

Assessment Team

The University Assessment Team was established to provide leadership and assistance in developing and overseeing an institutional effectiveness program. This program will provide continuous self-evaluation and improvement across all academic and non-academic units at Henderson State University. The team's primary function is to serve in an advisory capacity to academic and non-academic departments. The objectives for the team are:

- To promote a university image that values assessment and continuous quality improvement
- To promote assessment through training and education
- To develop assessment criteria

- To determine the assessment cycle
- To design the institutional review process
- To communicate the assessment goals of the university to all areas (academic/administrative/departmental)
- To assist with the submission of assessment plans and process results
- To conduct the review process of plans and results
- To make recommendations regarding the results submitted

ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERS FOR 2005-2006

- Wrenette Tedder, Assessment and Research
- Ginger Otwell, Assessment and Research
- Bruce Smith, Teachers College
- Carl Stark, School of Business
- Haroon Khan, Ellis College of Arts and Sciences
- Bob Yehl, Academic Affairs
- Lecia Franklin, Administration and Finance
- Pam Ligon, Student Services
- Jennifer Holbrook, Community and University Relations
- David Thigpen, President's Office
- Katherine Woodall, Graduate School

The Office of Assessment and Research assists all academic and non-academic departments at Henderson State University in developing their assessment plans and maintaining the plans with data in TracDat. To learn more, visit their website at:

<http://www.hsu.edu/research-assessment/>

If you can't find it here, contact Wrenette Tedder, Director of Assessment, at 230-5270 for any questions you may have.

Want to keep receiving paper copies of the newsletter?

Future newsletters will be published on the Office of Assessment and Research website. Paper copies will be mailed only to those individuals who request it. If you want to receive paper copies in the future, please e-mail Wrenette Tedder at tedderw@hsu.edu to be added to the request list.

Assessment Brief is brought to you by the Office of Assessment and Research:

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Ginger Otwell, Research Associate*



Assessment Brief

Ready for the Next Step in TracDat?

Training dates have been set up for the next step in assessment-**observations**. This step includes making your observations, putting your results into TracDat and documenting the changes to your department or program based on your evidence.

Training sessions are as follows:

Faculty—March 7-9, 14 (3-5 p.m.), March 10 (1:30-3:30 p.m.).

Staff—March 7-9 (9-11 a.m.), March 13 (1:30-3:30 p.m.), March 10 and 14 (10-12).

An e-mail will be sent to those who need to sign up to attend the training.

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New HLC Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

The new Higher Learning Commission accreditation criteria became effective in January 2005. Over the next few newsletters we will discuss various parts each of the new criterion.

Excerpts from criterion one include:

The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students. Evidence for this criteria include:

- ◆ The organization's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.
- ◆ In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.
- ◆ Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization.
- ◆ The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.
- ◆ The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

If you would like to view this and other criterion in full you may do so by going to:

<http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/download/PolicyBookJan05.pdf>

Information for article comes from HLC website.

Why Do We Need to Conduct Assessment?

Let's face it, assessment is a fact of life in today's educational system. The different accrediting organizations ask that universities conduct assessment in order to be accredited or renew their accreditation.

Well, there are other reasons for conducting assessment beside this one. Five of these reasons are listed below:

- 1) Assessment is used to improve student learning
- 2) Assessment is used to satisfy the demand for accountability from external agencies
- 3) Assessment is used to improve student services to improve student satisfaction
- 4) Through assessment we can show how we meet, or exceed, our standards of excellence
- 5) Assessment also helps to show how your work makes a measurable difference in the lives of students, and ultimately, their employers and constituents

FAQ: Why Aren't Grades Valid Assessment Tools?

The following article comes from the "Toolkit" newsletter at Northern Illinois University.

Many faculty members grade their students according to demonstrated mastery of course content. Why, then, aren't grades useful in assessing student learning outcomes?

The answer is threefold.

First, grades may take into account extra effort or extra credit on the part of the student. Such effort may well be worthy of a grade increase — or decrease, if

the converse is the case — but at that point, the grade is no longer a pure reflection of learning outcomes.

Second, grades inevitably vary by teacher. Every student knows that the same class is not the same class if it is taught by a "tough" teacher versus an "easy" one. Department chairs sometimes experience this phenomenon as grade inflation. Essentially, student grades may suffer or soar in part due to poor inter-rater reliability.

Third, and most importantly, grades are often a "kitchen sink" measure because they simultaneously take into account multiple learning objectives.

For true, authentic assessment to occur, each course learning objective must be delineated into a measurable component that can stand alone. Outcomes must clearly show to what degree *each* objective has been met.

Confused by Assessment Definitions?

This newsletter will feature a series designed to help clarify the common assessment terminology.

Criteria/Standards:

Performance descriptors that indicate how well students will meet expectations of what they should be able to think, know and do. They are descriptive benchmarks against which performance is judged. Often they are stated in terms of percentages, percentiles, or other quantitative measures (Nichols, 2000).

Evaluation: Decisions made about assessment findings; deciding about the value of programs/program outcomes; may involve recommendations for changes.

Goals: description of intended

results of learning stated in global, general terms, e.g. clear communication, problem solving.

Objectives/Outcomes:

Statements that describe measurable expectations of what students should be able to think, know or do when they've completed a given educational program. Each statement should



describe one expectation; should not bundle several into one statement. The statements must be clear, easily understood by all faculty in the area/department.

Measurement: Process of quantifying any human attribute pertinent to education without necessarily making judgments or interpretations.

Rubric: A scoring guide consisting of specified pre-established performance criteria used to evaluate performance.

Qualitative: Data in which the values of a variable differ in kind (quality) rather than in amount.

Quantitative: Data in which the values of a variable differ in amount rather than in kind.

Direct vs. Indirect Assessment

The most important criterion when selecting an assessment method is whether it will provide useful information - information that indicates whether students are learning and developing in ways faculty have agreed are important (Palomba & Banta 2000).

DIRECT ASSESSMENT methods require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills and provide data that directly measure achievement of expected outcomes. Examples:

•**Capstone or Senior-Level** projects, papers, presentations, performances, portfolios, or research evaluated by faculty or external review teams. These are effective as assessment tools when the student work is evaluated in a standard manner that focuses on student achievement of program-level outcomes.

•**Exams** - locally developed comprehensive exams or entry-to-program exams, or national standardized exams, certification or licensure exams, or professional exams

•**Internship or Practicum** - evaluations of student knowledge and skills from internship supervisors, faculty overseers, or from student participants themselves. This may include written evaluations from supervisors focused on specific knowledge or skills or evaluation of student final reports or presentations from internship experiences.

•**Portfolios** - reviewed by faculty members from the program, faculty members from outside the program, professionals, visiting scholars, or industrial boards.

•**Professional Jurors or Evaluators** to evaluate student projects, papers, portfolios, exhibits, performances, or recitals

•**Intercollegiate Competitions** - useful for assessment when students are asked to demonstrate knowledge or skills that are related to the expected learning outcomes for the program.

•**Course-embedded assessments** - these are projects, assignments, or exam questions that

directly link to program-level expected learning outcomes and are scored using established criteria.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT methods such as surveys and interviews ask students to reflect on their learning. Examples:

•**Exit interviews and Student Surveys** - to provide meaningful assessment information, exit interviews or student surveys should focus on student learning (knowledge, skills, abilities) in addition to student satisfaction. The questions should be designed to gain insight into student knowledge and skills. The questions might also focus on student experiences such as internships, participation in research, independent projects, numbers of papers written or oral presentations given, and familiarity with tools of the discipline.

•**Faculty Surveys** aimed at getting feedback about perceptions of student knowledge and skills

•**Alumni/Graduate/Undergraduate Surveys** aimed at evaluating perceptions of knowledge, skills, and abilities gained while studying in the program.

•**Surveys of Employers / Recruiters** aimed at evaluating specific competencies, skills, or outcomes

•**Tracking Student Data** related to enrollment, persistence, and performance. These data may include graduation rates, enrollment trends, transcript analysis (tracking what courses students take and when they take them), and tracking student academic performance overall and in specific courses.

NSSE Survey is here!

You may have seen the posters around campus and wondered.... What is NSSE? NSSE stands for National Survey of Student Engagement. It is a survey that Henderson participates in every other year. Both freshmen and seniors are randomly picked to receive the survey. If you know of anyone who may have received this survey, please encourage them to fill it out and return the survey.