

Course-Level Assessment

Course-level assessment of student learning is fairly similar to program-level assessment, and many of the course-level resources will be helpful at the course level, as well.

Learning Goals

Instructors should establish learning goals for their courses. Like program-level goals, these intended student learning outcomes articulate what students who complete the course should know, be able to do, and/or value upon completion. Again, these goals should be specific, measurable, and focused on student learning. In fact, course-level goals should probably be more specific than a corresponding program-level goal, explaining how the goal will be realized in the context of the specific course. Learning goals must appear in the syllabus for each course.

Alignment

Learning goals in courses that satisfy requirements of the Integrative Core should align with the goals established for that Core category. Instructors will typically have made those connections explicit in their application for the Core designation and should communicate that information to students in syllabi.

Courses required for a particular major or minor should align course goals with the relevant program goals. If the program has completed a curriculum map, specific program goals may have been identified as important for the course. Instructors must communicate the relationship between course goals and higher-level goals (program and institutional) via the syllabus.

Assignments

While program-level assessment formally identifies measures and focuses on summative assessment, course-level assessment focuses on assignments and uses both formative and summative assessment. Assignments should relate directly to the learning goals for the course. Formative assessment provides feedback about learning to both the instructor and the students. Students may change their study habits in response to a poor quiz grade. The instructor may decide to re-teach a concept after seeing how poorly the entire class did on an assignment. Summative assessment evaluates student learning at the end of the course (a final exam or final project), when neither the instructor nor the student can make changes for that particular course. (However, students may use feedback from summative assessment in later courses, and instructors may use feedback to make changes in the way the course is taught in future semesters).

There is rarely the need to formally separate out assessment from the normal grading and evaluation processes at the course level, UNLESS the assignment is being used for program-level assessment or for assessment of the Integrative Core Curriculum.

However, syllabi should explain to students how their learning will be assessed. In other words, course learning goals should be linked to assignments, tests, quizzes, and activities.

Reporting

Program-level assessment requires an annual meeting and regular reports. There are no such requirements for program-level assessment. It is expected that all instructors will use information they collect about student learning (as part of grading or from more formal assessment procedures) to make changes to improve student learning in future courses. It is appropriate to expect that faculty annual reports and promotion and tenure applications will discuss how data about student learning is informing an instructor's planning and pedagogy.