Assessment Cycle

Thank you for joining the Student Life Studies assessment podcast. Our goal is to educate people about assessment resources and topics, so they can more easily incorporate assessment into their daily lives. Feel free to contact Student Life Studies by calling 979-862-5624, emailing sls@tamu.edu, or coming by 222 John J. Koldus Building. Let's get on with today's podcast.

I want to give a quick overview of a typical assessment cycle. It's usually much easier to see it, rather than just describe it, but there a few key pieces that I am going to highlight. Even before you jump into a cycle, you have to be clear about what you want to accomplish with your program, service, or experience. That guides what you actually do and how to best assess it. In addition, you have to pay attention to your context—what's going on politically at your campus, what does the budget cycle look like, what does the current literature say about what you do, who are the students at your campus?

At the center of the cycle, is the mission, vision, and/or goals of the program. That's the foundation that you work from. Ideally, those also align with larger division and university goals and mission.

Next, you want to identify the desired outcomes. What do you want students to learn or do by the end of the experience? What do you want customers to say about the services you provide? That will guide you in how you structure and deliver your program or service.

That will also determine the methods you will use to collect data. A survey might be enough to gather feedback, especially if you are looking at customer satisfaction. But, if you want your participants to demonstrate a specific skill or competency, you might be using a more direct measure of student learning. As you think about how you are planning to deliver your program, be sure to plan for your assessment at the same time.

That really leads you to the nuts and bolt of assessment. Think about when you will collect data, from whom, and how. You might be collecting data at one point or at several points along the way. This is also good time to think about how you will analyze the data. Be sure to identify any resources you need, too, in terms of supplies, technology, people, and funding.

Now you are ready to deliver your program and collect the data. At the end of the data collection, you will take time to analyze and interpret the data. Not only do you look at the specific results, you can look at them in the context of your environment, other assessment, or even current literature. You might even do additional analysis to disaggregate the data or combine it with other data sources.

Although you should plan for this from the beginning, it is now time to share your findings with stakeholders. This might include reports, presentations, social media posts, emails back to respondents, etc. It's important for others to know that you have done assessment and determined what action you will take based on the evidence.

Finally, you have the opportunity to make changes based on your interpretation of the results. Some changes are small, while others can be large. But, be sure to report back to stakeholders actual changes made!

Because assessment is a cycle, it is never-ending. It's time again to review your goals and mission, determine any changes to your outcomes and program, and plan for the next iteration of assessment to know whether your changes have had a positive effect. The cycle doesn't have to be really complicated. It's really about planning, doing, assessing, and improving.

Thanks for listening to today's podcast. Please let us know if this was helpful or if you have additional questions. You can contact us by calling 979-862-5624, emailing sls@tamu.edu, or coming by 222 John J. Koldus Building. Check out our website at studentlifestudies.tamu.edu for more resources and information. We hope to hear from you.