MINOT STATE UNIVERSITY

Mixed Feelings About Assessment

Nathan Anderson, PhD
Director of Institutional Assessment

Spring Assessment Day 2025

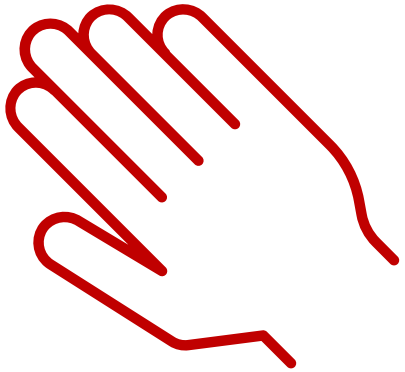
Agenda

- Why do programs assess annually?
- How can *A+ Inquiry* guide assessment?
- What do faculty think about assessment?
- How do assessment & evaluation promote quality?

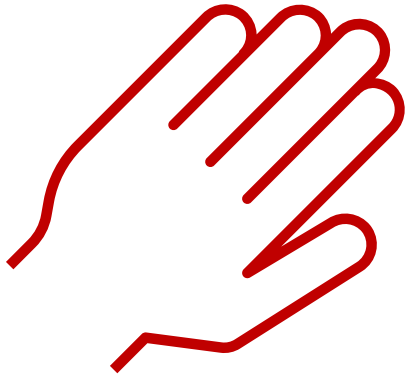
Why do programs assess annually?

Opportunity to…

generate evidence for making decisions that positively impact program quality



demonstrate to accreditors and other stakeholders that programs are thoughtfully using evidence to make intentional decisions that support program quality



What is assessment?

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***

in higher education

(Banta & Palomba, 2015, p. 2)

Who cares if we do assessment?

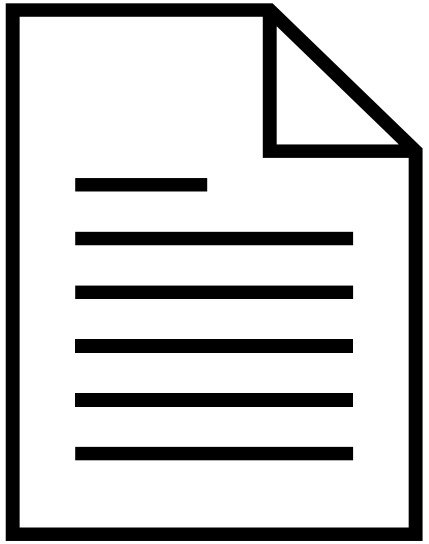
Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

3.E. Assessment of Student Learning

The institution improves the quality of educational programs based on its assessment of student learning

https://www.hlcommission.org/accreditation/policies/criteria/2025-criteria/

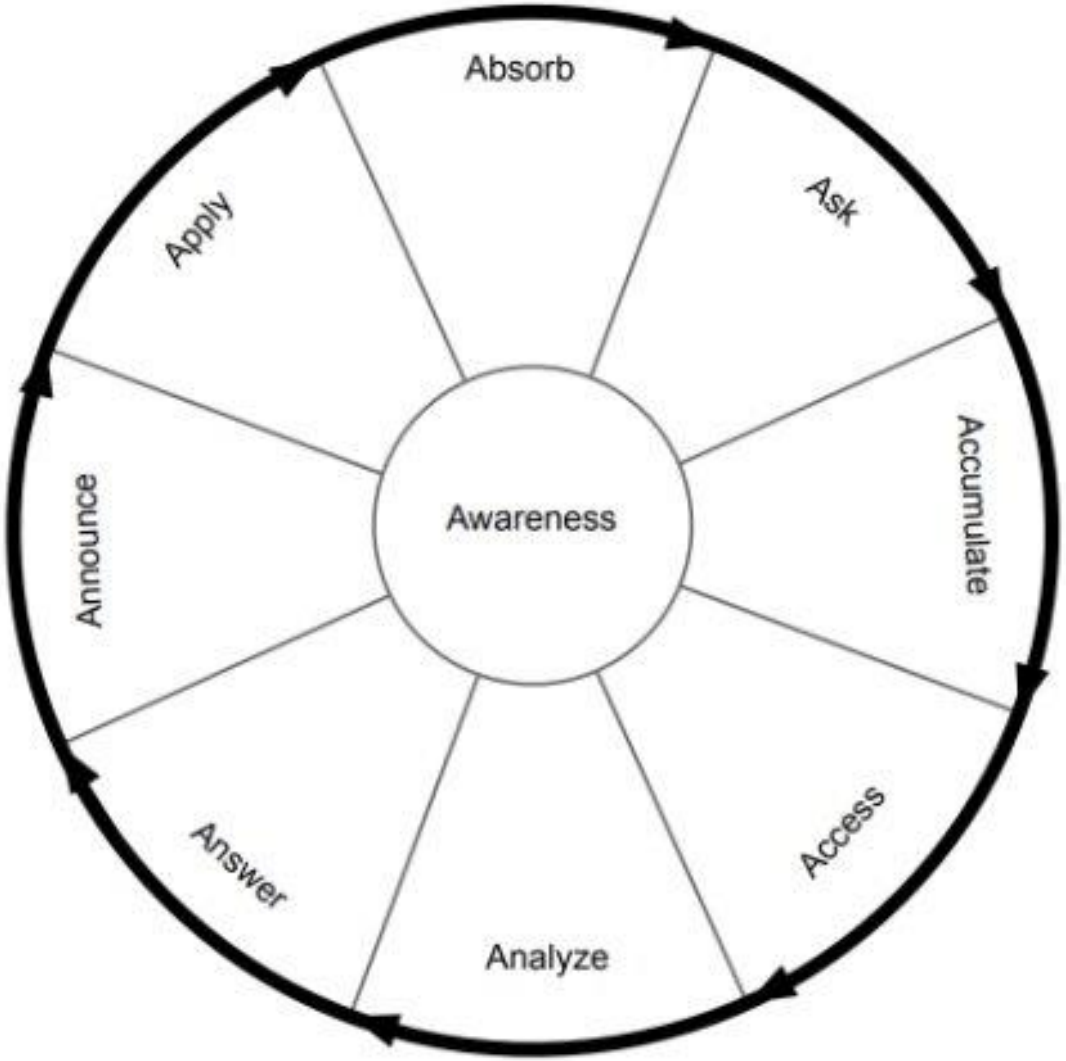
How do we meet HLC assessment criteria?



Yearly Program Assessment (YPA)

Annual implementation and documentation of a program's assessment plan, results, and utilization of results

What is A+ Inquiry?



A+ Inquiry's Purpose

Synthesize common stages of assessment, evaluation, research

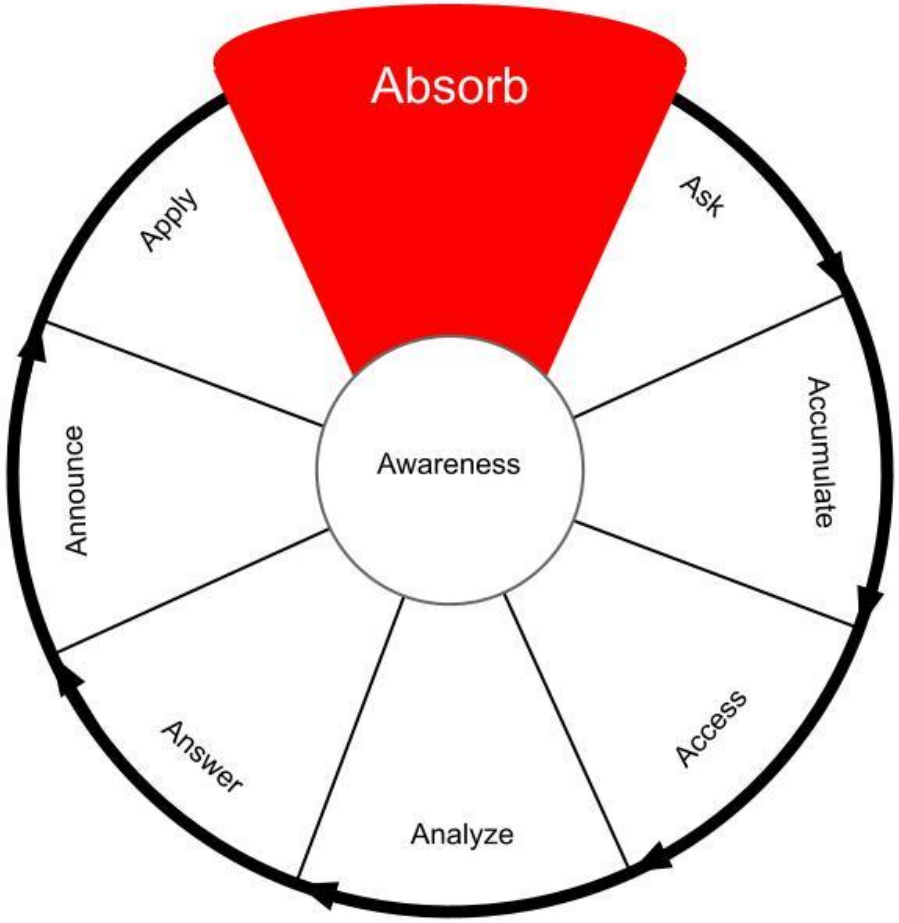
Identify a need for more information	Formulate questions to guide a study	Collect data	Analyze data	Share results with stakeholders	Use results to inform decisions

Alignment with Assessment Frameworks

A+ Inquiry	Pike (2002)	Shermis and Daniels (2002)	Gustafson et al. (2014)	Horst and Prendergast (2020)	Cicchino et al. (2023)
Absorb	x	x	x	x	x
Ask	x	x	x	x	x
Accumulate	x	x	x	x	x
Access	x	x	x	x	
Analyze	x	x	x	x	x
Answer		x	x	x	
Announce	x	x		x	
Apply		x	x	x	x

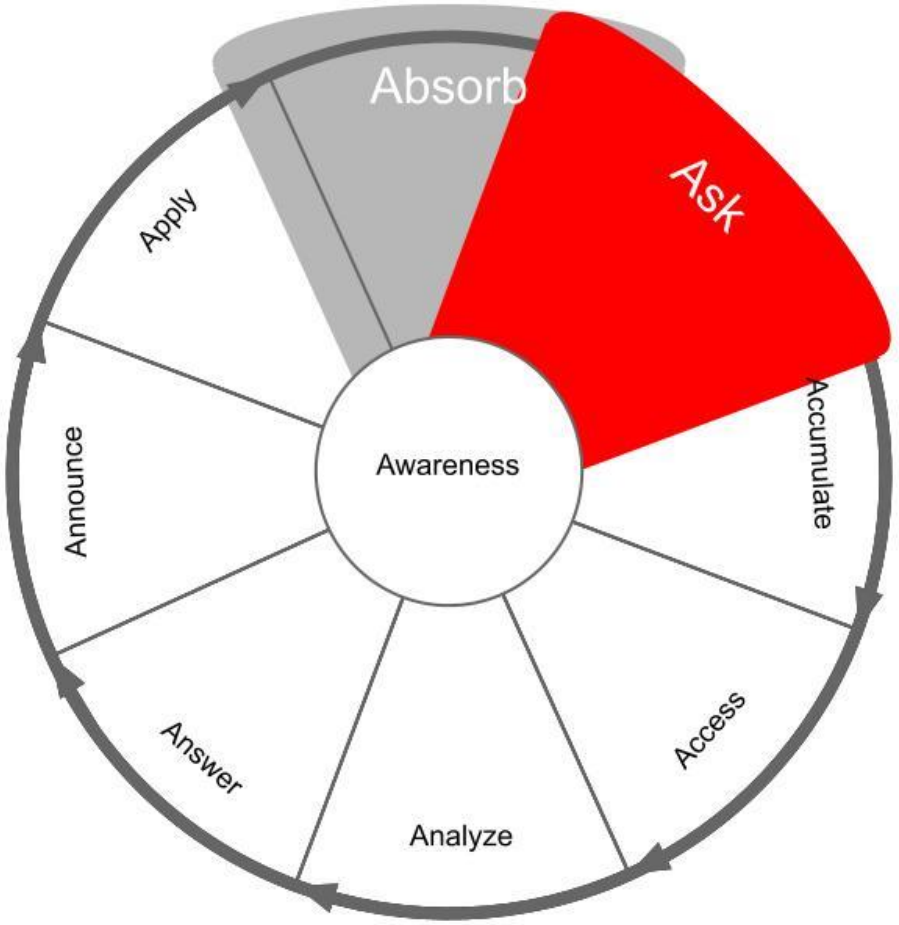
Absorb

- What is already known about the context?
- What is the knowledge gap that needs to be filled?
- Why is it important to fill the knowledge gap?



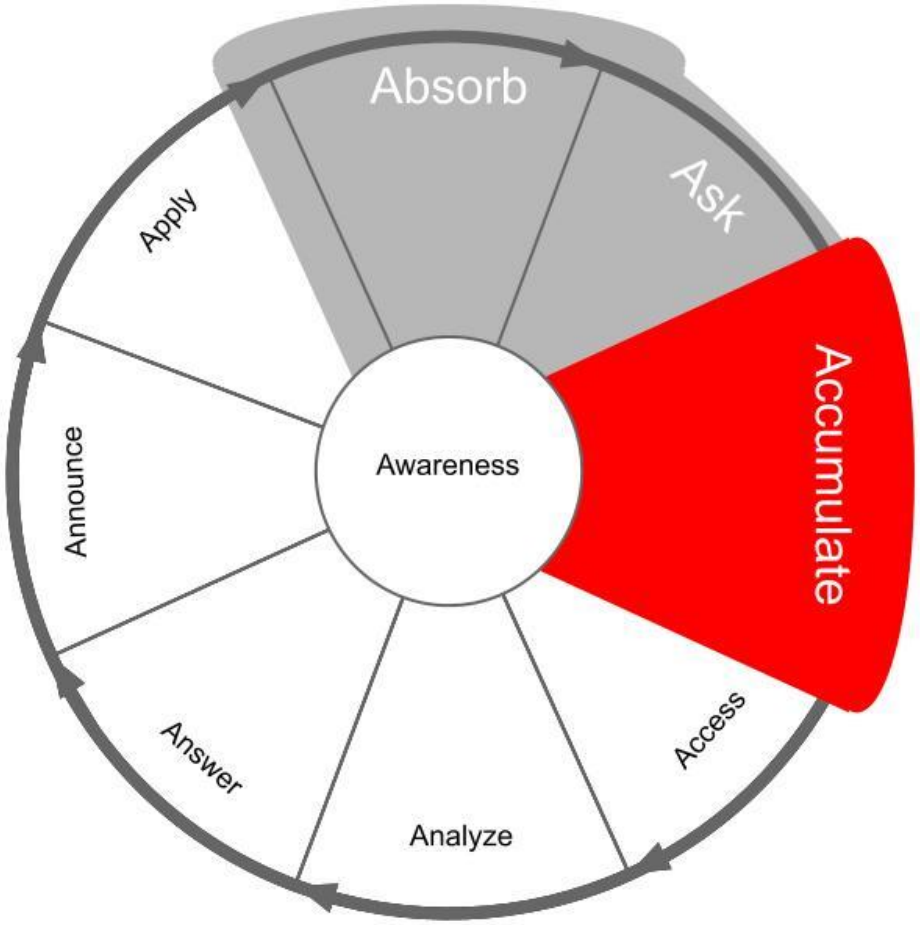
Ask

- What questions, if answered, could be formulated to help fill the knowledge gap?



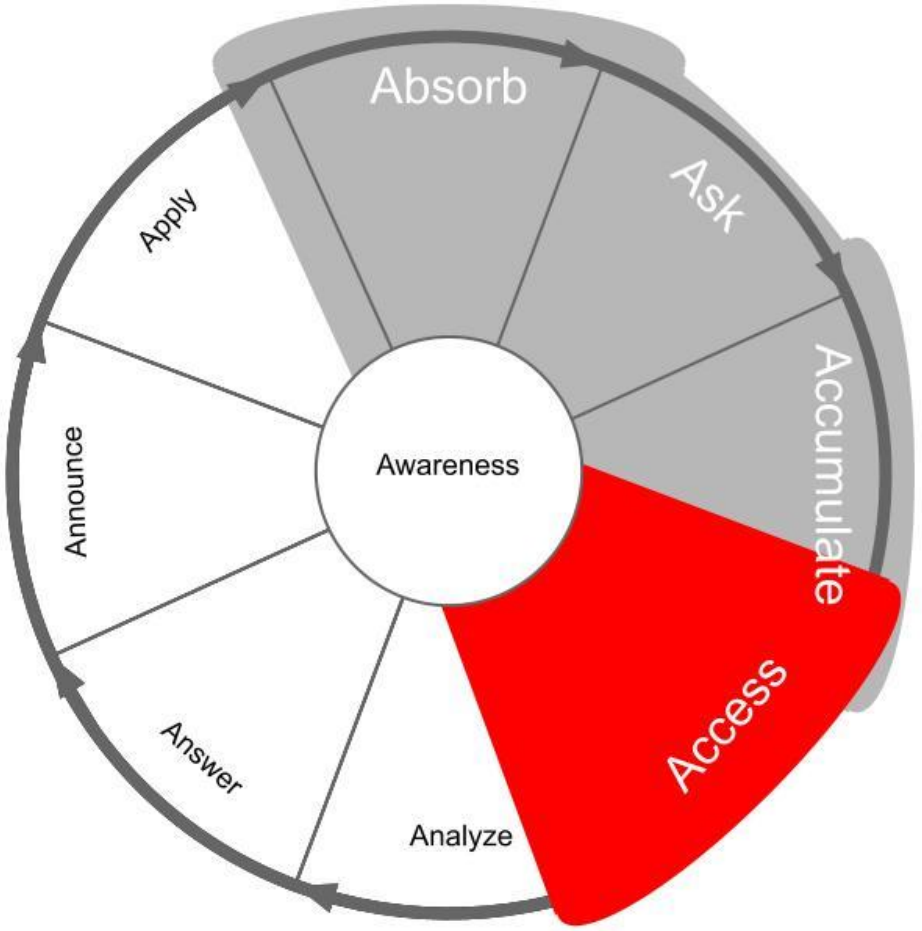
Accumulate

- What data are required?
- Do the data need to be collected or have they already been collected?
- What is the setting?
- What instrument is utilized?
- What is the collection procedure?



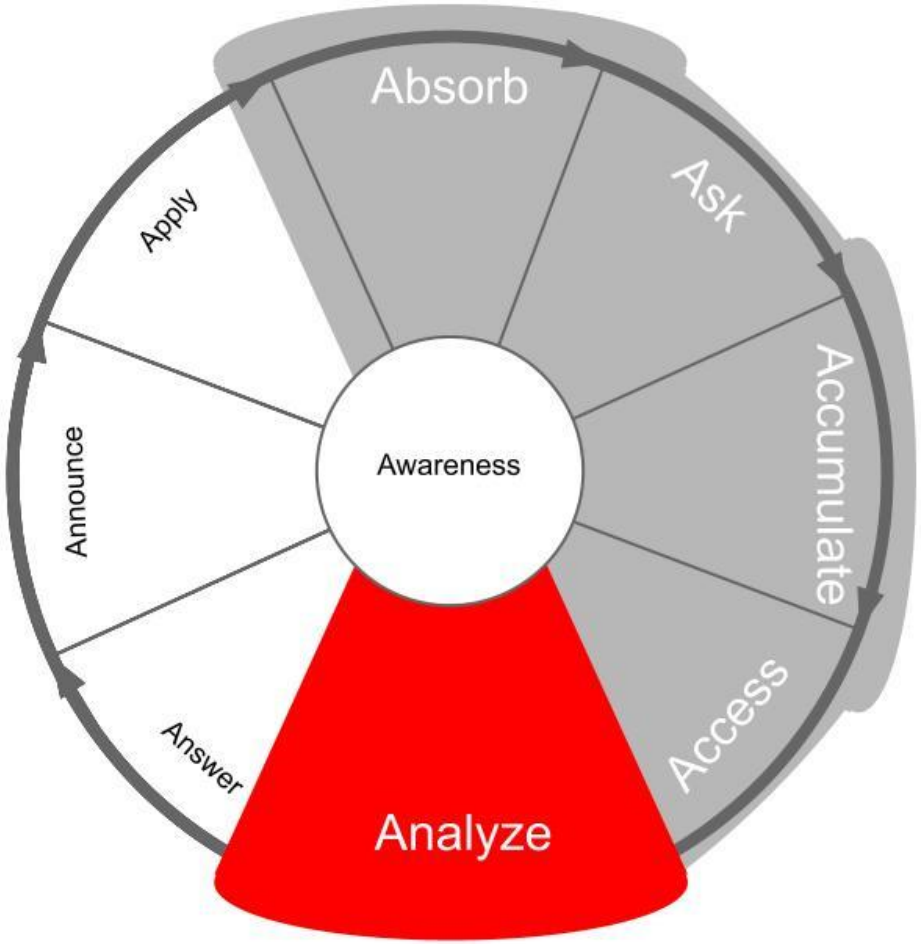
Access

- Where are the data retrieved from after they have been collected in the Accumulate stage?
- What is the procedure for retrieving the data in preparation for analysis?



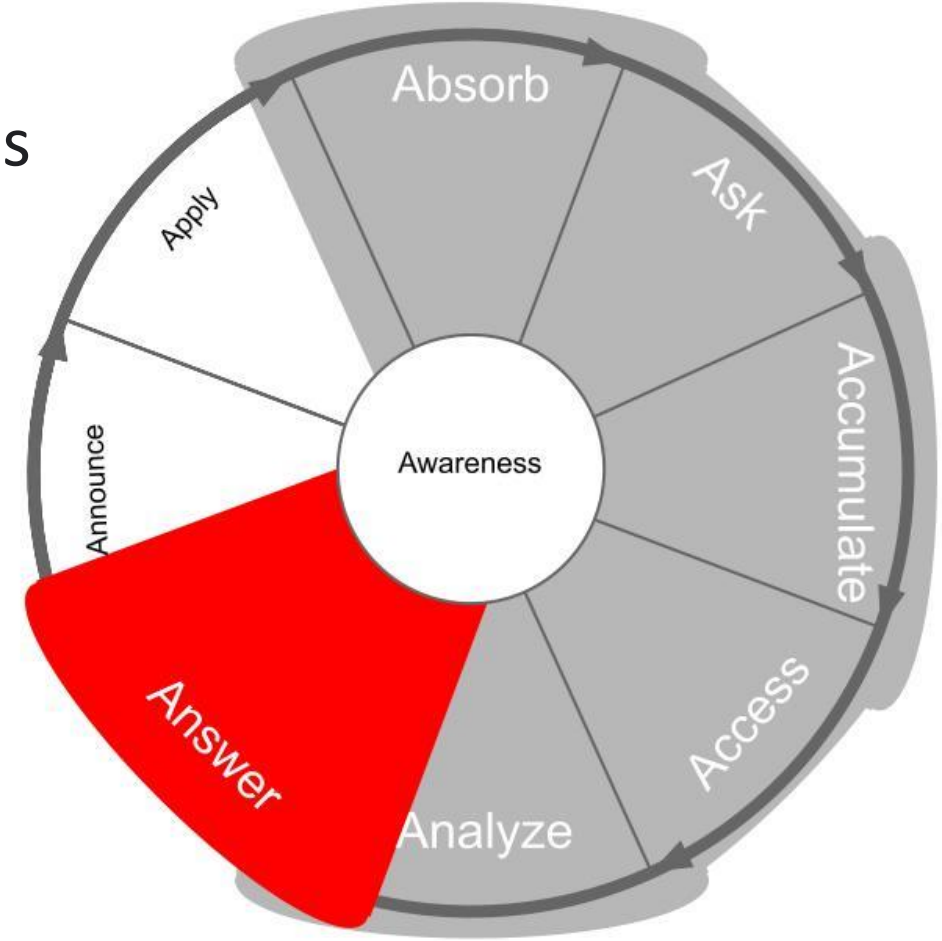
Analyze

- What quantitative and/or qualitative data analysis methods are implemented?
- What tools are required to analyze the data?



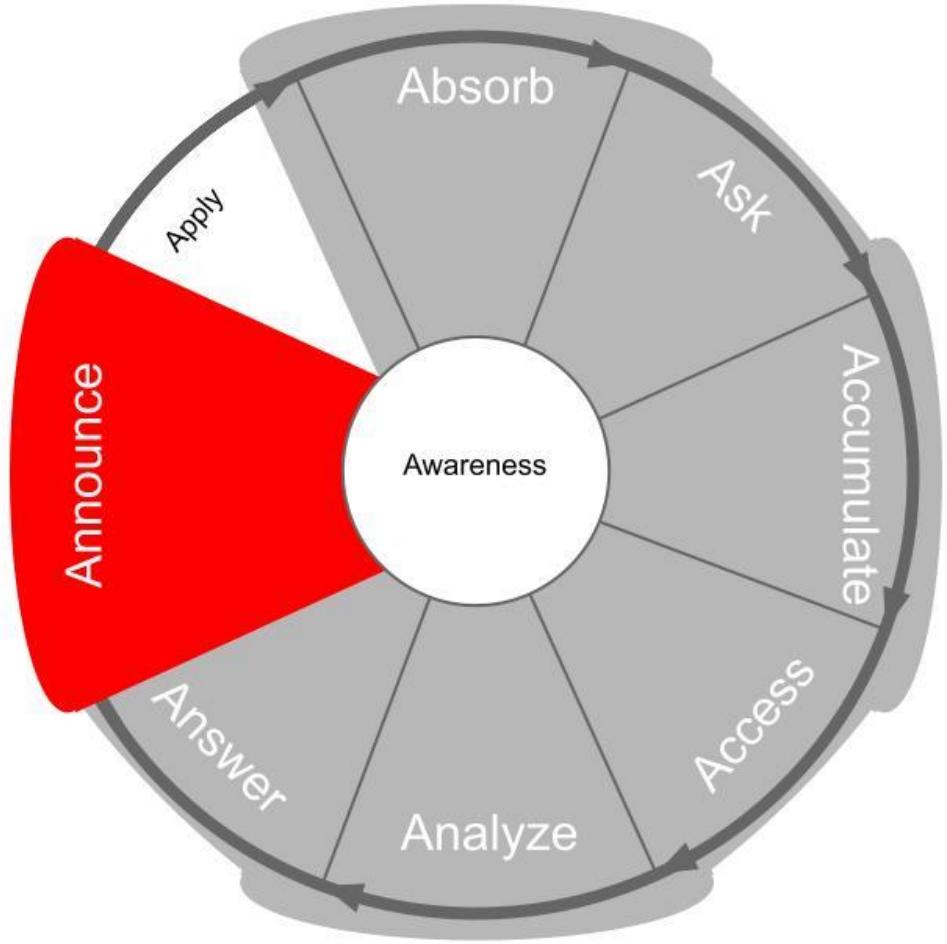
Answer

- What are the answers to the questions that were posed in the Ask stage?
- How do the answers relate to what was already known about the context?
- What are limitations of the answers?
- What are implications of the answers?



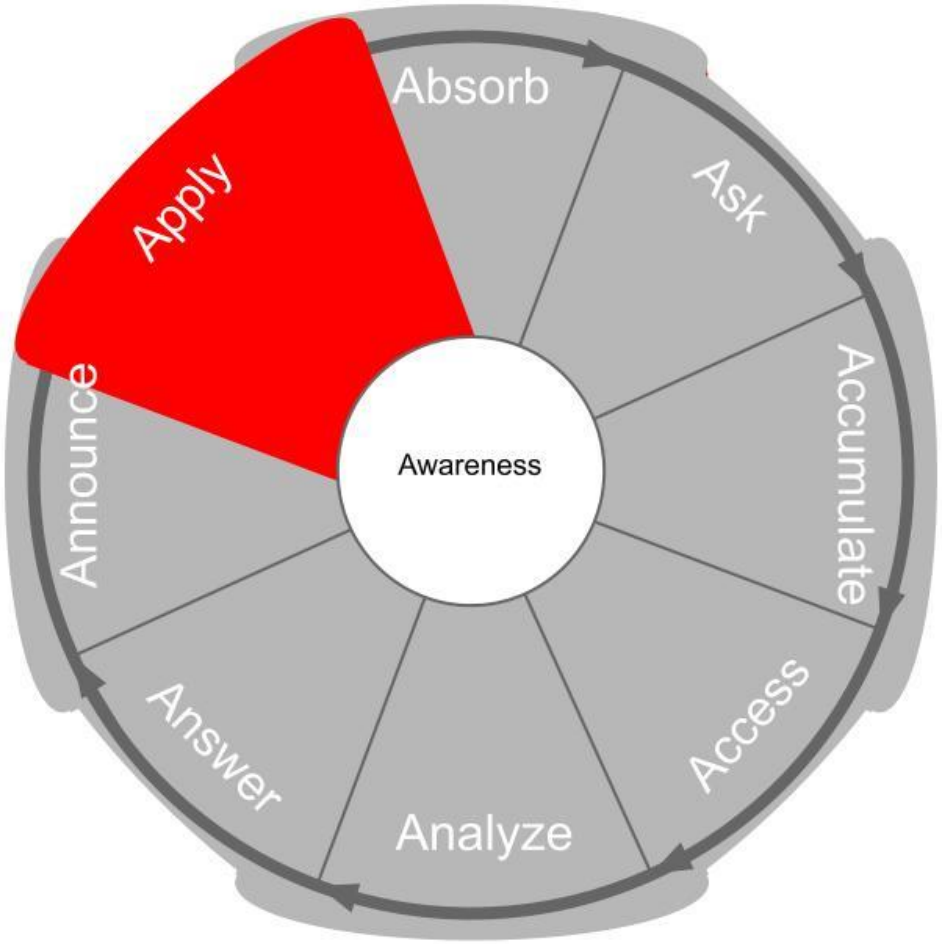
Announce

- Which stakeholders may benefit by being informed about the results?
- Which answers, limitations, and implications are important to communicate to each stakeholder?
- What is the procedure for disseminating the results to, and/or discussing the results with, the stakeholders?



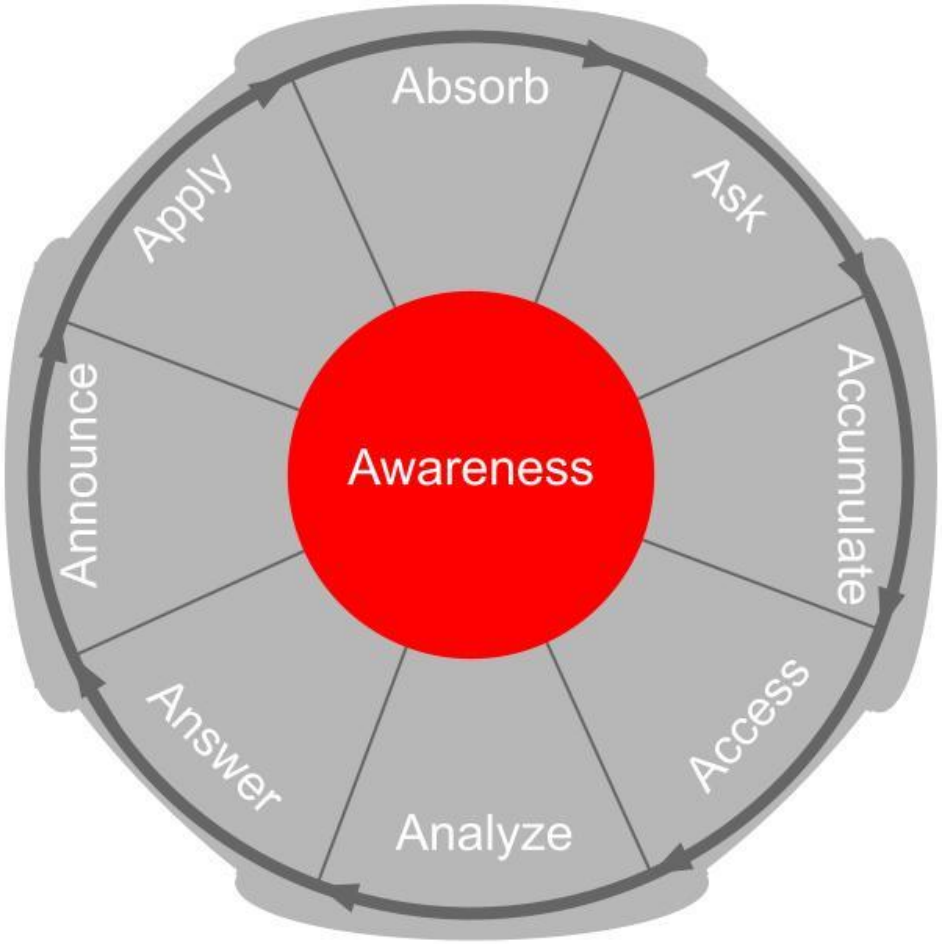
Apply

- What decisions or actions are informed by the results that were revealed in the Answer stage?
- Why are the decisions or actions important to implement?
- What cautions are considered when making decisions or taking actions based on the results?



Awareness

Are you attentive to how a task that you are performing in one stage aligns with the other stages?



A+ Inquiry Scenario

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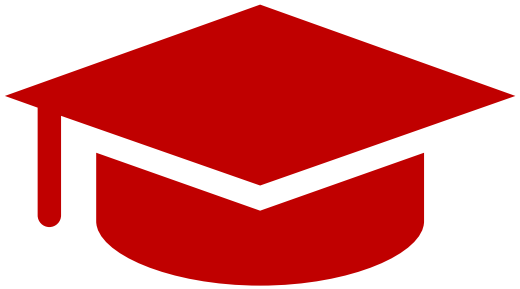
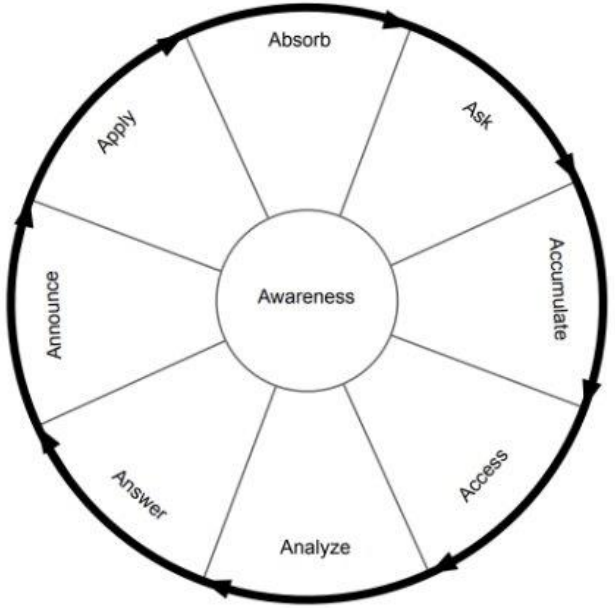
Student Learning Outcome (SLO) Assessment





Give it a try

Program Outcome Assessment

Students in Dr. Datta's INQ 490 course write a capstone paper with an instrument section relevant to quantitative data collection. Dr. Datta scores the instrument section of each student's paper on a 4-point scale using the Disciplined Inquiry Capstone Project Rubric. A score of 3 or above represents success. Dr. Datta submits a score for each student in an online form. The scores are automatically compiled in a spreadsheet upon submission. *

- ○ Absorb
- ○ Ask
- ○ Accumulate
- ○ Access
- ○ Analyze
- ○ Answer
- ○ Announce
- ○ Apply
- ○ Awareness

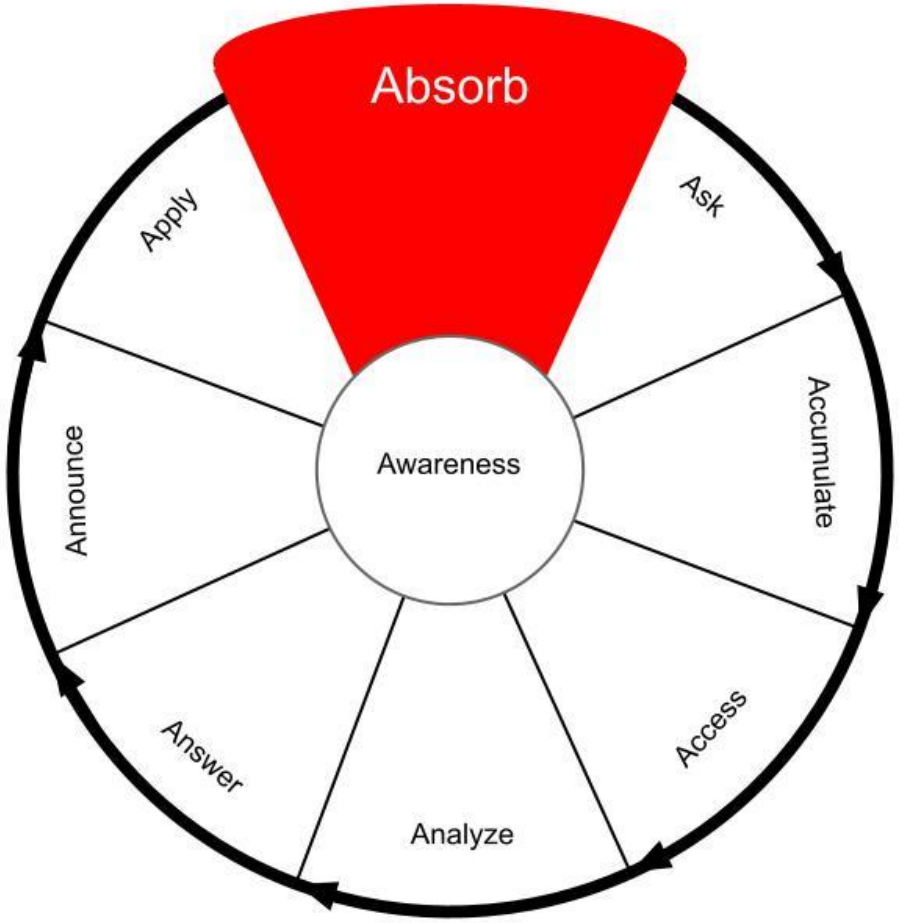
Absorb

Known:

- BS Disciplined Inquiry program
- Student Learning Outcome (SLO) 3.1: Develop a plan for collecting quantitative data.
- Target: 80% achieve success in describing a data collection instrument in their plan

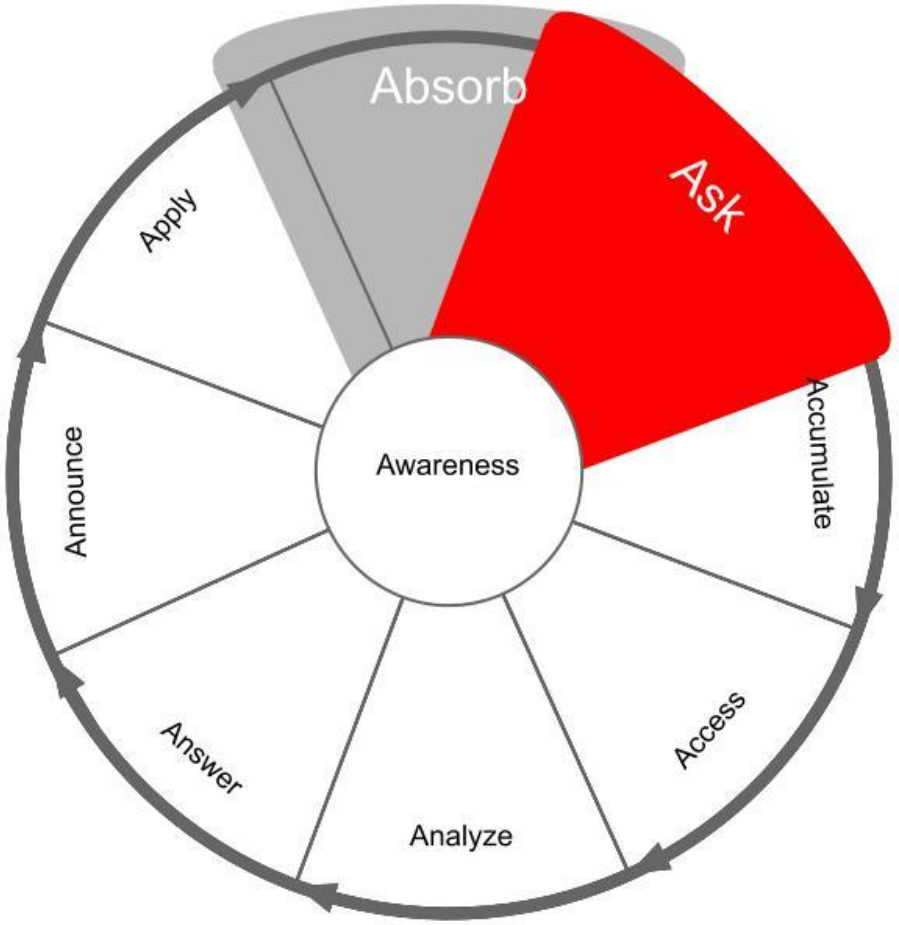
Not known:

- Extent to which SLO 3.1 is being achieved



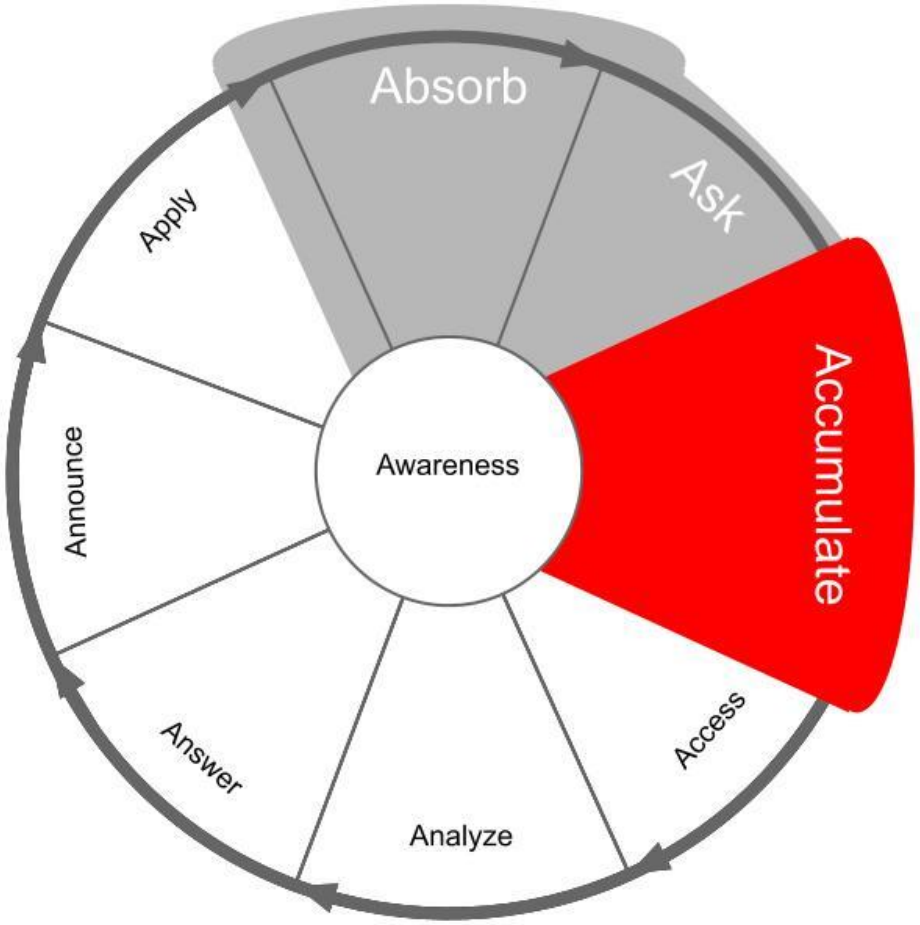
Ask

- To what is extent is the target being achieved?



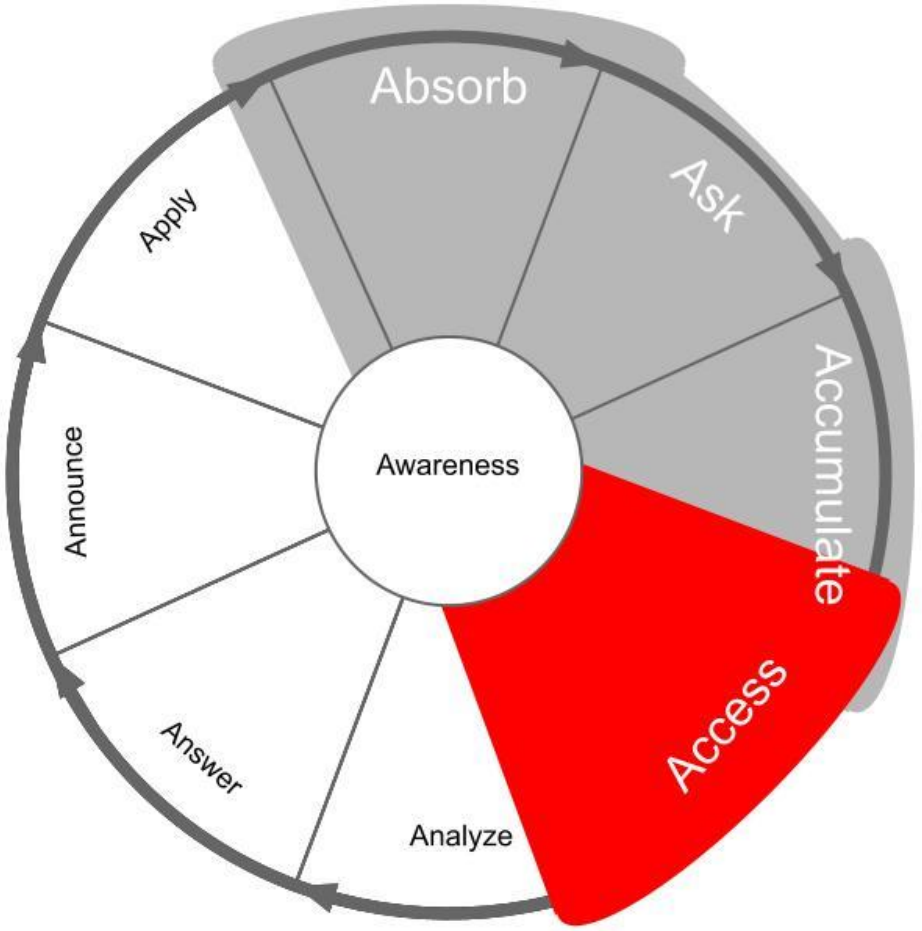
Accumulate

- INQ 490 course
- Students write a capstone paper with a quantitative data instrument section
- Score the instrument section on a 4-point scale using the Disciplined Inquiry Capstone Project Rubric
  - Score of 3 or above represents success
  - Submit a score for each student in an online form
  - Scores are automatically compiled in a spreadsheet upon submission



Access

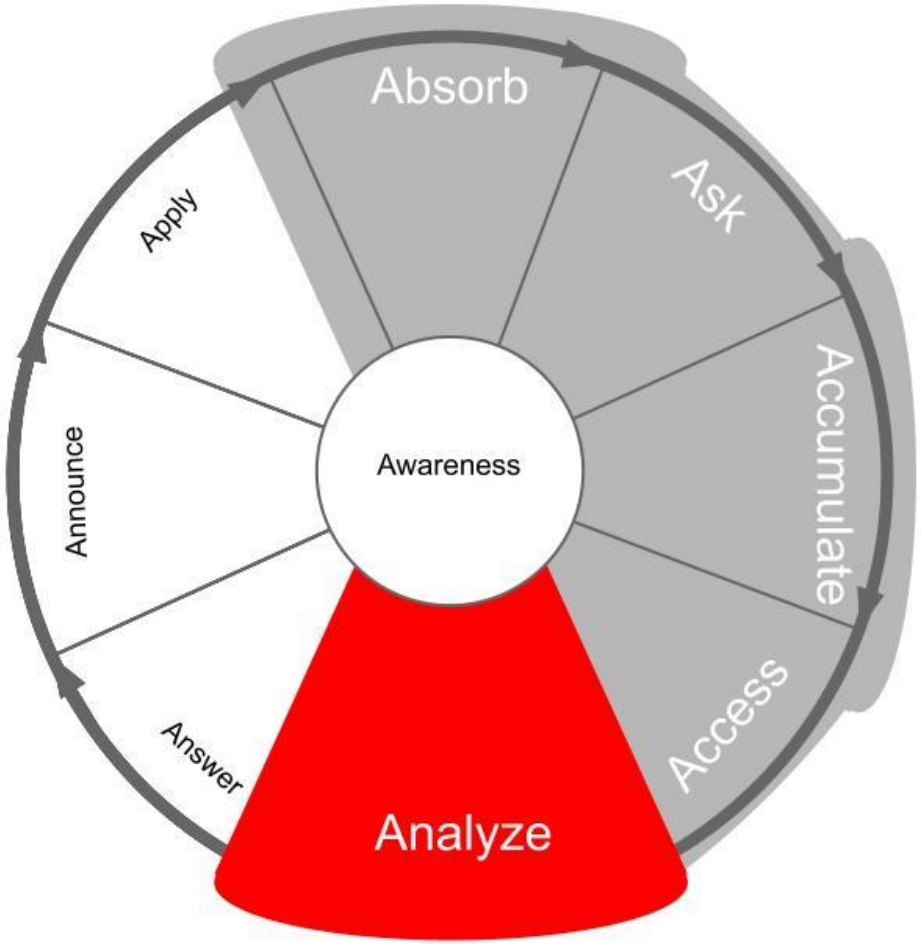
- Retrieve the rubric scores from the spreadsheet where the scores were automatically stored



Analyze

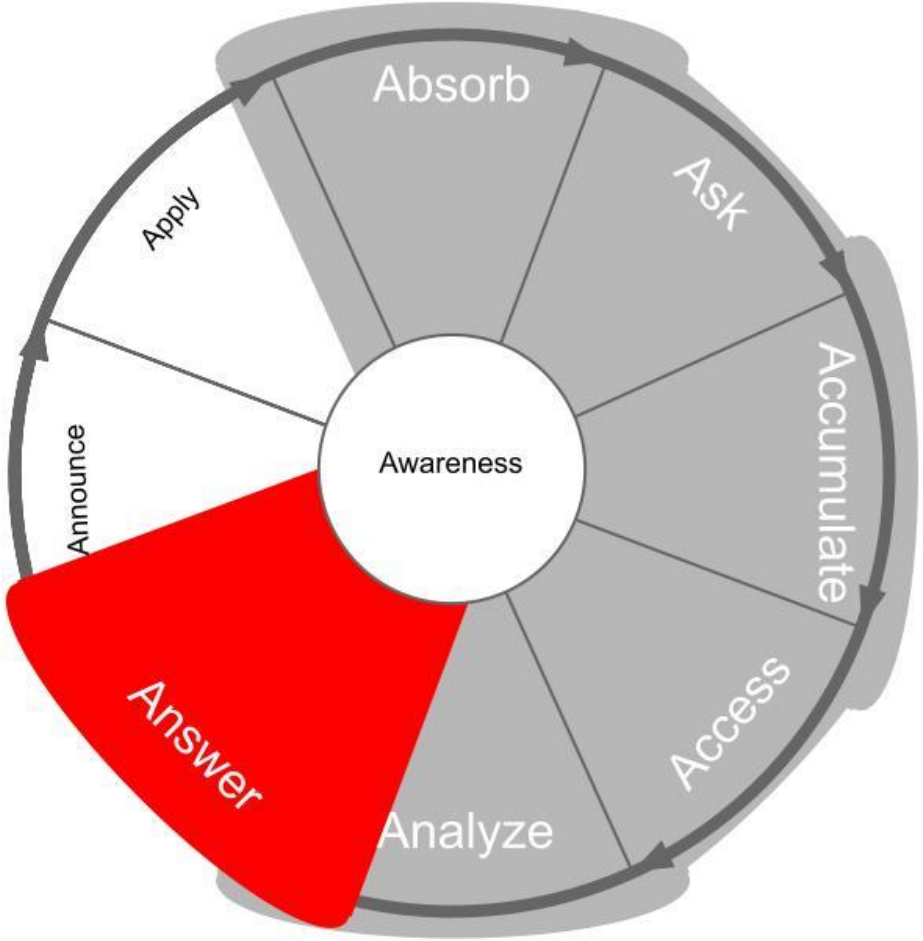
- $\frac{\text{\# students 3 or higher}}{\text{\# students assessed}}$ = % success

- % success - % target = % point difference



Answer

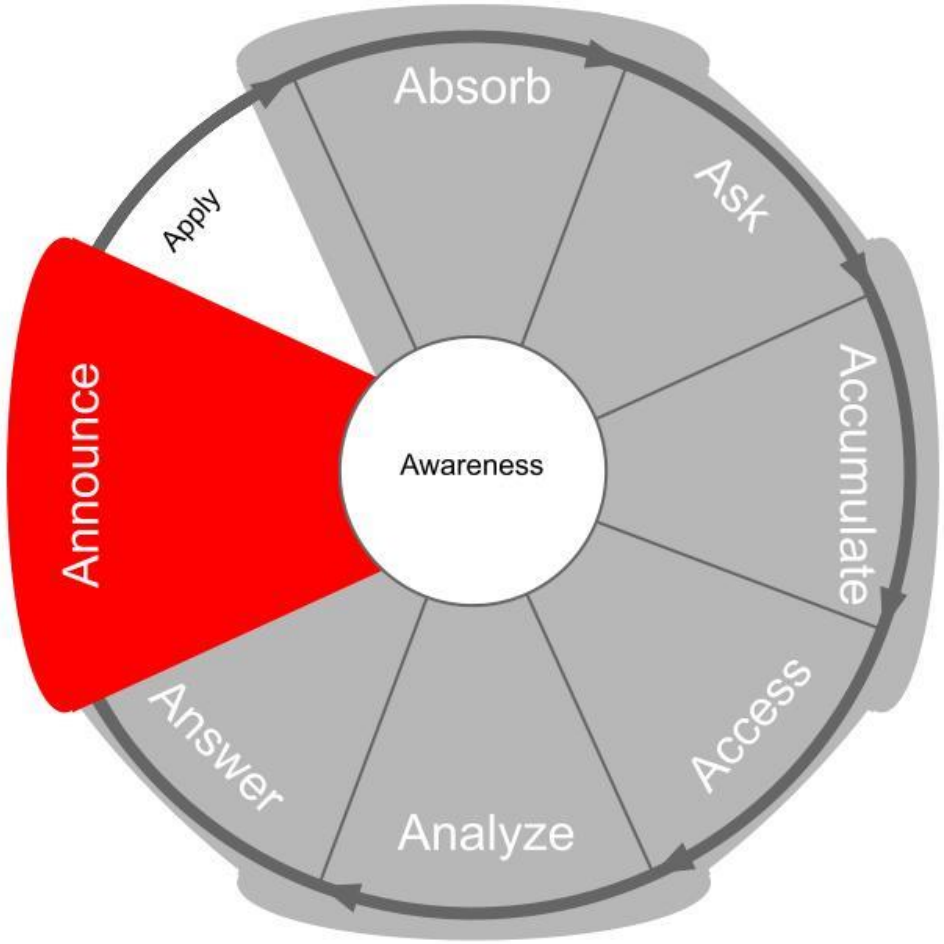
- Describe the extent to which the actual % is above or below the target %
- Describe limitations and implications



Announce

Distribute results to:

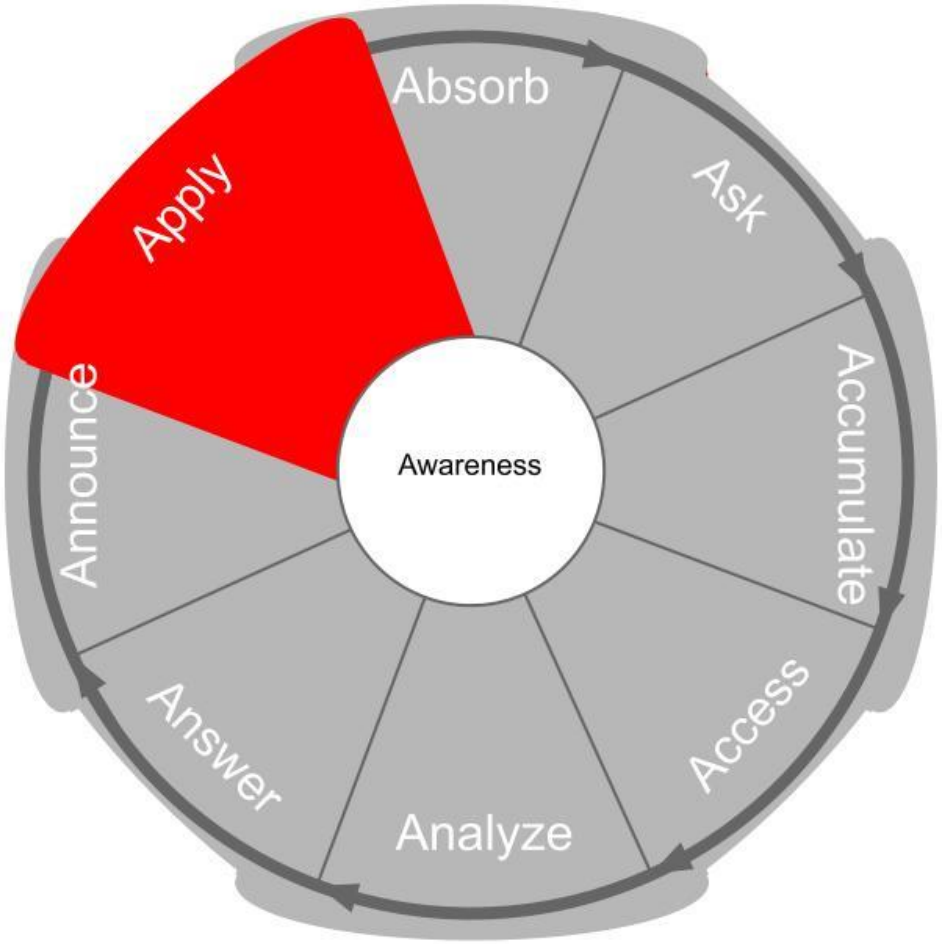
- Program faculty via email and report at a meeting
- Broader campus via yearly program assessment (YPA) report
- External program reviewers via a self-study report



Apply

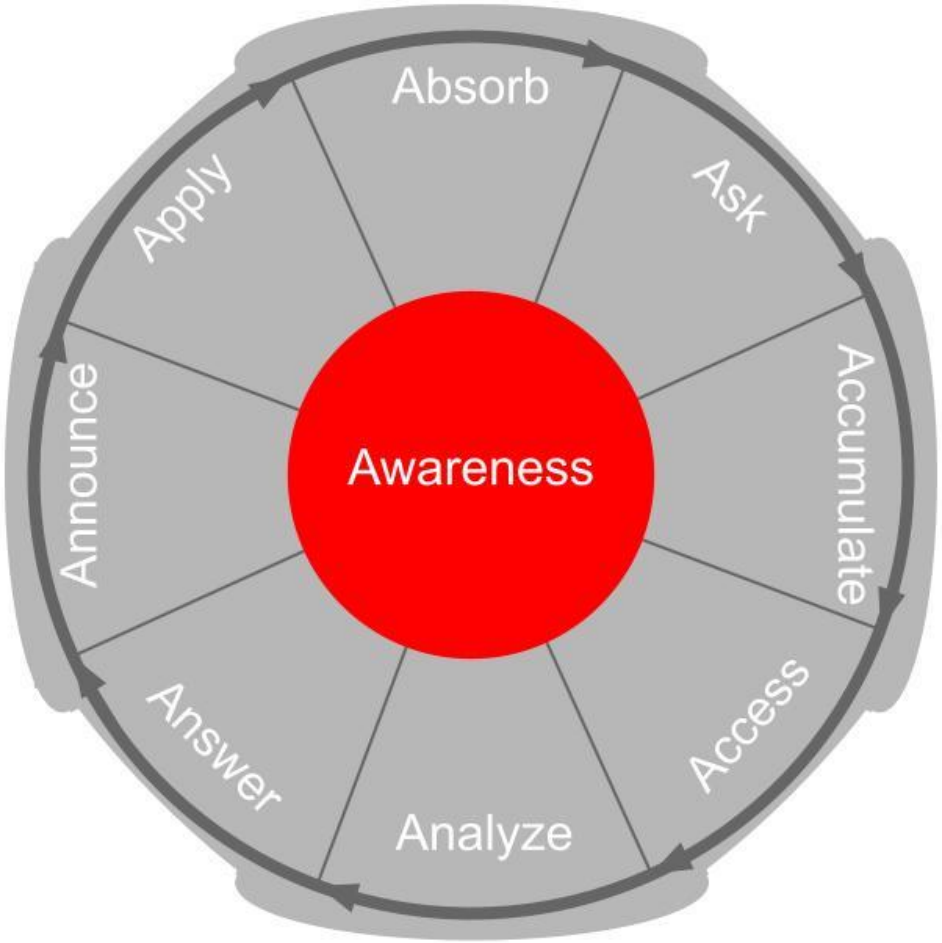
Use results to make decisions relevant to program:

- Content
- Delivery
- Assessment



Awareness

All stages of the outcomes assessment process were addressed and collectively served a common purpose



Let's sing an A+ Inquiry song together!

On the next 8 slides

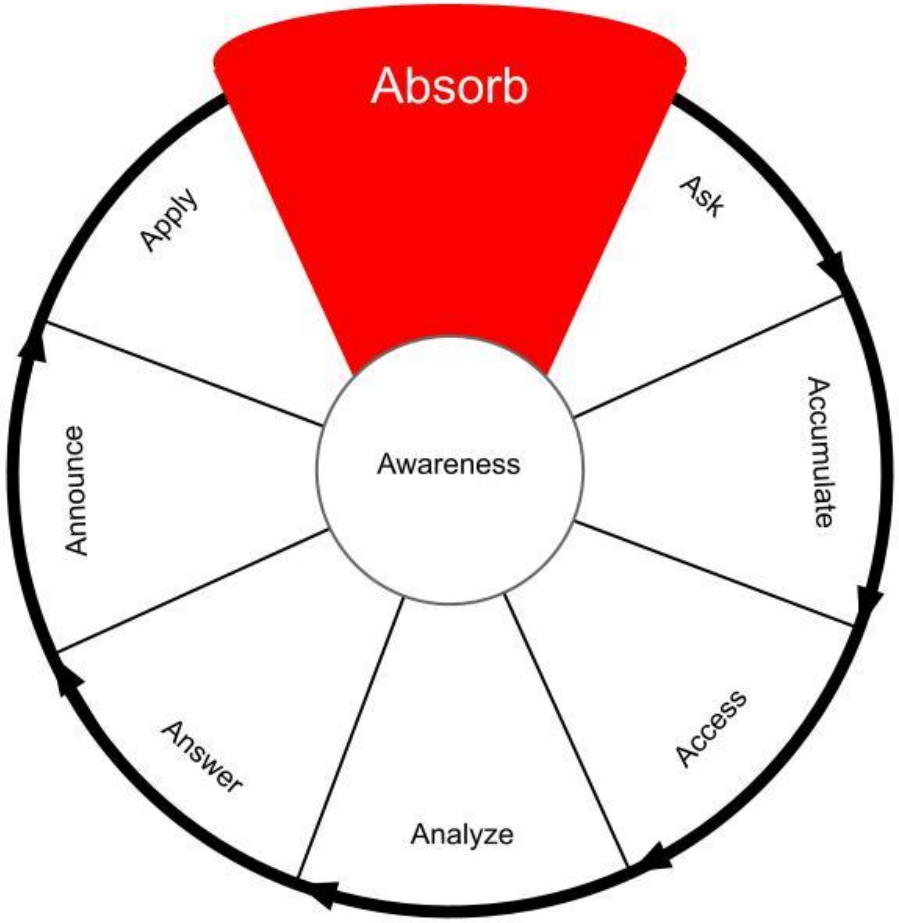
Repeat the

♪ *italicized text*

after me

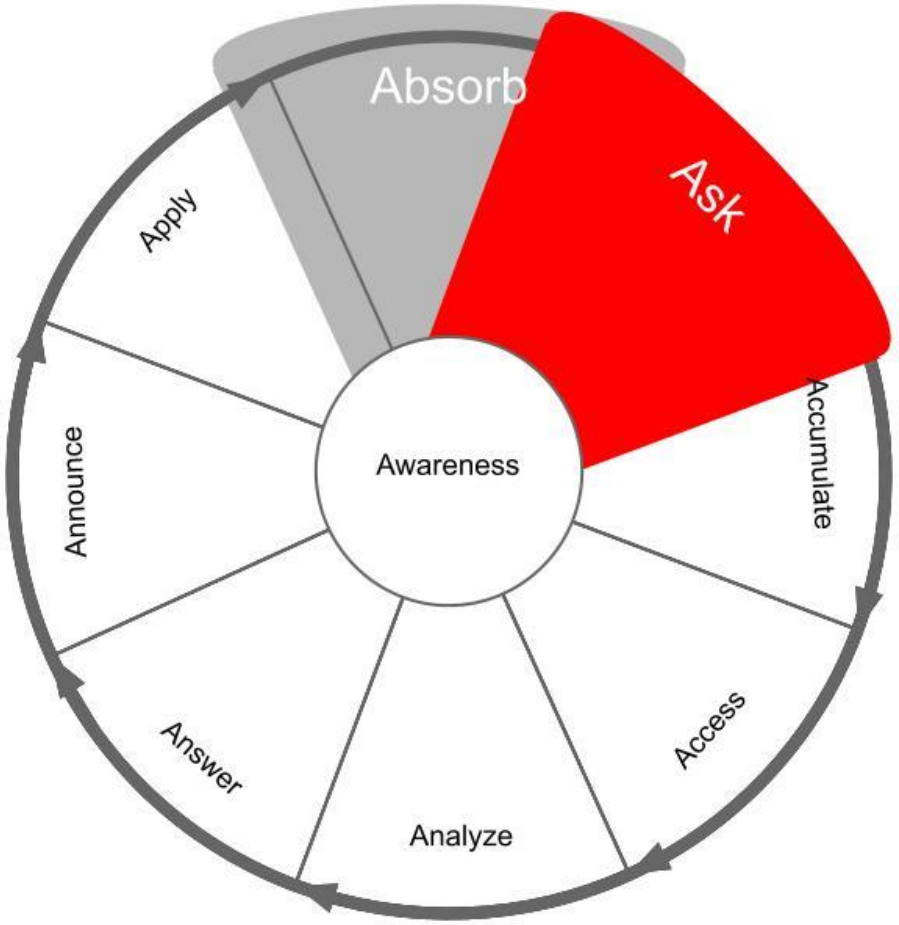
Repeat after me

Figure out what you want to know more about



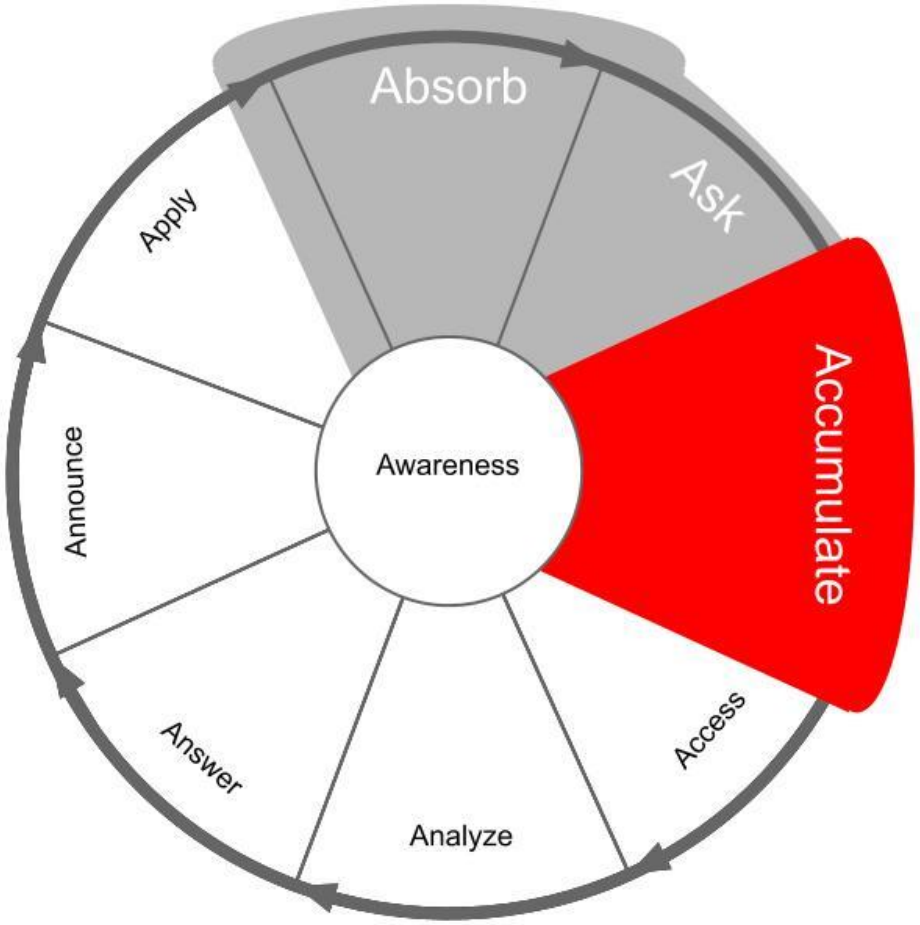
Repeat after me

Formulate a question to help you find out



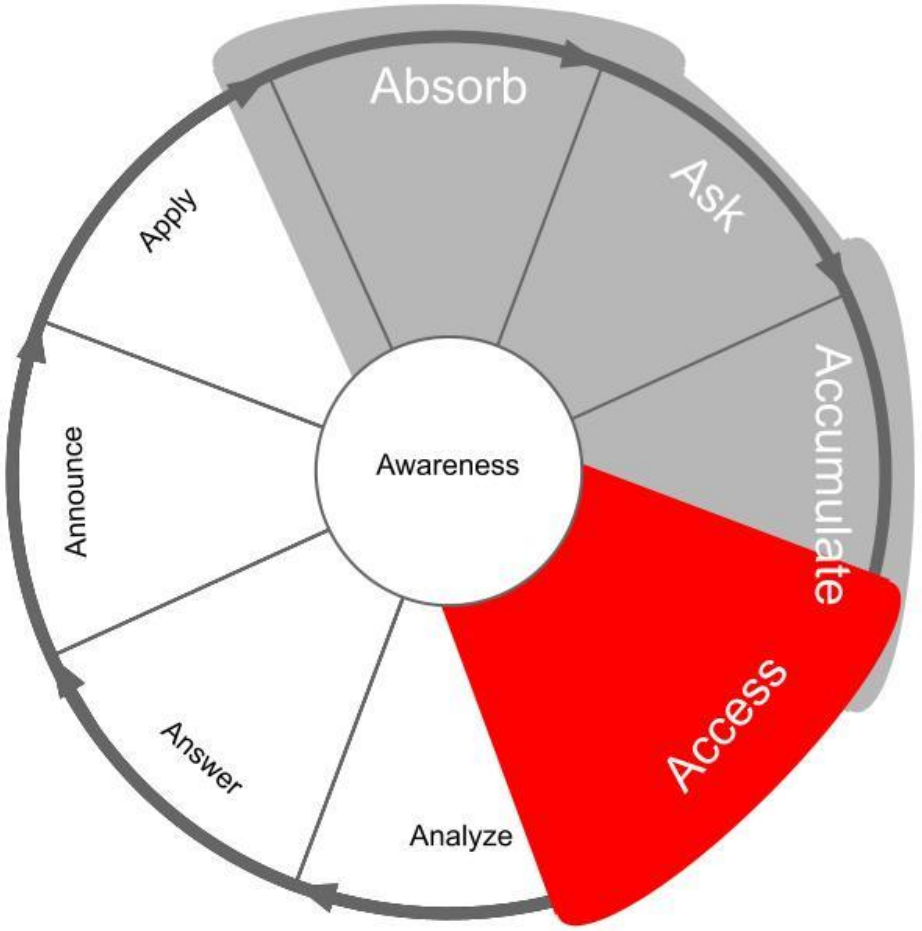
Repeat after me

Collect the right data that can be explored



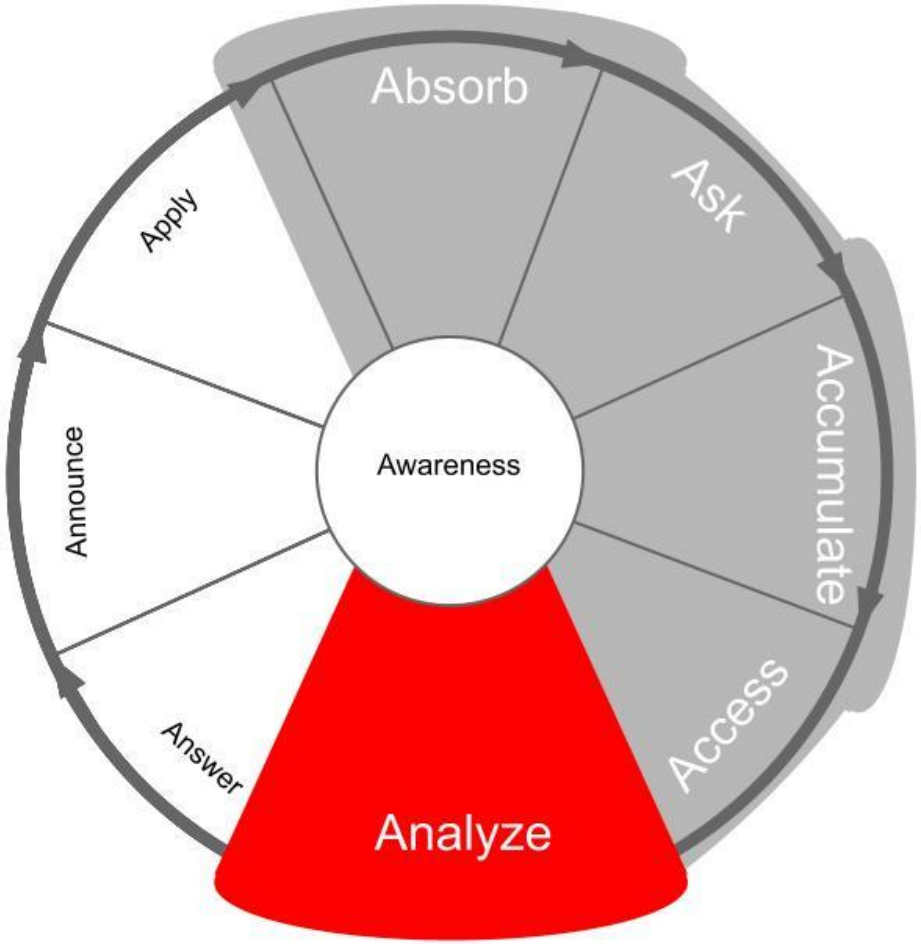
Repeat after me

Ensure you can get it from where it is stored



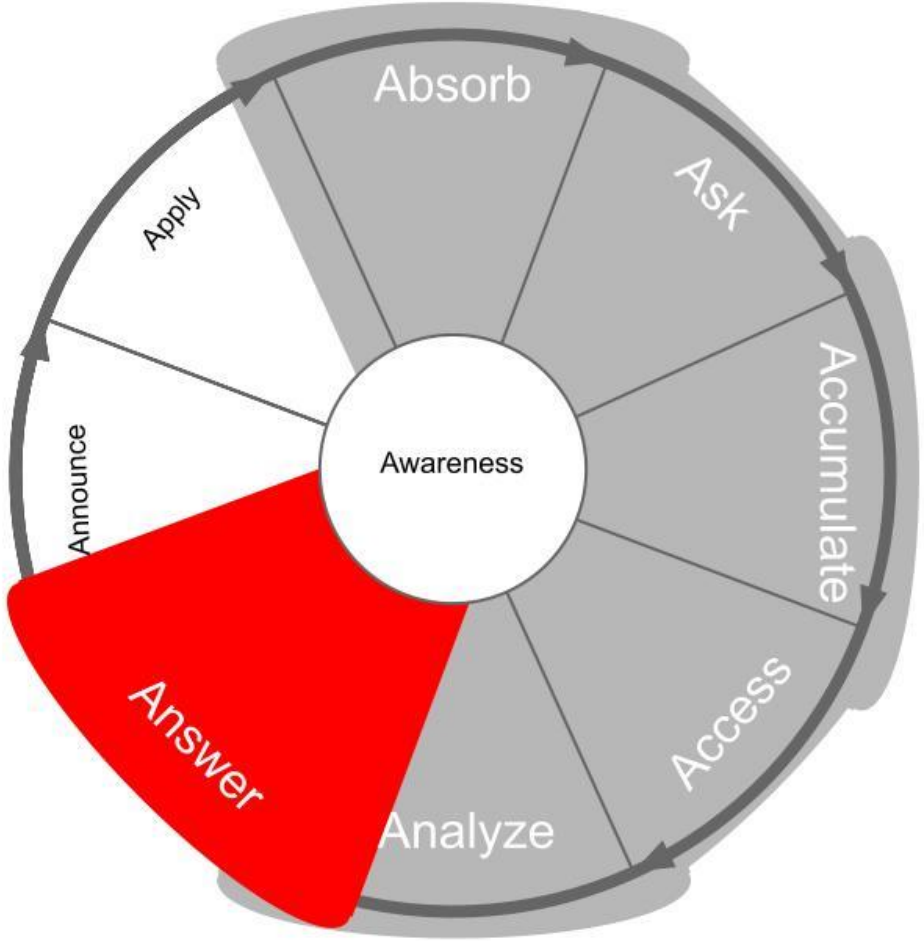
Repeat after me

Conduct analysis with methods that yield



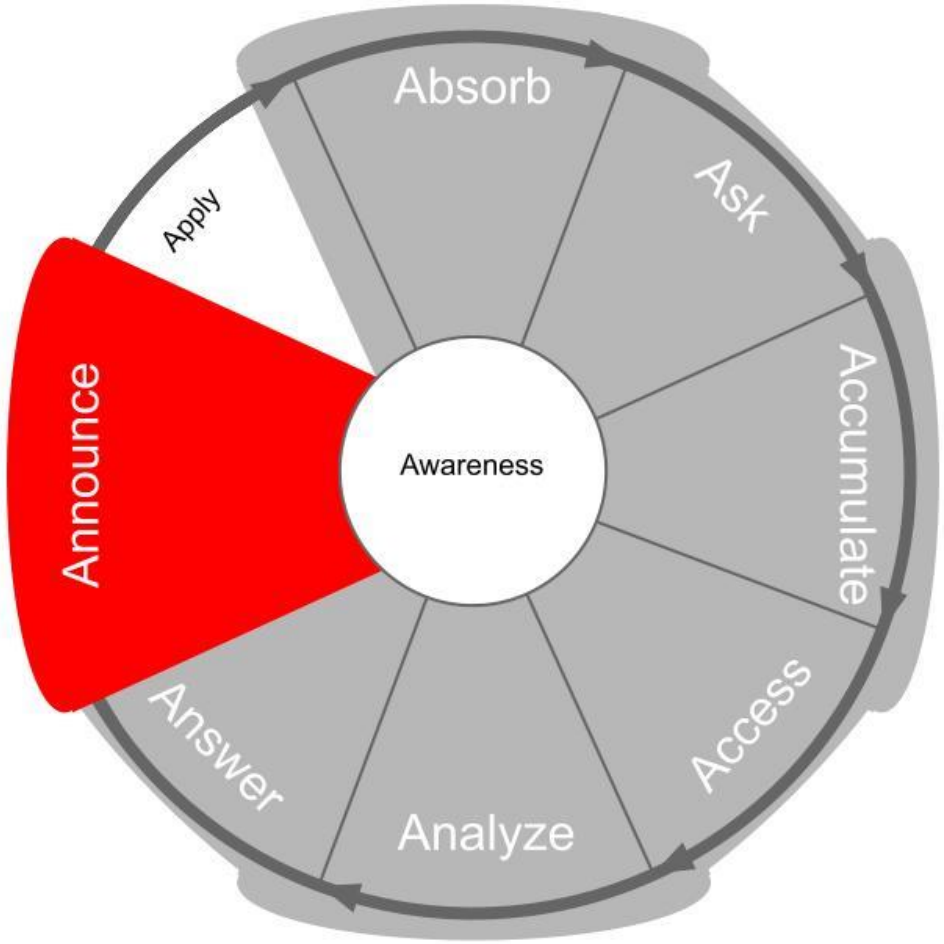
Repeat after me

An answer that adds new knowledge to the field



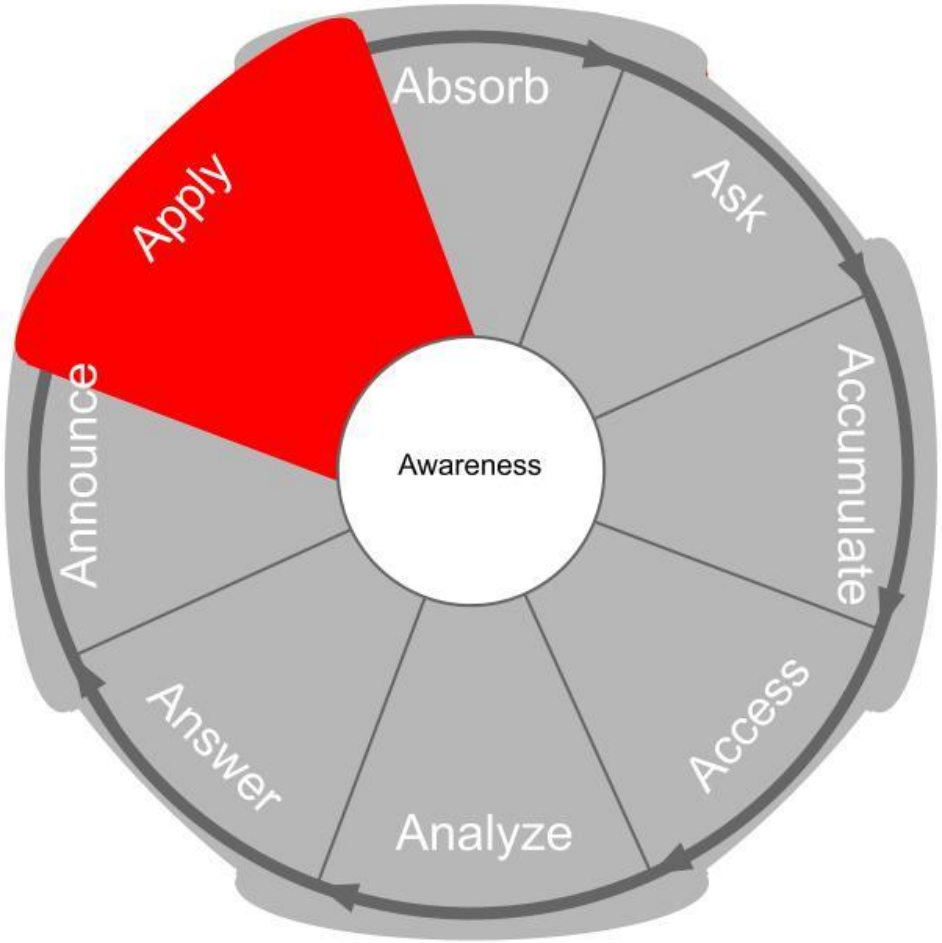
Repeat after me

Distribute your results
to those that have a stake



Repeat after me

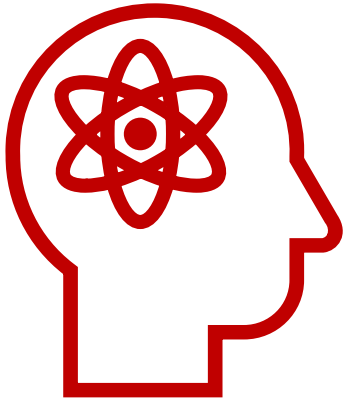
Use your findings to guide decisions you make



A grateful applause from me to you!

What do faculty think about assessment?

- Faculty perceptions of assessment workload study
  - Satisfaction
  - Impact
  - Barriers
  - Recommendations

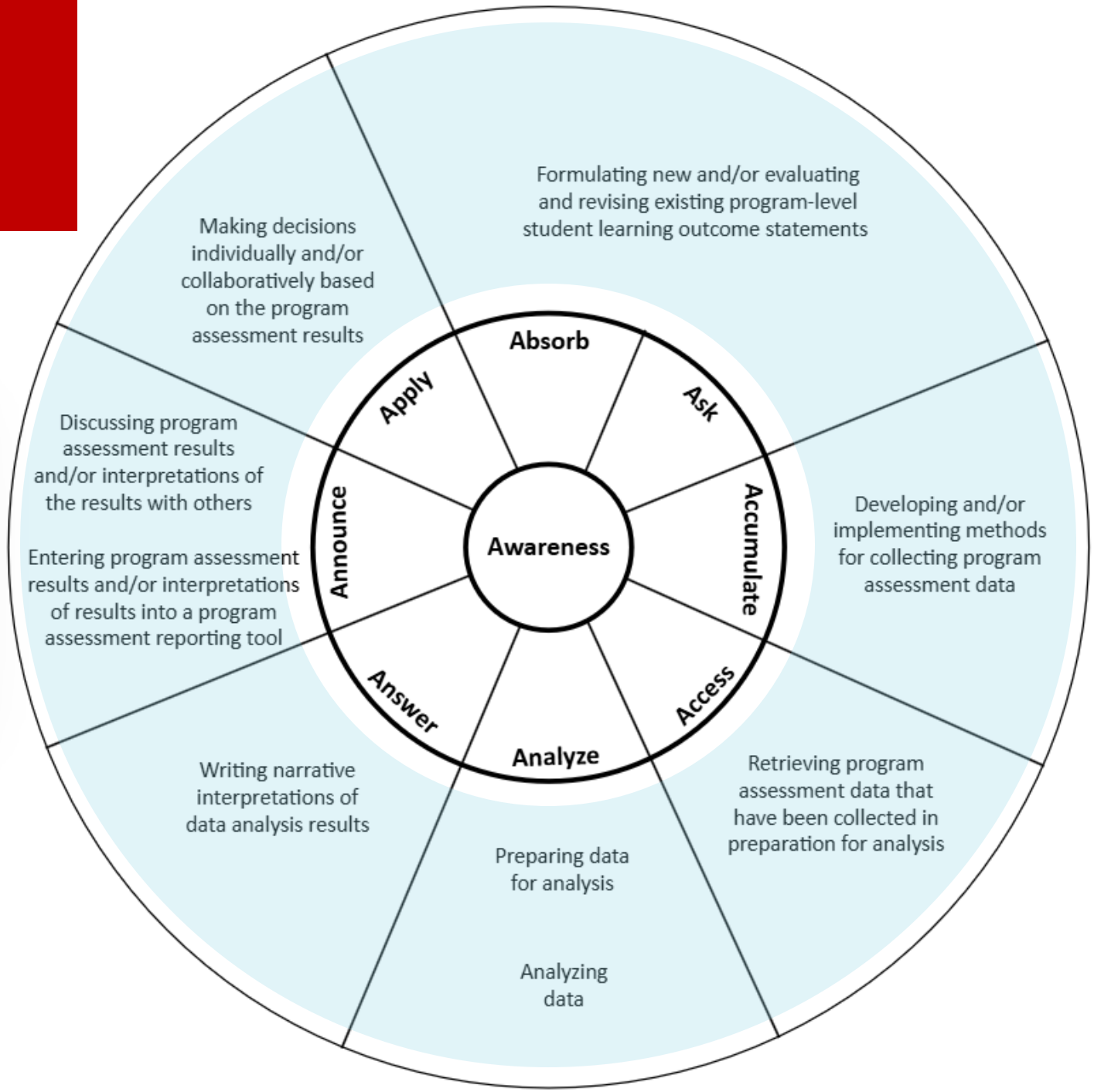


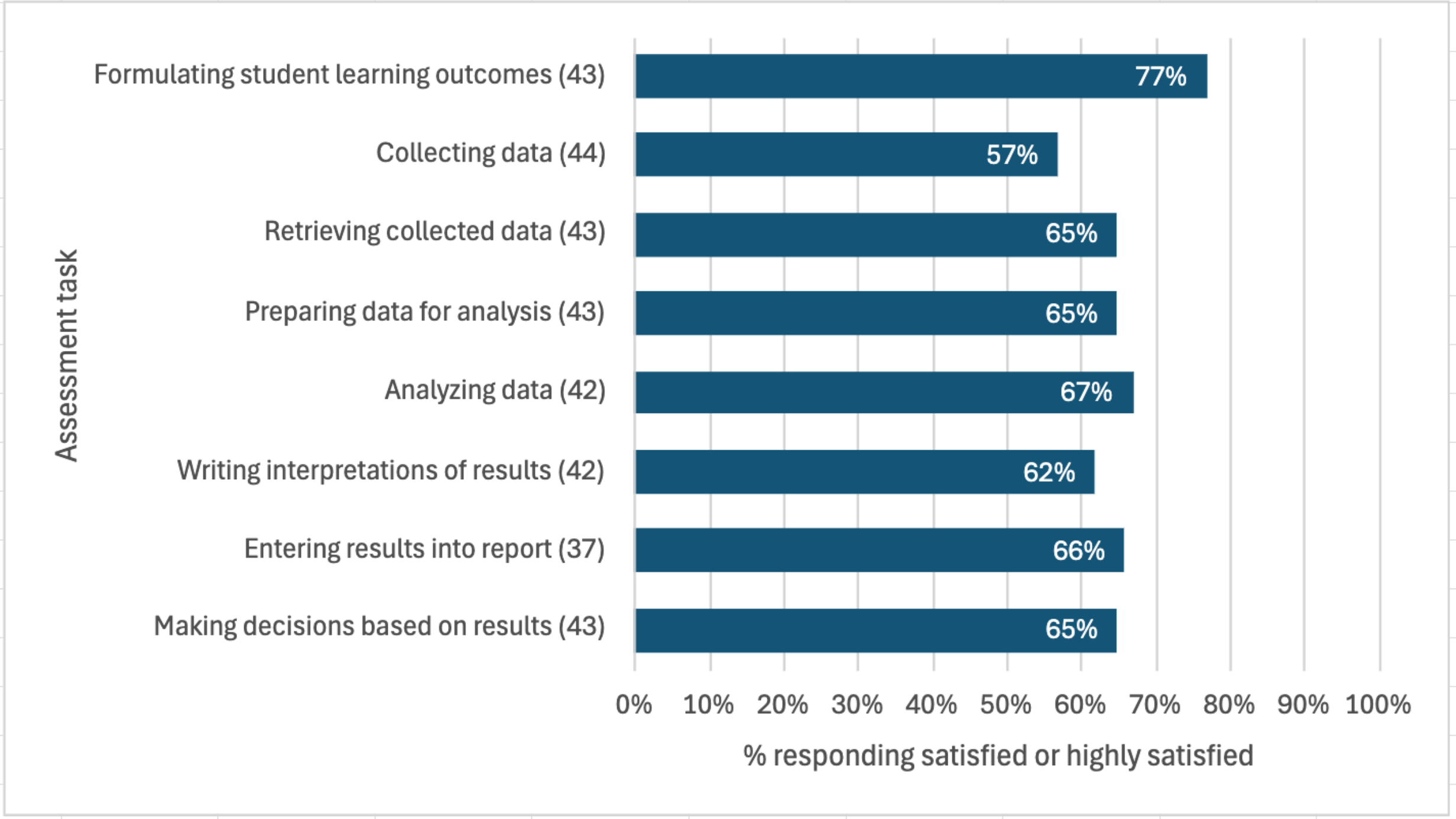
- Survey emailed to 336 full- and part-time faculty in spring '24
- 92 total respondents
- 55 answered questions related to satisfaction and impact
  - 49 full-time faculty
  - 6 part-time faculty

Satisfaction

To what extent are you ***satisfied or dissatisfied*** with your process of implementing each ***program assessment task?***

Highly dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Satisfied
Highly satisfied
I do not implement this task




Assessment task
Formulating student learning outcomes (43)
77%
Collecting data (44)
57%
Retrieving collected data (43)
65%
Preparing data for analysis (43)
65%
Analyzing data (42)
67%
Writing interpretations of results (42)
62%
Entering results into report (37)
66%
Making decisions based on results (43)
65%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
% responding satisfied or highly satisfied

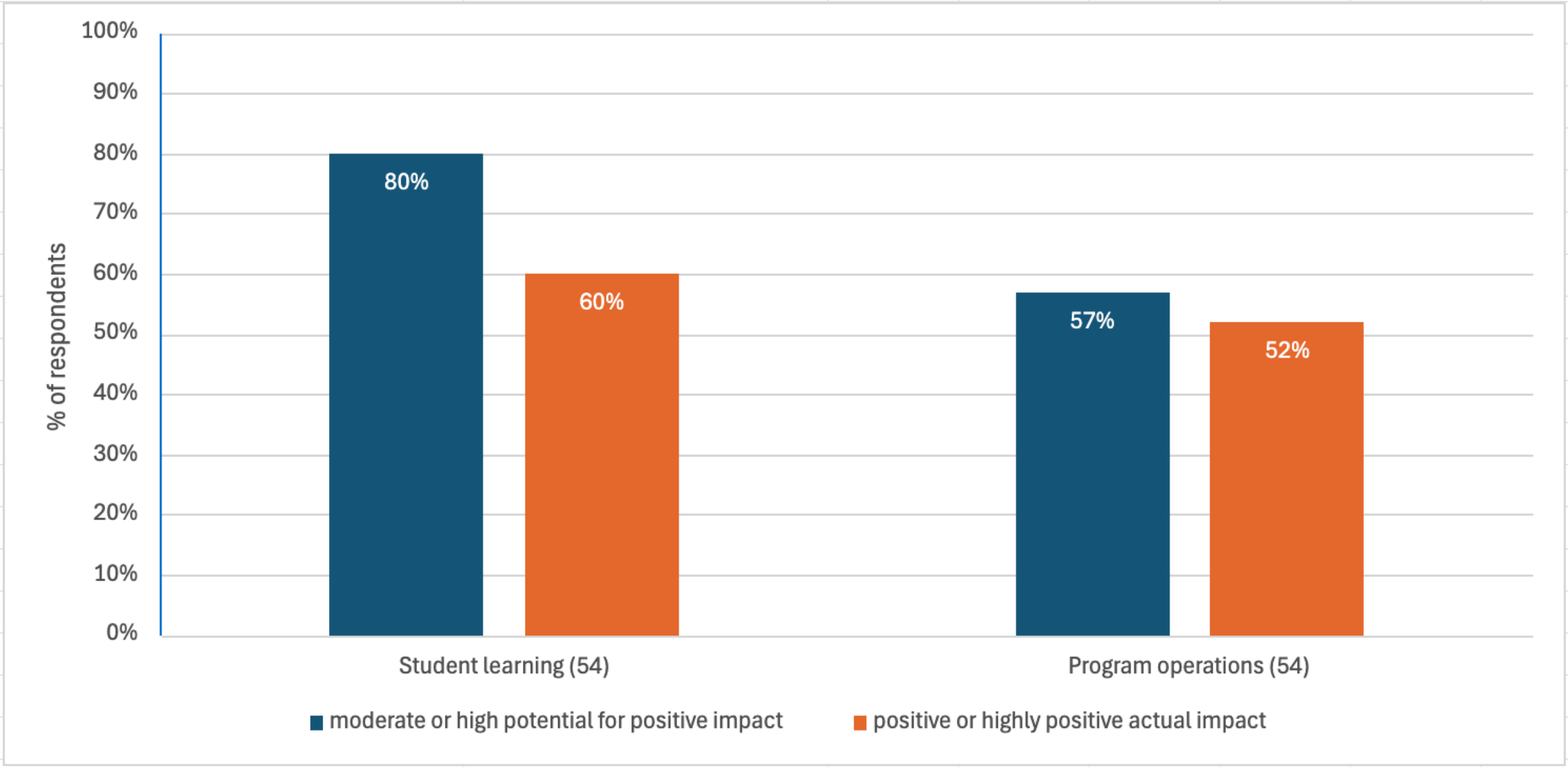
Perceived Impact

To what extent do you believe that effective program-level assessment methods have ***potential to positively impact***

- ***STUDENT LEARNING*** within an academic program
- the ***OPERATIONS*** of an academic program

To what extent do you believe that yearly program assessment ***actually impacts***

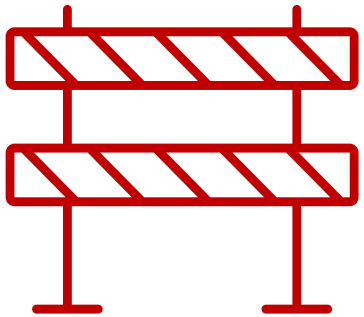
- ***STUDENT LEARNING*** within your program
- the ***OPERATIONS*** of your program


100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
% of respondents
80%
60%
57%
52%
Student learning (54)
Program operations (54)
moderate or high potential for positive impact
positive or highly positive actual impact

Barriers

Complexity and misalignment

Faculty engagement and interest



Resource limitations

Lack of integration and clarity

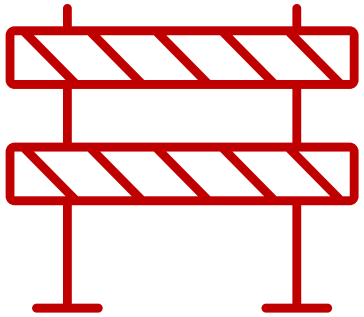
Managing data

Measuring outcomes

Setting goals

Complexity and misalignment

Changing implementation



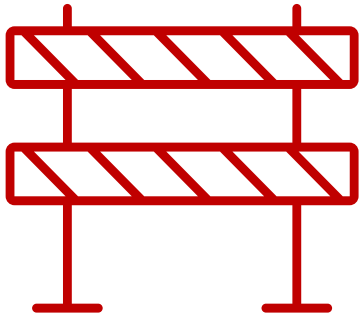
Faculty engagement and interest

Resource limitations

Lack of integration and clarity

Complexity and misalignment

Faculty engagement and interest



Lack of integration and clarity

Time constraints

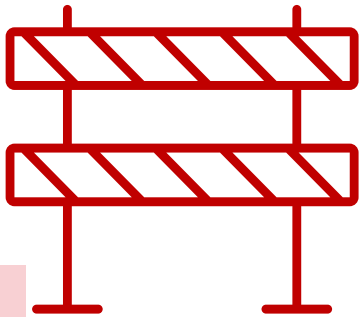
Staffing shortages

Resource limitations

Large workloads

Complexity and misalignment

Faculty engagement and interest



Resource limitations

Unclear expectations

Lack of training on assessment processes

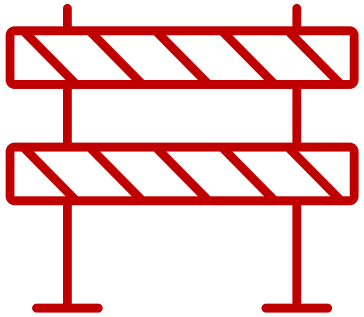
Lack of integration and clarity

Faculty buy-in

Levels of engagement

Faculty engagement and interest

Effort toward program assessment tasks



Complexity and misalignment

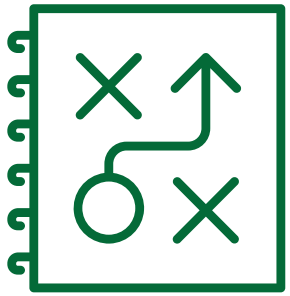
Resource limitations

Lack of integration and clarity

Recommendations

Resource optimization

Alignment and relevance



Simplification and integration of processes

Data communication and use

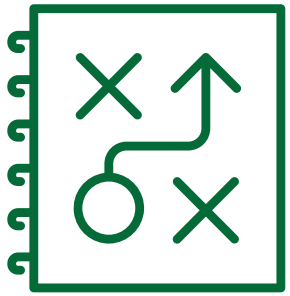
More support

More training

Resource optimization

More resources

Alignment and relevance

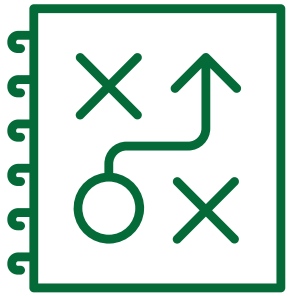


Simplification and integration of processes

Data communication and use

Resource optimization

Alignment and relevance



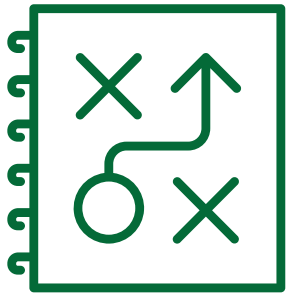
Simplification and integration of processes

Train on integration w/ dept. activities

Data communication and use

Resource optimization

Alignment and relevance



Simplification and integration of processes

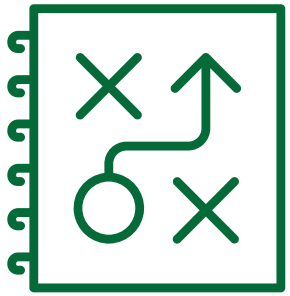
Data communication and use

Train on using data for decision-making

Train on aligning data w/ program needs

Alignment and relevance

Resource optimization



Simplification and integration of processes

Data communication and use

Pontenila, S., & Stephens, E., & Anderson N. C. (2025). Using A+ Inquiry as a Framework for Exploring Faculty Needs Related to Program Assessment Workload. *Intersection: A Journal at the Intersection of Assessment and Learning, Early View.*

Using A+ Inquiry as a Framework for Exploring Faculty Needs Related to Program Assessment Workload

Serena Pontenila, Ph.D., Emily Stephens, M.S., Nathan C Anderson, Ph.D.

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We have no conflicts of interest to disclose

Intersection: A Journal at the Intersection of Assessment and Learning
Early View

Abstract: This paper begins by establishing the A+ Inquiry model as a theoretical lens for assessing needs related to program assessment workload by demonstrating its alignment with elements of five published frameworks associated with higher education assessment. Then, it uses the model as a frame of reference to explore faculty needs related to program assessment workload. The study examines faculty perceptions associated with five areas related to program assessment: time commitment, processes, impact, barriers, and recommendations. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected by administering an online survey to all faculty across the institution. Results revealed an average amount of time that faculty spend on program assessment efforts, tasks in assessment processes reflecting the highest and lowest levels of faculty satisfaction, a gap between perceptions of potential and actual impact of program assessment, four themes related to barriers inhibiting program assessment, and four themes related to recommendations for improving program assessment.

Keywords: *needs assessment, program assessment, program evaluation*

Introduction

Program assessment helps academic programs ensure that students are learning what they are

Scan to read the article

How do assessment & evaluation promote quality?

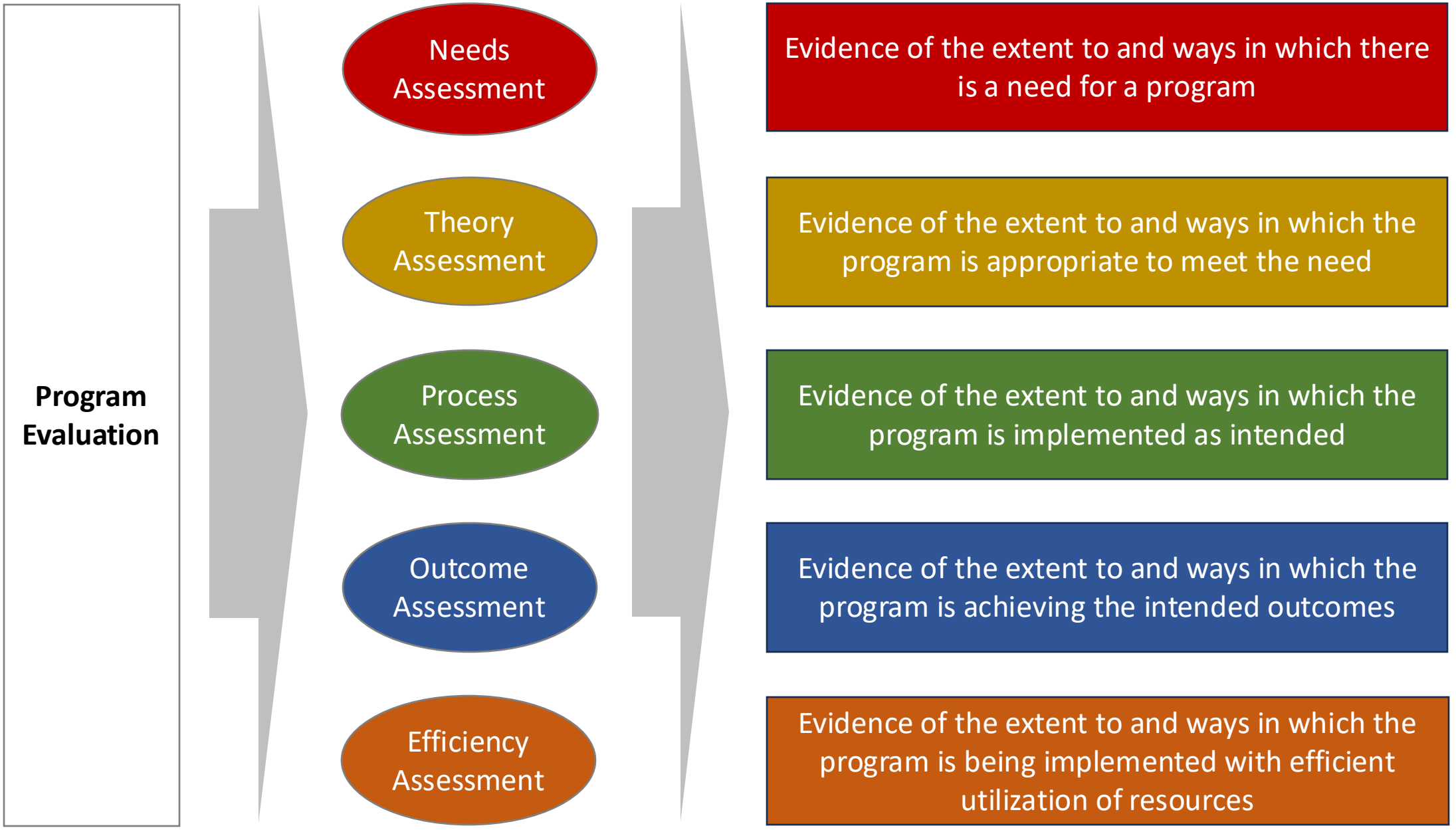
PROGRAM EVALUATION

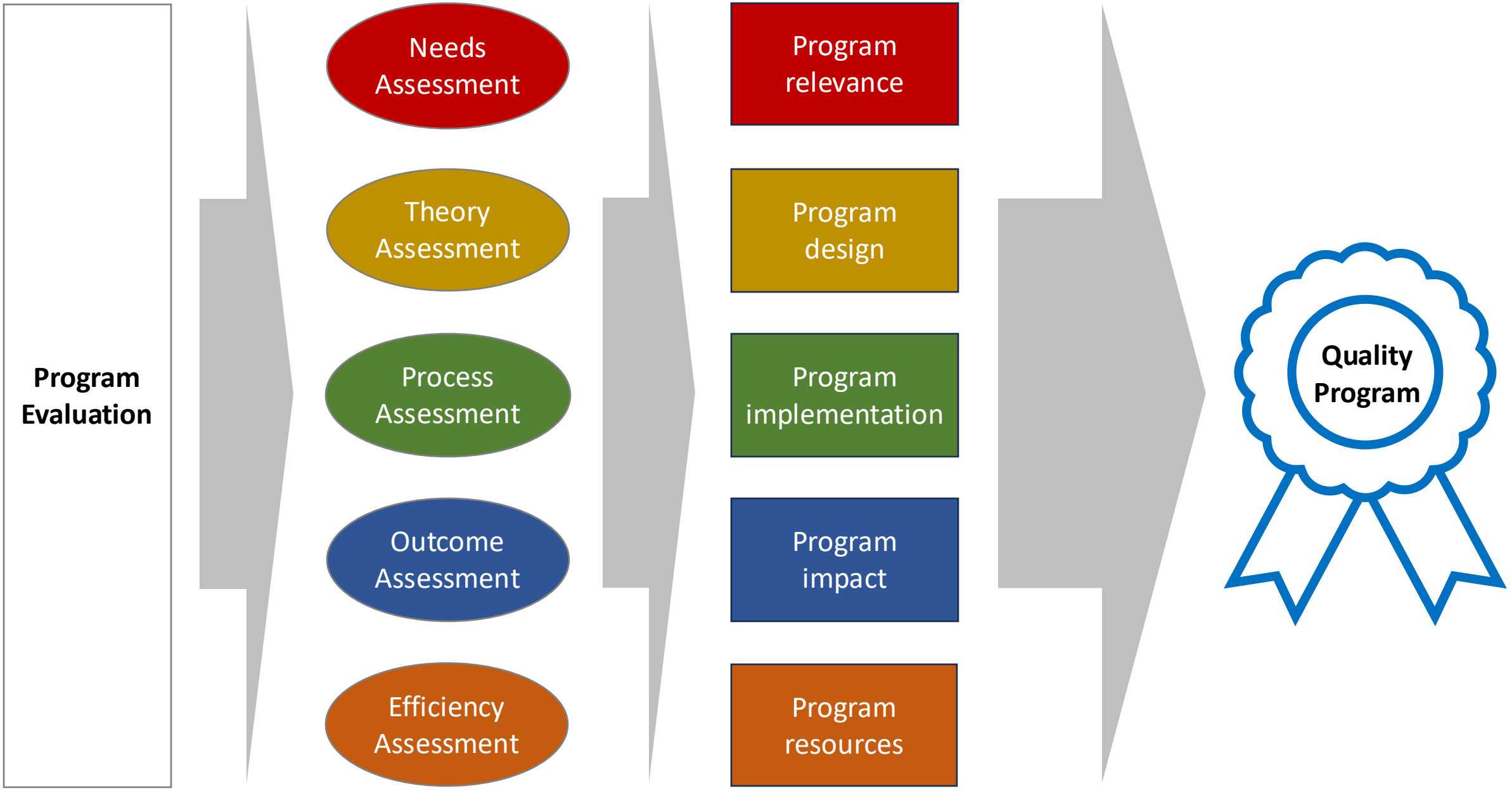
is often used
interchangeably
with the term

ASSESSMENT

in higher education

(Banta, 2002, p. 289)


Program Evaluation
Needs Assessment
Theory Assessment
Process Assessment
Outcome Assessment
Efficiency Assessment
Evidence of the extent to and ways in which there is a need for a program
Evidence of the extent to and ways in which the program is appropriate to meet the need
Evidence of the extent to and ways in which the program is implemented as intended
Evidence of the extent to and ways in which the program is achieving the intended outcomes
Evidence of the extent to and ways in which the program is being implemented with efficient utilization of resources


Program Evaluation
Needs Assessment
Theory Assessment
Process Assessment
Outcome Assessment
Efficiency Assessment
Program relevance
Program design
Program implementation
Program impact
Program resources
Quality Program

Revisiting the definition of assessment

The process of providing credible evidence of

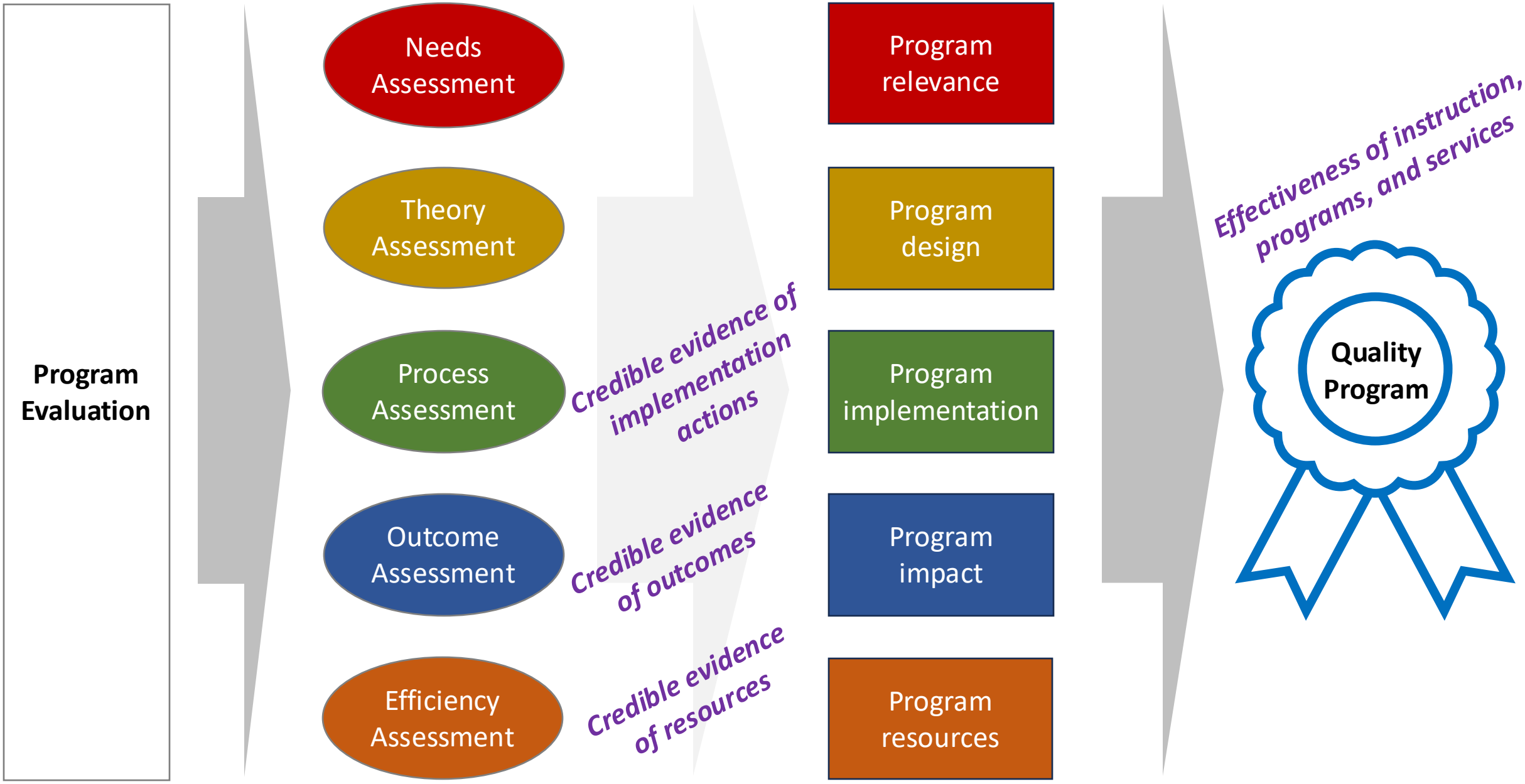
- ***resources***
- ***implementation actions***
- ***and outcomes***

undertaken for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of

- ***instruction***
- ***programs***
- ***and services***

in higher education

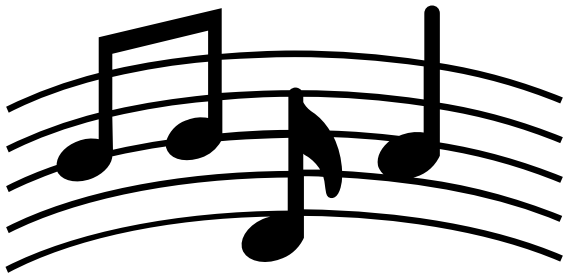
(Banta & Palomba, 2015, p. 2)



Banta & Palomba's (2015) assessment definition

Let’s close with another song

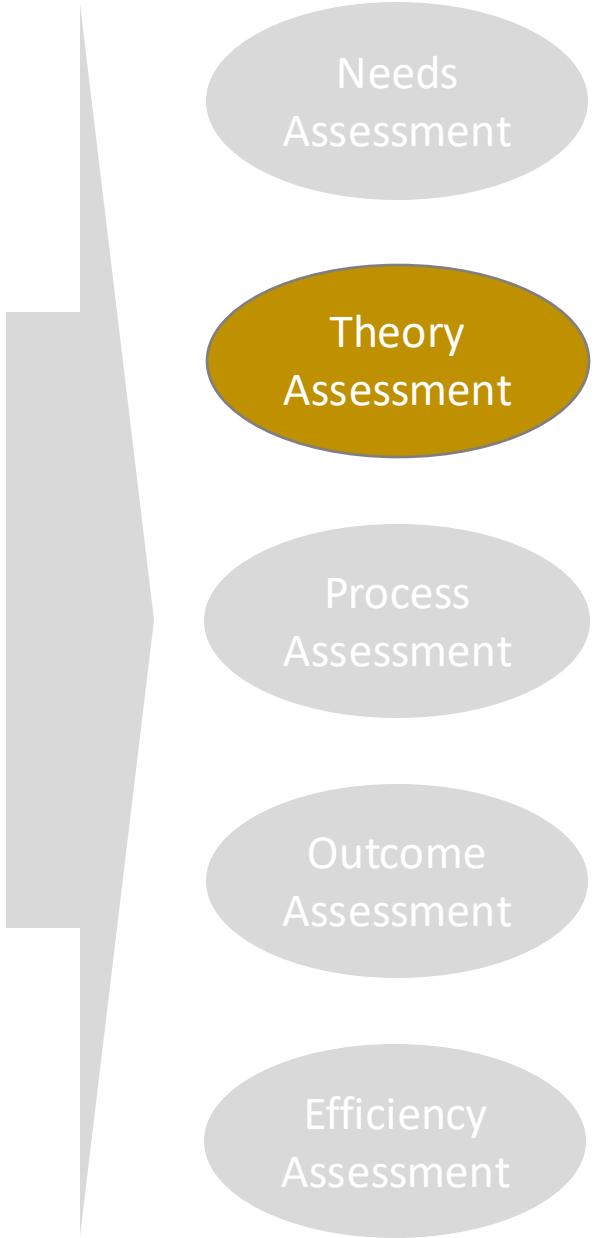
The 5 Categories of Assessment



Program Evaluation

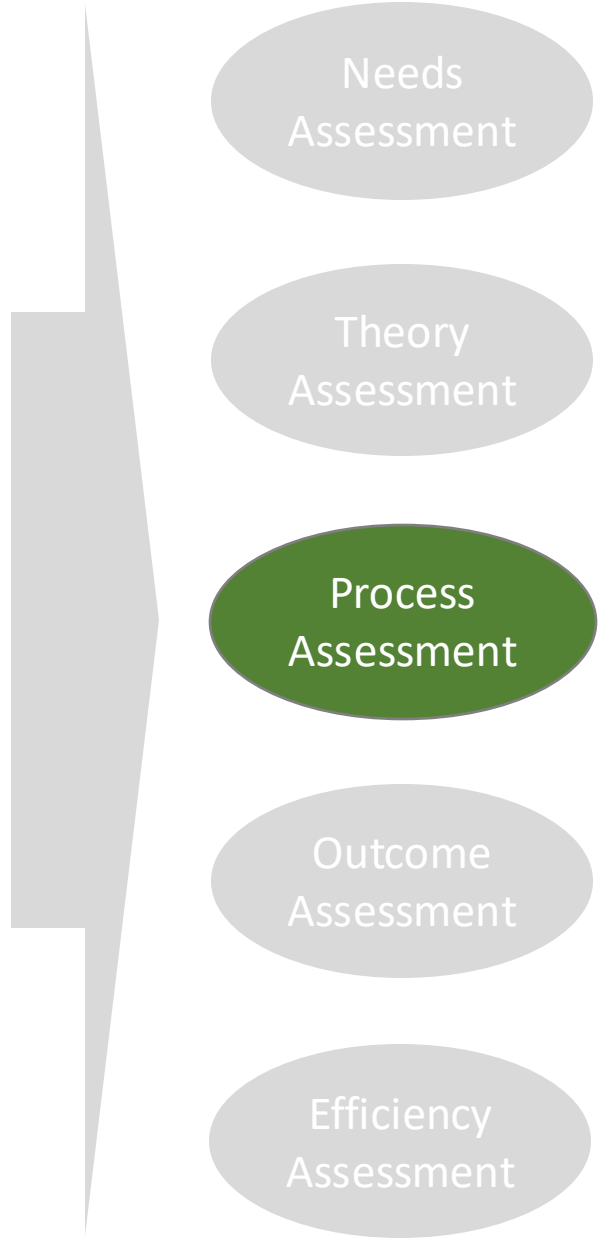
- *Assess the needs that it can meet*
- *Get relevant issues in sight*

Program Evaluation



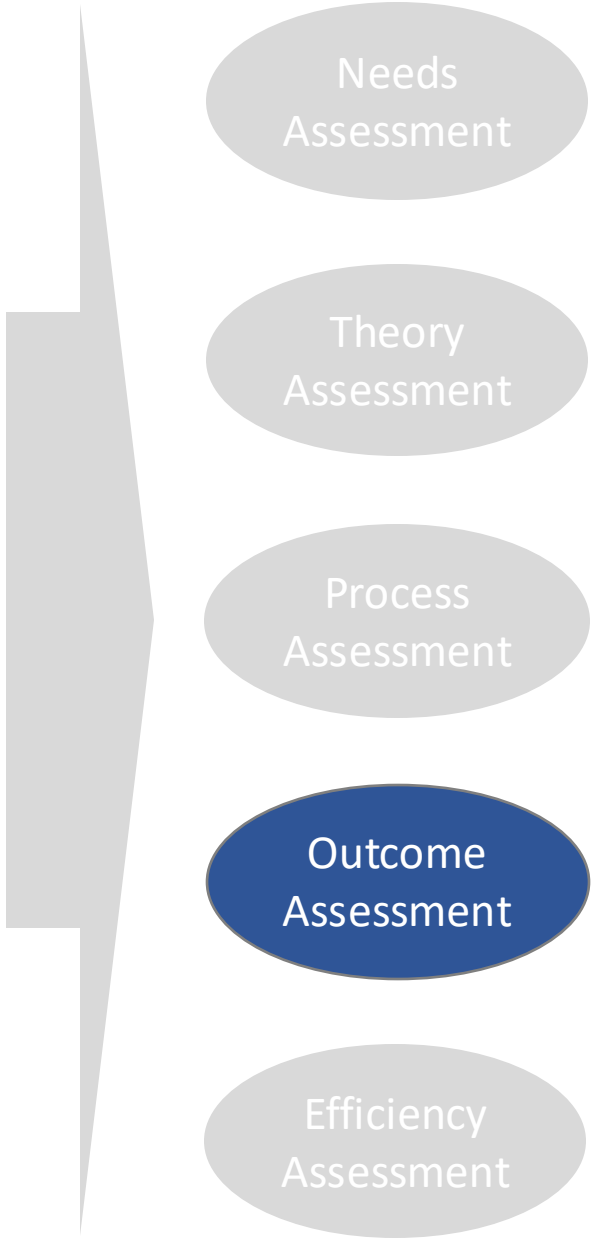
- *Wisely assess all its theory*
- *To know that it's designed just right*

Program Evaluation



- *Also assess its processes*
- *To ensure it's implemented*

Program Evaluation

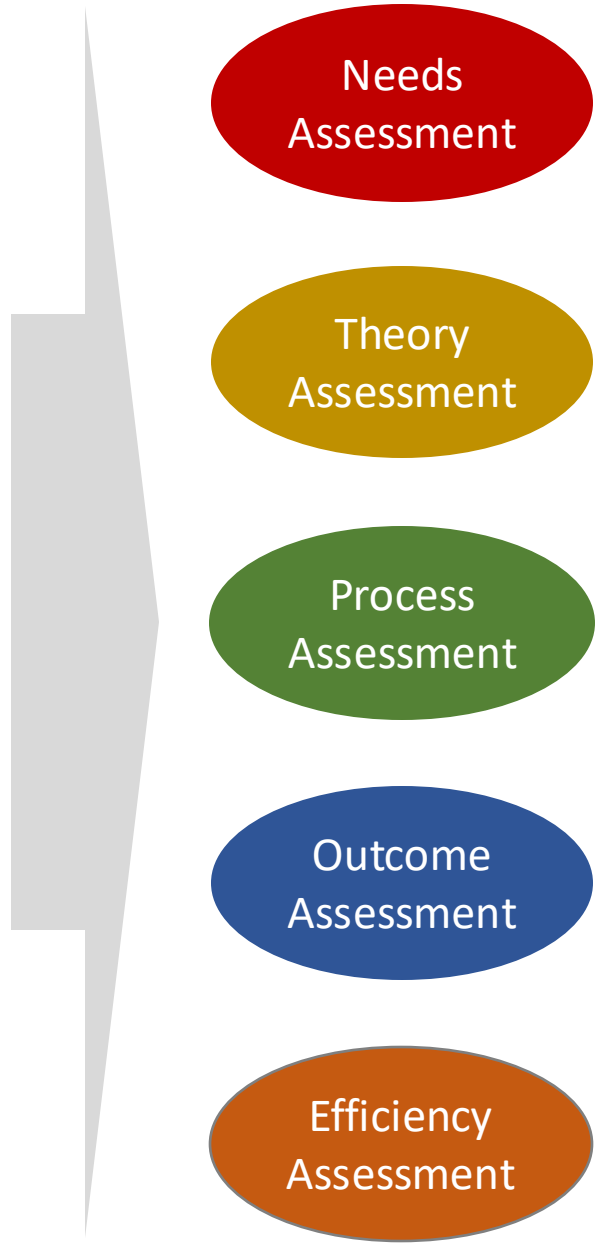


- *Assess outcomes that it produced*
- *To know impacts it presented*

Program Evaluation

- *And assess its efficiency*
- *To rightly use its resources*

Program Evaluation



♪ *Assess in these five areas*

♪ *To leverage data forces*

Breakout sessions

10:15-11:00

- Goals and Outcomes (Swain 2nd Floor Atrium)
- Measures and Criteria (HH Collaboration Space)
- Reporting, Actions, Decision Making (Swain 3rd Floor Atrium)

10:30-11:00

- Develop Your YPA (Souris Room)