

Exercise 1: Where Are You Regarding Assessment? A Situation Audit

Jot down brief answers to each of the following questions. Answer them from your individual perspective, not a collective perspective.

1. How familiar are you with current thinking on the principles and practice of assessment?
2. Why do you think assessment is important? How will assessment benefit your institution? individual faculty and staff members?
3. Is assessment a priority on your campus? Why or why not?
4. What is your vision of assessment on your campus? Why does that vision appeal to you?
5. How do you share that vision with others across campus? How do you otherwise inspire interest in assessment across campus?
6. Where, in a general sense, is your institution regarding assessment? Where and in what ways are things are going well? Where and in what ways are lagging?
7. How familiar are you with MSCHE Standards 7 (Institutional Assessment) and 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)?
8. Where is your institution in terms of meeting MSCHE expectations for those standards?

Look over your answers to the above questions, then discuss the following with your team.

1. What do your answers say about what you are already doing to foster a culture of assessment?
2. What do your answers suggest about steps you might take to foster a culture of assessment?

Exercise 2: Promoting Deep, Lasting Learning

A growing body of research evidence indicates that students learn most effectively when:

1. They understand course and program goals and the **characteristics of excellent work**.
2. They are academically challenged and given **high but attainable expectations**.
3. They are **graded on important goals**. While students do pick up some things through faculty and staff modeling, discussions, and the like, they focus their time and energy learning what they'll be graded on...and therefore learn those things more effectively.
4. They are **taught with enthusiasm**.
5. New learning is **related to their prior experiences**.
6. They spend **significant time studying** and practicing.
7. They use or apply memorized facts in some way, because **facts memorized in isolation are quickly forgotten**.
8. The diversity of their learning styles is respected. They are given **a variety of ways to learn** and to demonstrate what they've learned.
9. They spend more time actively involved in **learning through hands-on practice** and receiving information visually. They spend less time listening to lectures and reading long texts.
10. They engage in **multidimensional "real world" tasks** in which they explore, analyze, justify, evaluate, use other thinking skills, and arrive at multiple solutions. Such tasks may include realistic class assignments, field experiences, and service learning opportunities.
11. They spend more time **interacting with others**—face-to-face and/or online. They receive individual attention from faculty and work collaboratively with fellow students.
12. They participate in **co-curricular activities** that build on what they are learning in the classroom.
13. They **reflect** on what and how they have learned and **see coherence** in their learning.
14. They have a **synthesizing experience** such as a capstone course, independent study, or research project.
15. **Assessments are learning activities** in their own right.
16. They receive **prompt, concrete feedback** on their work.
17. They have opportunities to **revise** their work.

Source: Suskie, L. (In press). *Assessment Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

1. With your team, write one of the following codes next to each of the items on this list:
 - Yes! = We already actively emphasize and reward this across campus.
 - OK = We encourage this across campus, although we could do more.
 - Think = We're not encouraging this as well as we could; we have to think about how to encourage this more.
 - ??? = Realistically, we can't encourage this at our institution.
2. With your team, brainstorm some ways to encourage and, perhaps, reward the strategies you marked "OK" and "Think."

Exercise 3: Creating an Environment for Learning, Innovation...and Even Risk-Taking

Discuss the following questions with your team. If you don't have time to consider all these questions, discuss those that are most pertinent on your campus.

1. What initiatives have been launched successfully on your campus? How was campus buy-in achieved with those initiatives? Are there any lessons you can apply to getting buy-in for assessment?
2. How much is collaboration valued on your campus? How much is cross-campus collaboration valued? Should you further encourage and reward collaboration? If so, how?
3. How, if at all, do you define "teaching excellence" at your institution? Does your definition reflect research-based practices that promote deep, lasting learning? Would a clearer—or different—definition be helpful?
4. How much does teaching and learning "quality" or "excellence" *really* factor in to faculty promotion and tenure decisions? in evaluations of faculty leaders (deans)? Are assessment results considered evidence of teaching effectiveness? If not, should they be?
5. How do you encourage and reward faculty efforts to *improve* teaching and learning? What happens when changes in curricula and pedagogies initially fail?
6. How much of your budget is spent on helping faculty improve teaching and learning? How are those resources deployed? How *effectively* are they deployed?
7. Do you encourage and reward faculty and staff who engage in the scholarship of teaching? If so, how? How effective are your efforts?
8. When recruiting new faculty, how much weight do you place on candidates with documented success in creating learning-centered environments?
9. How do you otherwise demonstrate your personal support for development of a learning-centered environment?
10. Are you doing enough to foster an environment that fosters learning, innovation, and risk-taking? What else might you do?

Exercise 4: Identifying Sources of Resistance to Assessment

Discuss the following questions with your team:

1. Who is foot-dragging at your institution: faculty? staff? campus leaders?
2. Why are they foot-dragging at your institution?
3. Why are the "hard core resisters" so resistant to assessment?
4. How might you address those sources of resistance?
5. Do faculty understand what academic freedom means and doesn't mean? If there are misunderstandings, how can you correct them?

Exercise 5: Identifying Strategies to Foster a Culture of Assessment

Discuss the following questions with your team. If you don't have time to consider all these questions, discuss those that are most pertinent on your campus.

1. Incentives and rewards for engaging in assessment
 - a. What questions are faculty most interested in regarding their programs, teaching methods, and students? Can assessment help answer these questions?
 - b. What incentives and rewards might work at your campus? How can you celebrate, honor, and reward efforts to assess student learning...in a cost-effective way?
2. Faculty leadership of assessment
 - a. Are faculty empowered to lead assessment? What decisions are they empowered to make regarding assessment? What decisions are made by administrators?
 - b. Is there a faculty-led steering committee?
 - i. What is its charge? Is the charge appropriate?
 - ii. Who chairs it? Who is on it? Are they the right people? sensitive and open-minded to other perspectives and values? flexible? passionate about teaching and learning? with—or willing to develop—enough expertise to fulfill their responsibilities?
 - iii. How effective is the committee in fulfilling its charge? Why is it effective or ineffective?
3. Administrative support of assessment
 - a. How do you promote and facilitate assessment? Are your communication strategies effective?
 - b. Is assessment an “add-on” expectation? What can be put on a back burner to help make time for assessment?
 - c. Is there an assessment coordinator?
 - i. What are his or her responsibilities? Why?
 - ii. Is he or she sufficiently empowered to fulfill those responsibilities?

- d. What kinds of professional development opportunities do faculty need? What kinds are most effective?
 - e. What kinds of technical support do faculty need?
 - f. What are faculty already doing well regarding assessment? How can you build on those successes?
 - g. How can you foster assessment in a period of contracting resources?
4. Expectations for assessment
- a. Are they clear? Does everyone understand exactly what they are to do?
 - b. Are they realistic? Or are they too complex, too demanding, or require too much time?
 - c. Are they rigid or flexible? Do you encourage multiple, innovative approaches?
 - d. What must faculty and staff report regarding assessment? Why?
 - i. Can the reporting process be made simpler, faster, and more effective?
 - ii. What kind of feedback is provided on assessment reports?
5. Support of campus processes for assessment (Resource allocation, administrative performance review, and faculty promotion & tenure are discussed at other points today.)
- a. Academic program review
 - i. What is its purpose? How effective is it in achieving that purpose?
 - ii. What is the balance of emphasis on inputs, processes, and outcomes? Should this balance be modified?
 - b. Curriculum approval

Exercise 6: Using Assessment Results

Discuss the following questions with your team.

1. How do you use assessment results? What kinds of decisions do assessment results inform?
2. What data and information inform campus planning discussions? Are plans based on anecdotal or systematic evidence? Are assessment results folded into campus planning discussions? If so, how?
3. How, if at all, do planning priorities and assessment results inform budget decisions?
4. How do funding priorities reward those programs that are seriously engaged in assessment efforts?
 - a. Is funding priority given to resource requests supported by assessment evidence?
 - b. Is funding priority given to pervasive rather than isolated problems?
 - c. How do funding priorities address disappointing assessment results?
5. How might you use positive results to tell the story of your institution's successes? Who would be the audiences for that story?

