Understanding and Using Student Learning Assessment Results

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We will focus on

1. Understanding your purposes & audiences

2. Choosing & setting benchmarks or standards

3. Sharing assessment results

4. Using assessment results to improve

Teaching-Learning-Assessment Cycle

1. Learning Goals

2. Learning Opportunities

3. Assessment

4. Using Results

Understanding Purposes and Audiences

Why Are You Assessing?

1. Evaluate and give feedback to individual students.

2. Improve what we're doing.

    ▶ Our curricula

    ▶ Our teaching

    ▶ Our support programs and infrastructure

3. Make sure quality isn't slipping.

4. Tell the story of our success to key audiences (accountability).

What Are You Assessing?

Are your goals expressed as clear student learning outcomes?

> ► Think critically and analytically

> ► Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own and others' work

> ► Develop well-reasoned arguments

How are you assessing?

Are your assessment tools aligned with your learning goals?

- ▶ Rubrics / scoring guides (writing, projects, presentations, performances)
- ▶ Evaluations (internships, clinical placements)
- ▶ Portfolios
- ▶ Other tools

Where to Assess?

Where do students have the opportunity to learn and demonstrate the skills and knowledge you want to assess?

- *Courses*
- *Programs (degrees)*
- *General Education / Skill areas*
  - Critical thinking
  - Writing
  - Technology
- *Co-curricular*

When to Assess?

▶ *When is the best opportunity to assess extent of student learning?*

  ▶ Curricular opportunities

  ▶ Expectations of level of student learning

    ▶ Novice

    ▶ Advancing

    ▶ Proficient

  ▶ Resources and timing

How Much to Assess?

Are you gathering sufficient information to answer the question: *Are students learning?*

- ► Audience expectation
- ► Needs and intended uses of assessment

Understanding Your Audiences

- ▶ Audience is a critical consideration in assessment planning
- ▶ Understand assessment expectations
  - ▶ What are you being asked to do?
  - ▶ Who will be using results?
  - ▶ Who will be interested in results?

Who Are Your Campus Audiences?

- ▶ Students
- ▶ Faculty in the program
- ▶ Faculty in affiliated programs
- ▶ Institutional leaders
- ▶ Administrators & staff in support programs
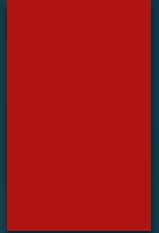- ▶ Who else?

Who Are Your Public Audiences?

- ▶ Prospective students and their families
- ▶ Employers
- ▶ Policymakers (government officials)
- ▶ Accrediting bodies
- ▶ Who else?

Setting Standards

Where do you want students to be?

High   Low   · Close
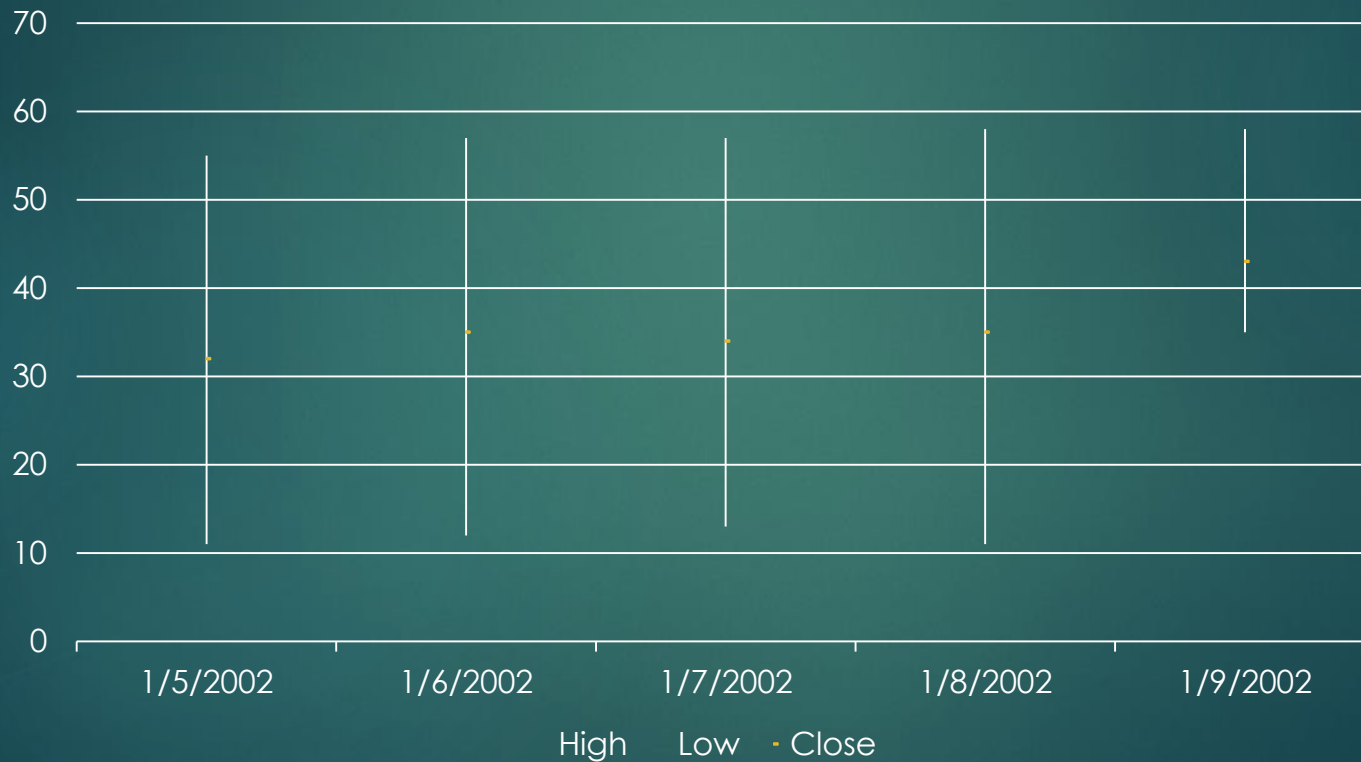
Considering Your Sample

Purposeful sampling

▶ *Select the sample from which you can learn the most*

▶ *Consider the criteria (learning goals) you are seeking to assess*

Planning your Sample

- *Comprehensive*

  "All graduates of the journalism program"

- *Typical*

  "A representative group of students who have graduated from the journalism program in last 3 years"

- *Ideal*

  "All students in fall and spring sections of a capstone course"

Choosing & Setting Benchmarks or Standards

1. Choose the type of benchmark or standard
2. Set performance targets
   - How good is good enough?
   - How many students should do well?

Example: Student Retention

Owl University has a four-year graduation rate of 40% for students entering as first-time, full-time freshmen

Is this good enough?

Owl U: Is 40% good enough?

|		
Local standards-based	**40% institutional goal**	**YES**
External standards-based	**50% athletic conference goal**	**NO**
Peer-referenced	**45% system average**	**NO**
Historical	**30% 3 years ago**	**YES**
Strengths & weaknesses	**48% for women; 36% for men**	**YES/NO**

Which benchmark or standard should you use?

- ▶ Each has advantages and disadvantages.

- ▶ Each gives a somewhat incomplete picture.

- ▶ **Multiple perspectives** give the most balanced picture of student learning.

- ▶ Remember the original goal and purpose for assessment

Set Performance Targets

- What level is minimally adequate? **Why?**
- What level is exemplary? **Why?**
- How many students should be minimally adequate?
- How many students should be exemplary?

Setting Benchmarks
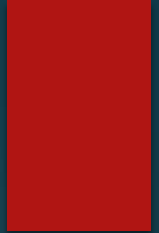
- ▶ Have others set standards?
  - ▶ Disciplinary associations
  - ▶ Online searches
  - ▶ Colleagues in peer programs and colleges
- ▶ Who might you involve in discussion?
  - ▶ Employers
  - ▶ Students
  - ▶ Faculty in your program
  - ▶ Faculty in more advanced programs

Use Student Work to Inform Discussions

- ▶ What does an "A" look like?
- ▶ Would this paper embarrass us?
- ▶ Would this paper make us proud?
- ▶ Why?

Express Targets as Percentages, Not Averages.

- ▶ "90% will score 65 or better"

- ▶ **NOT** "The average will be 72."

Your Targets May Vary
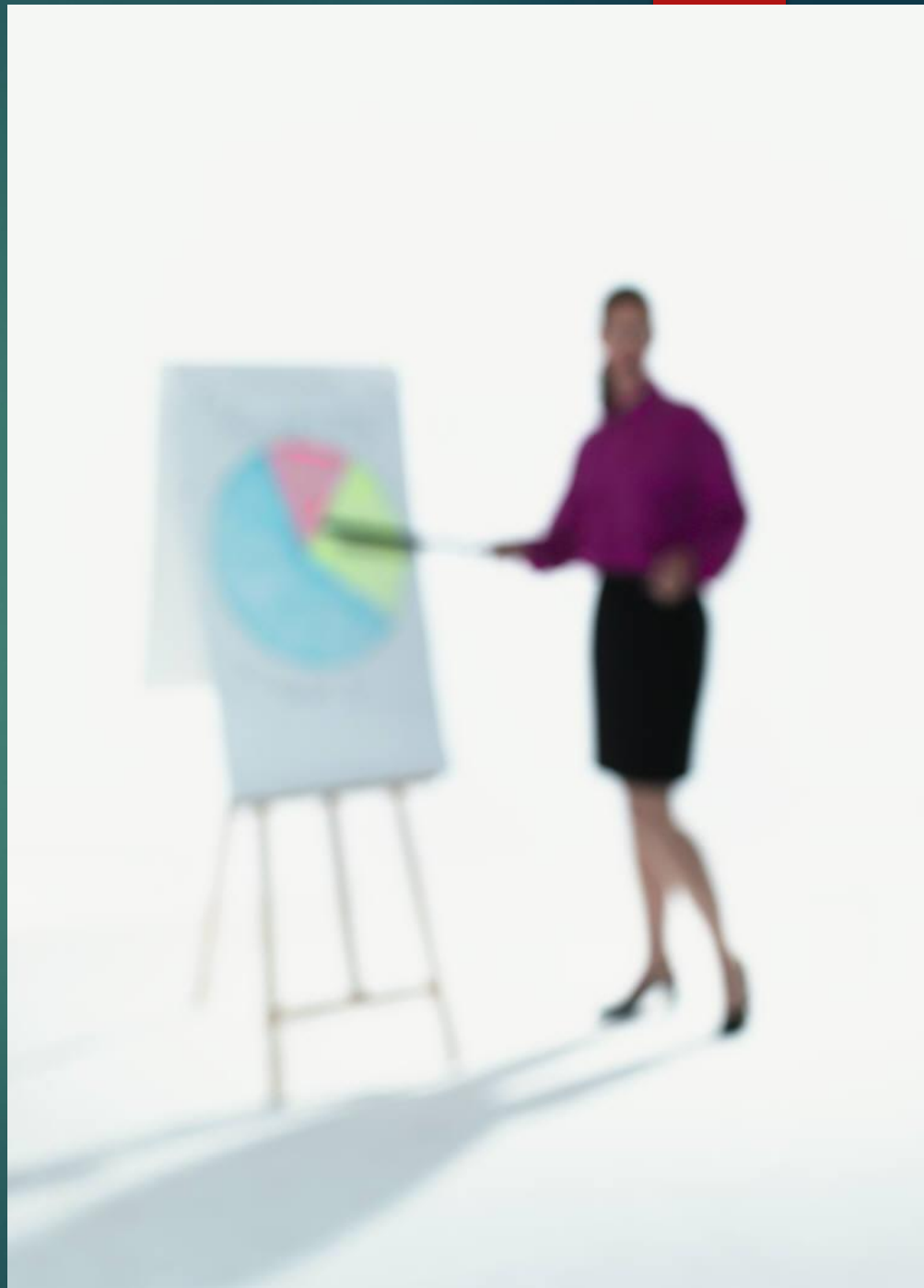
▶ Is this competency essential?

   ▶ *Calculating dosages*

   ▶ *Making effective oral presentations*

▶ Can a target be achieved along the way?

▶ How can performance expectations be communicated?

Time to Talk

Exercise 1: Setting Targets and Expectations for Performance

Sharing Assessment Results

Keep Results Fast and Easy to Find, Read & Understand.

- Short
  - 25 words or less!
- Simple
  - Round numbers
  - No jargon

Tally the Results

	Excep-tional	Very Good	Ade-quate	Inade-quate
Communicates ideas & concepts effectively when speaking	60%	29%	10%	1%
Brainstorms/develops options & ideas	58%	25%	14%	3%
Exhibits a vibrant approach to work	67%	22%	9%	2%
Sets appropriate priorities	67%	22%	9%	2%
Seeks out & utilizes appropriate resources	60%	26%	13%	1%
Understands written materials	62%	27%	9%	2%
Communicates ideas & concepts clearly in writing	56%	30%	10%	4%
Participates effectively in meetings or group settings	57%	32%	10%	1%
Dress & appearance are appropriate	78%	18%	3%	1%
Manages & resolves conflict in a productive manner	48%	35%	16%	1%
Demonstrates assertive but appropriate behaviors	58%	27%	14%	1%
Overall rating	64%	26%	8%	2%

Sort Results from Highest to Lowest

	Excep-tional	Very Good	Ade-quate	Inade-quate
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Present Results Visually

- Rounded numbers
- Bulleted lists
- Charts
- Graphs
- PowerPoint presentations
- Minimal text

Share only what your audience will find useful.

- ▶ Most information is useless.
- ▶ Give yourself permission to dismiss it.

Focus on Big News.

- ▶ Present a summary
- ▶ Provide on request:
    - ▶ Research approach (methods)
    - ▶ Background information/ literature review
    - ▶ Detailed results
    - ▶ Reliability and validity measures (if taken)

The Reliability/Validity Challenge

▶ Address concerns of critics

  ▶ Articulate the purpose of the assessment

  ▶ Demonstrate ability to answer the central question: Are student learning?

  ▶ Describe your sampling and timing decisions

▶ Consider how you can improve your assessment(s)

Any amount of evidence of weaknesses in student learning is important.

Using Assessment Results

- Discuss
- Share
- Showcase
- Plan

Places to Discuss, Share and Showcase

▶ Assessment committee meetings

▶ Department / School meetings

▶ Annual assessment events

▶ Newsletters or e-blasts

▶ Websites

▶ Conferences

Address Disappointments

- What results were expected?
  - Pleasant surprises
  - Unanticipated areas of "bad" results
- Trends v. new findings
- Where do we go from here?

Improve Assessments

▶ Poorly written and misinterpreted?

▶ Match key learning goals?

▶ Too difficult for most responsible students?

▶ Could we hve measured more? Less?

▶ Benefits worth time and money invested?

Improve Learning Goals

- Too many goals?

- Goals need to be clarified?

- Goals inappropriate or overly ambitious?

Improve Curricula or Pedagogy

▶ Are we placing students properly?

▶ Does the curriculum adequately address each learning goal?

▶ Are we using the right methods of instruction to maximize learning?

▶ Are courses sequenced in a way to maximize learning?
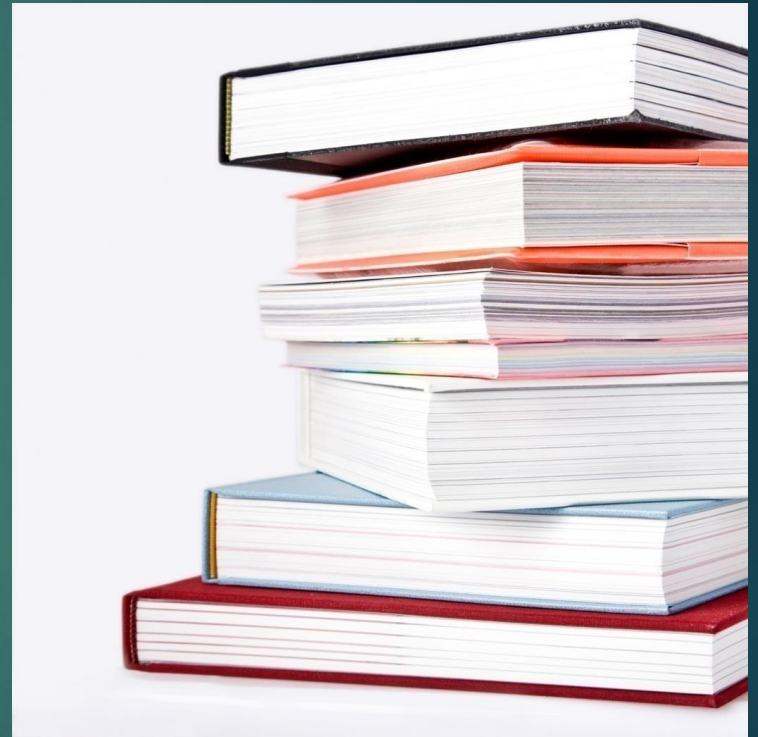
Improve Advisement & Support Services
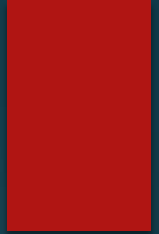
- ▶ Tutoring

- ▶ Library services

- ▶ Academic advisement & counseling

- ▶ Technology infrastructure

- ▶ Co-curricular opportunities

Time to Talk

Exercise 2: Review the data and using results to improve / strengthen teaching, learning and assessment

Summary

▶ Understand your audiences and decisions they need to make.

▶ Choose an appropriate benchmark or standard.

▶ Summarize results in simple charts and graphs.

▶ Discuss & use results

▶ Plan for improvements

Questions, Comments

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