Assessment, Evaluation and Research Context, Definitions, Processes, and Frameworks
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NASPA/ACPA Competency

Differentiate among assessment, program review, evaluation, planning and research.
Learning Outcomes

Evaluate definitions of assessment, program review, planning, and research.

Describe the student affairs context in which AER activities take place.

Create an assessment definition and assessment cycle for your unit/division.
Student Affairs Assessment Context
“Assessment begins with simply wondering whether what you are doing all day is contributing to what you hope your efforts can accomplish.”

Marilee Bresciani, 2011
Evolution of Assessment

Socrates and other Greek teachers in the fifth century acted as evaluators when they introduced questioning practices into the learning process (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 1985).

Large scale surveys in the 17th and 18th centuries measured mortality and health (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2003).

During World War I, mental tests were developed to screen and classify personnel for military induction.

1950s and 1960s saw the rise of social science assessment in higher education.

20th century saw U.S. federal government emphasis on program accountability (tied to funding).

2002: No Child Left Behind
Assessment in Higher Education

CONTEXT: Institutional Mission, Vision and Values

Use of Results

Intended Outcome

Actual Outcome

Evaluation/Assessment Methods and Evidence

IMPACT: Institutional Effectiveness & Student Learning

Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2001
“[Assessment] is no longer something that should only be done by those outside of organizations; indeed, it suggests that all of us have responsibilities for asking evaluative questions, making decisions based on the answers, and taking action to implement the recommendations.”

Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009, p. 46
Student Affairs Assessment

Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) (1979): http://www.cas.edu/


ACPA ASK Standards (2006)

NASPA Assessment Reconsidered

NASPA Assessment Education Framework (2009)

Creation of Assessment Directors, Coordinators, and Committees

Conferences, web sites, publications, blogs

Student Affairs Assessment Leaders (SAAL)

NASPA Assessment, Evaluation and Research Knowledge Community: https://www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/kcs/assessment-evaluation-and-research

ACPA Commission for Assessment and Evaluation: www.myacpa.org/commae
Definitions
Distinctions and Common Elements

Program Review

Evaluation

Assessment

Research
Research

“A truth-seeking activity which contributes to knowledge, aimed at describing or explaining the world” - Coryn, 2006, p.1

Develops new knowledge
Seeks conclusions
Tests theories
Develops theory-based hypotheses and research questions
Higher Education Research
(Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 34)

A form of inquiry in which:

1. Key concepts and procedures are carefully defined in such a way that the inquiry can be replicated and possibly refuted;

2. Controls are in place to minimize error and bias;

3. The generalizability limits of the study are made explicit; and

4. The results of the study are interpreted in terms of what they contribute to the cumulative body of knowledge about the object of inquiry.
Evaluation

“Evaluation refers to the process of determining the merit, worth, or value of something, or the product of that process....The evaluation process normally involves some identification of relevant standards of merit, worth or value; some investigation of the performance by evaluands of these standards; and some integration or synthesis of the results to achieve an overall evaluation or set of associated evaluations.”
(Scriven, 1991, p. 139)

“Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and results of programs to make judgments about the program, improve or further develop program effectiveness, inform decisions about future programming, and/or increase understanding.”
(Patton, 2008)
Program Review in Student Affairs

• Collaborative process
• Evaluation of how well goals are being accomplished (in the context of standards/norms)
• Self-study, external review
• Use of evidence (assessment)
• Focus on improvement and change
Assessment Definitions

“Assessment is the process of providing credible evidence of resources, implementation actions, and outcomes undertaken for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of instruction, programs, and services.”
(Banta & Palomba, p. 2)

“Any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness.”
(Upcraft & Schuh, p. 4)
Assessment, Evaluation and Research: What They Have in Common

- Systematic process
- Enhancing knowledge or decision-making
- Collecting data regarding questions or issues
- Data analysis techniques
- Methods of inquiry
Assessment, Evaluation, and Research: How They Differ

Often initiated for different purposes
- Assessment guides good practice
- Research guides theory and tests concepts

Involve and respond to different kinds of audiences or constituent questions and needs.
- Assessment has implications for a single institution
- Research has broader implications for student affairs and higher education

Communicate and report their findings in different ways to different groups.

Role of the researcher/assessor

“Substantially different in how judgments of their quality are made. Accuracy is important in [all] cases, but the evaluation [assessment] discipline uses unique criteria of utility, feasibility, propriety, and inclusion of stakeholders.”
- Mathison, 2008, p. 195
“While it is important to understand the difference [between assessment, evaluation, and research], what is most important is the inquiry itself—the collection of quality information that will inform and guide decision-making, learning, and action.”

Preskill & Russ-Eft, 2016, p. 5
Purposes of Assessment
Why Assessment Matters in Student Affairs

Contribute to student learning, growth, and development

Ensure quality

Contribute to increased organization members’ knowledge

Seek and prioritize resources

Plan and deliver organizational initiatives (strategic planning)

Accountability

Convince others of need or effectiveness of organizational initiatives

Policy development

Accreditation
Assessment: 3 broad categories

**Individual assessment**: determine an individual’s progress and provide feedback so that goals can be reached.

**Large-scale assessment**: benchmark an institution’s or unit’s performance, generally in the context of accountability.

**Program assessment**: gather evidence in order to improve student learning, programs, and services.

Ewell, 2002
Types of Assessment

- Tracking
- Benchmarking
- Outcomes: student learning; program
- National Standards
- Satisfaction Assessment
- Needs Assessment
- Student cultures and campus environment
- Cost effectiveness
“Assessment prompted from any source can ask good or useless questions, collect appropriate or off-point data, and come to meaningful or distracting conclusions.”

Keeling, Wall, Underhile, & Dungy, p. 3
Assessment

Strategic Planning  Resource Allocation

Accreditation  Program Review

Relationship to Division and Institution Processes
“Assessment is a multi-stage, multi-dimensional process—a vehicle—for bringing clarity and balance to an individual activity or a set of activities.”

Banta, 2002
Assessment Process

Successfully undertaking assessment in student affairs has three essential stages:

- Planning
- Implementing
- Improving and sustaining the process

Banta & Palomba
STEP 1: Identify Outcomes
STEP 2: Select & design measure(s)
STEP 3: Plan for data collection & implement measure
STEP 4: Analyze data
STEP 5: Use results to improve student learning
Bresciani Assessment Cycle

1. Focusing the Evaluation
2. Selecting a Design
3. Choosing Data Collection methods
4. Analyzing Evaluation Data

Mission Purpose Goals Outcomes

Henning & Roberts, p. 42
Assessment Process/Cycle

1. Write Goal or Outcome
2. Determine Assessment Method
3. Collect Data
4. Analyze Data
5. Use & Share Results
6. Deliver Course or Program
“Assessment is a means, not an end.”

Assessment Reconsidered
References

ACPA ASK Standards
Bresciani, M. J. (2011, August). Making Assessment Meaningful: What New Student Affairs Professionals and Those New to Assessment Need to Know (NILOA Assessment Brief; Student Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS):
Thank You!