

Strategies for Strengthening Assessment of the First College Year

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Overview

- **Assessment Structures**
 - Criterion Referenced
 - Value Added Model
 - Benchmarking
- **Typology of Assessment Tools**
- **Assessment Perennial Problems**

Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs for the purpose of improving student learning and development.

Effective Assessment

Either. . .

Creates Improvement

OR

Confirms Current Practice

Assessment Strategies

1. Criteria Referenced

2. Value Added

3. Benchmarking

Assessment Strategies

Criteria Referenced

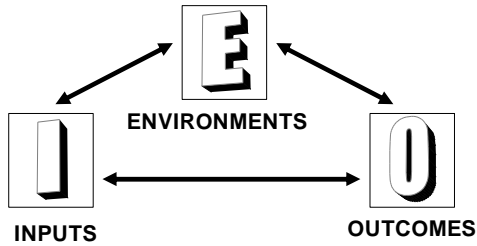
Pre-established minimum score

Often individual rather than program assessment

Examples:

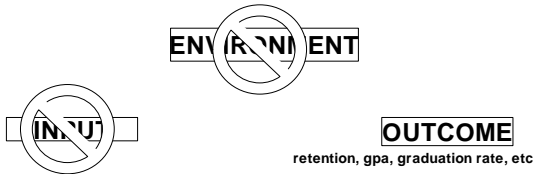
- Placement tests
- Exit tests
- Externally mandated assessment

**Value Added
I - E - O Model**



**Common Errors in
Assessment Designs:
An Incomplete I-E-O Model**

Outcomes Only Assessment



**Common Errors in
Assessment Designs:
An Incomplete I-E-O Model**

Environment Only Assessment

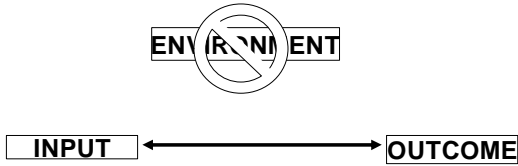


Count the number who enrolled.

**Common Errors in
Assessment Designs:
An Incomplete I-E-O Model
Environment - Outcomes Assessment**



**Common Errors in
Assessment Designs:
An Incomplete I-E-O Model
Input - Outcome Assessment**



What but not how or why?

Assessment Strategies

Benchmarking



Control for input and environment
by PEER SELECTION process

Typology of Instruments for First College Year Assessment

Pre-Enrollment/Baseline Data

These surveys are administered in high school, during the admissions process, or during new student orientation. Survey participants report their expectations, impressions, goals, and/or hopes for the college experience or they report their pre-enrollment behaviors and experiences. These surveys:

- Provide baseline data – Who are our students at the point of entry?
- Form gain scores when matched with posttests.
- Provide covariates & controls for advanced statistical evaluations.

CSXQ – College Student Expectations Questionnaire (Kuh, Indiana)
College Student Inventory Form A (Noel-Levitz)
College Student Inventory Form B (Noel-Levitz)
CIRP – The Freshman Survey (Astin, UCLA)
Entering Student Survey (ACT)
Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire (ACT)
Survey of Current Activities and Plans (ACT)
Survey of Postsecondary Plans (high school version) – (ACT)

End of First-Year Surveys

Three new instruments, the NSSE, YFCY and CCSSE, were developed as part of The Pew Charitable Trusts accountability agenda for higher education. The NSSE and YFCY are designed primarily for 4-year institutions. Both survey students near the end of their first year in college. The CCSSE is designed for 2-year institutions and surveys a random sample of courses (so it is not limited to first-year students.) The NSSE is also intended for use with seniors. The YFCY survey can be used alone or linked with the CIRP Freshman Survey to form a pretest/posttest.

College Student Report - NSSE - National Survey of Student Engagement (Kuh, Indiana)
* also a survey of seniors
Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) –(McClenney, University of Texas)
Your First College Year (Sax, UCLA) – posttest to CIRP

General Surveys of Student Behavior, Attitudes, Study Skills, Satisfaction, & Experiences

These surveys take a holistic approach by collecting information on a variety of college experiences and environments. Examples of topics:

- “average time” spent on academic and co-curricular tasks
- frequency of contact with peers, faculty, and staff
- self-reported gains in knowledge and self-confidence
- study skills such as time-management, note-taking, etc
- satisfaction with college
- life management skills (relationship with roommate, parents, partners, etc.)

College Outcomes Survey (ACT)
CSS - College Student Survey (Astin, UCLA)
CSEQ - College Student Experiences Questionnaire (Kuh, Indiana)
College Student Needs Assessment Survey-(ACT)
Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire (Murrell, Memphis)
Faces of the Future (ACT/American Association of Community Colleges)
Institutional Priorities Survey 4-year & Com College/Jr. College versions (Noel-Levitz)
Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (Weinstein)
PEEK -Perceptions, Expectations, Emotions, and Knowledge about Campus (Weinstein)
RSVP – Student Retention Survey – (Harris International) 4-year & 2-year versions
Student Development Task & Lifestyle Assessment (Student Development Assoc.)
Student Opinion Survey – (ACT)
Student Satisfaction Inventory (Noel-Levitz) 4-year, Jr. college, 2-year

Surveys of Specific Services/Units/Programs

These surveys deeply investigate a particular slice of the college experience with a series of narrowly drawn and specific questions about the full range of a given service, unit or program. Instruments may include demographic and self-report questions so that opinions can be disaggregated. Examples of available Instruments include those focused on academic advising, residence life, campus student unions and first-year seminars.

College Student Unions (EBI & Association of College Unions International)
Financial Aid Services – (ACT)
First Year Initiative (FYI) benchmarking (EBI)
LCQ36 - Learning Community Effectiveness Survey (Indiana)
Resident Halls (EBI & ACUHO – I)
Survey of Academic Advising – (ACT)

Surveys of Specific Populations

This survey group also has a narrow focus, but these instruments primarily provide information to evaluate the experiences, satisfaction, etc. of a specific group of students across a range of services, behaviors, etc. Examples of sub-population instruments include adult learners, fraternity or sorority members, and non-returning students.

Adult Learner Needs Assessment Survey (ACT)
Adult Student Priorities Survey (Noel-Levitz)
Fraternity Survey and Sorority Survey(EBI)
Student Instructional Report II
Withdrawing/Nonreturning Student Survey (short & long forms) (ACT)

Placement and Academic Knowledge Surveys/Tests

These instruments are designed to test academic knowledge and skills. Unlike opinion and satisfaction surveys, these instruments usually have a right answer and the student is judged on his/her ability to select the best (right) answer. Some instruments contain a mix of discipline topics, but it is more common for tests to be designed to measure one specific knowledge domain. The use of these instruments may vary depending on the timing of the test. For example:

- Surveys given during new-student orientations are often designed to place students in the appropriate level of college courses based on knowledge at the point of admissions.
- Surveys given in the sophomore/junior year may serve as formative evaluation of progress or be “gateways” to a major.
- Surveys given in the senior year may serve as summative evaluation or as a posttest of institutional effectiveness.

In addition to knowledge testing, students may also be asked to self-report their gain in academic skills & knowledge.

Academic Profile (long & short forms) (ETS)
ASSET (ACT)
Accuplacer & Companion (ETS)
California Critical Thinking Dispositions Inventory (California Academic Press)
California Critical Thinking Skills Test (California Academic Press)
CollegeBASE (Missouri)
College Placement Test (College Board, CPT)
Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)
COMPASS/ESL (ACT)
Cornell Critical Thinking Test (Critical Thinking Press & Software)
Tasks in Critical Thinking (ETS)
Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (Psychological Corp.)

Is the relationship
a correlation or cause & effect?

Correlation –

Two phenomena happen together
Can't determine causation

Cause & Effect –

One phenomenon causes the other to occur.

An independent variable is manipulated to isolate
its impact on a dependent variable

Assessing Writing

- Academic Profile
- Accuplacer
- Asset
- CAAP
- CollegeBASE
- Compass

Understanding Student Self-Report Data

There is a rich body of evidence that
student self-reports can be valid
measures of...

Satisfaction

Learning Outcomes

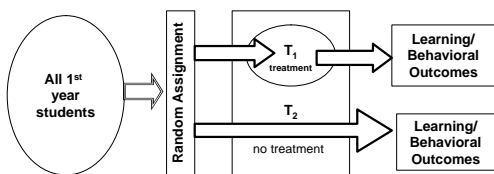
Personal Behaviors

Pedagogy

Students CAN Provide Accurate Self-Reports (Unless we ask dumb questions)

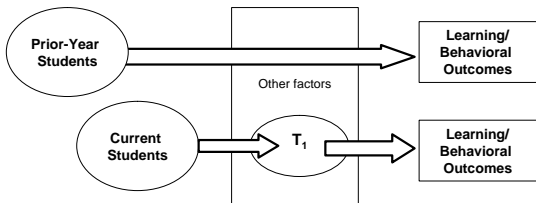
How good are you at computing?
 In High School how often did study with friends?
 Have your critical thinking skills improved this year?
 Did this course increase your writing/thinking skills?

Model 1: An Experimental Design with random assignment to treatment or non treatment groups. Differences in outcomes can be directly attributed to level of participation in the intervention, because all other student characteristics and experiences vary randomly.

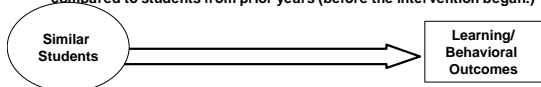


(Rarely possible in educational interventions.)

Model 2: Mandatory intervention models do not have contemporary comparison groups.



Use benchmarking (comparison to a similar external group) or be compared to students from prior years (before the intervention began.)



Methods of Assessing Writing

Academic profile:

One essay written in 45 minutes. Students select from three options (Humanities, Social Science, or Natural Science). Essay must be supported with information drawn from subject area courses. Writing graded on a 4 point scale. Grading is done by local professors using the ETS scoring rubric. "Once trained, a professor can grade 40-50 essays per hour." Each essay is scored by two judges. "Therefore, 6 faculty could score 200 papers in 3 hours."

Accuplacer:

Essay written on a computer connected to the Internet. The essay is immediately graded using artificial intelligence. The score includes a holistic grade with sub scores for focus, development, organization, and sentence structure.

Asset

36 multiple choice items in 25 minutes. Covers grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, writing style, and writing structure.

CAAP

Essay:

Two essays each written in 20 minutes. One prompt for each essay. Students must "make a decision, take a position, and support that position." Knowledge level to write the essays is "within the command of college sophomores." Scored on a 6 point scale by ACT staff

Multiple choice test:

72-item, 40 minute multiple choice test of standard written English. Tests "English in usage/mechanics (punctuation, grammar, sentence structure) and rhetorical skills (strategy, organization, style). Spelling, vocabulary, and rote recall of grammar are not tested. The test consists of six prose passages, each of which is accompanied by a set of 12 multiple-choice test items."

CollegeBASE

Essay: One essay written in 40 minutes from one prompt. The essay is "on issues and concerns common to college campuses rather than on course-specific knowledge or current events." Scored by at least two CollegeBASE trained readers on a 6-point scale.

Multiple choice test:

Tests the "skills involved in the various stages of the writing process, from gathering and organizing information to revising the rough draft." Students may be presented sentences with non-standard English and asked to find the flaw.

Compass

Students "find and correct errors in essays presented on the computer screen." Includes test items about punctuation, basic grammar, sentence structure and rhetorical skills (strategy, organization, and style).

Other methods:

Portfolio created from "best work"

Portfolio created from randomly selected course work

Self-report of gain in writing ability

Course Embedded Assignments