What Is Assessment?

Definitions

Various definitions of assessment and the role it plays in teaching and learning:

- Assessment involves the use of empirical data on student learning to refine programs and improve student learning. (Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education by Allen 2004)
- Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. (Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: shifting the focus from teaching to learning by Huba and Freed 2000)
- Assessment is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. It is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using information to increase students’ learning and development. (Assessing Student Learning and Development: A Guide to the Principles, Goals, and Methods of Determining College Outcomes by Erwin 1991)
- Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. (Assessment Essentials: planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education by Palomba and Banta 1999)

A Taxonomy of Approaches to Assessment
Fundamental Components of Assessment

Four fundamental elements of learner-centered assessment:

Formulate statements of intended learning outcomes

Discuss and use assessment results to improve learning

Develop or select assessment measures

Create experiences leading to outcomes

• **Formulating Statements of Intended Learning Outcomes** – statements describing intentions about what students should know, understand, and be able to do with their knowledge when they graduate.

• **Developing or Selecting Assessment Measures** – designing or selecting data gathering measures to assess whether or not our intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Includes
  - *Direct* assessments – projects, products, papers/theses, exhibitions, performances, case studies, clinical evaluations, portfolios, interviews, and oral exams – which ask students to demonstrate what they know or can do with their knowledge.
  - *Indirect* assessments – self-report measures such as surveys – in which respondents share their perceptions about what graduates know or can do with their knowledge.

• **Creating Experiences Leading to Outcomes** – ensuring that students have experiences both in and outside their courses that help them achieve the intended learning outcomes.

• **Discussing and Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning** – using the results to improve individual student performance.

(Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: shifting the focus from teaching to learning by Huba and Freed 2000)