sure they learn it. (Suskie, p 8)
Assessment: Add-On	Add-on assessment refers to any ungraded assessment activity. Except for licensure or certification exams, add-on assessments should never be the centerpiece of an assessment program. (Suskie, 279)
Assessment: Analytic	Analytic assessment involves assessing different aspects of student performance, such as mechanics, grammar, style, organization, and voice in student writing. (Jönsson et al)
Assessment: Holistic	Holistic assessment means making an overall assessment, considering all criteria simultaneously. (Jönsson et al)
Closing the Loop/Using Assessment Results	Closing the Loop" encompasses analyzing results from outcome assessments, using results to make changes to improve student learning, and re-assessing outcomes in order to determine the effect those changes had on student learning. (NOVA)
Direct Assessment	Direct assessment involves looking at actual samples of student work produced in our programs. These include capstone projects, senior theses, exhibits or performances. (Skidmore College)
Embedded Assessments	Embedded assessments are course assignments and learning activities that can provide evidence of student achievement of program, general education, or institutional learning goals. (Suskie, p157)

Formative Assessment	The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. More specifically, formative assessments help: ✓ students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work ✓ faculty recognize where students are struggling and address problems immediately Formative assessments are generally low stakes, which means that they have low or no point value. (Carnegie Mellon University Eberly Center)
Indirect Assessment	Indirect assessment is gathering information through means other than looking at actual samples of student work. These include surveys, exit interviews, and focus groups. (Skidmore College)
Objectives	Objectives describe broad learning goals and concepts (what you want students to learn) which are expressed in general terms (e.g., clear communication, problem-solving skills, etc.) (ISU, p 9)
Objectives: State Board of Education & ISU	The Idaho State Board of Education developed six state-wide learning objectives (GEM 1 – 6) with input from faculty representing their institutions as Gen Ed State-Wide Reps. Idaho State University developed ISU Objectives seven through 9 for the institution.
Rubric	A rubric is a written guide for assessing student work. At a minimum, it lists the things you are looking for when you assess student work. (Suskie, p 190)
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)	Outcomes are the specific skills, values, and attitudes students should exhibit that reflect the broader objectives (e.g., for students in a freshman writing course, this might be "students are able to develop a cogent argument to support a position. (ISU, p 9)

Summative Assessment	The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.
	Summative assessments are often high stakes, which means that they have a high point value. Examples of summative assessments include: ✓ a midterm exam ✓ a final project ✓ a paper ✓ a senior recital Information from summative assessments can be used formatively when students or faculty use it to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent courses. (Carnegie Mellon University Eberly Center)

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