MINOT STATE UNIVERSITY

Assessment 101 - Basics

Prepared by the Office of Academic Assessment

What is Assessment?

- Assessment is the systematic collection and analysis of information for the purpose of continuous improvement
- Assessment overlaps in some ways with research but is primarily focused on program improvement, management, accountability, and decision-making and budgeting.

Why Assess Student Learning?

- Faculty and staff assess courses, programs, and administrative units all the time to determine what worked, what didn't, and how improvement is implemented

- Assessment proper transforms these informal activities into systematic and public process

What Assessment is NOT?

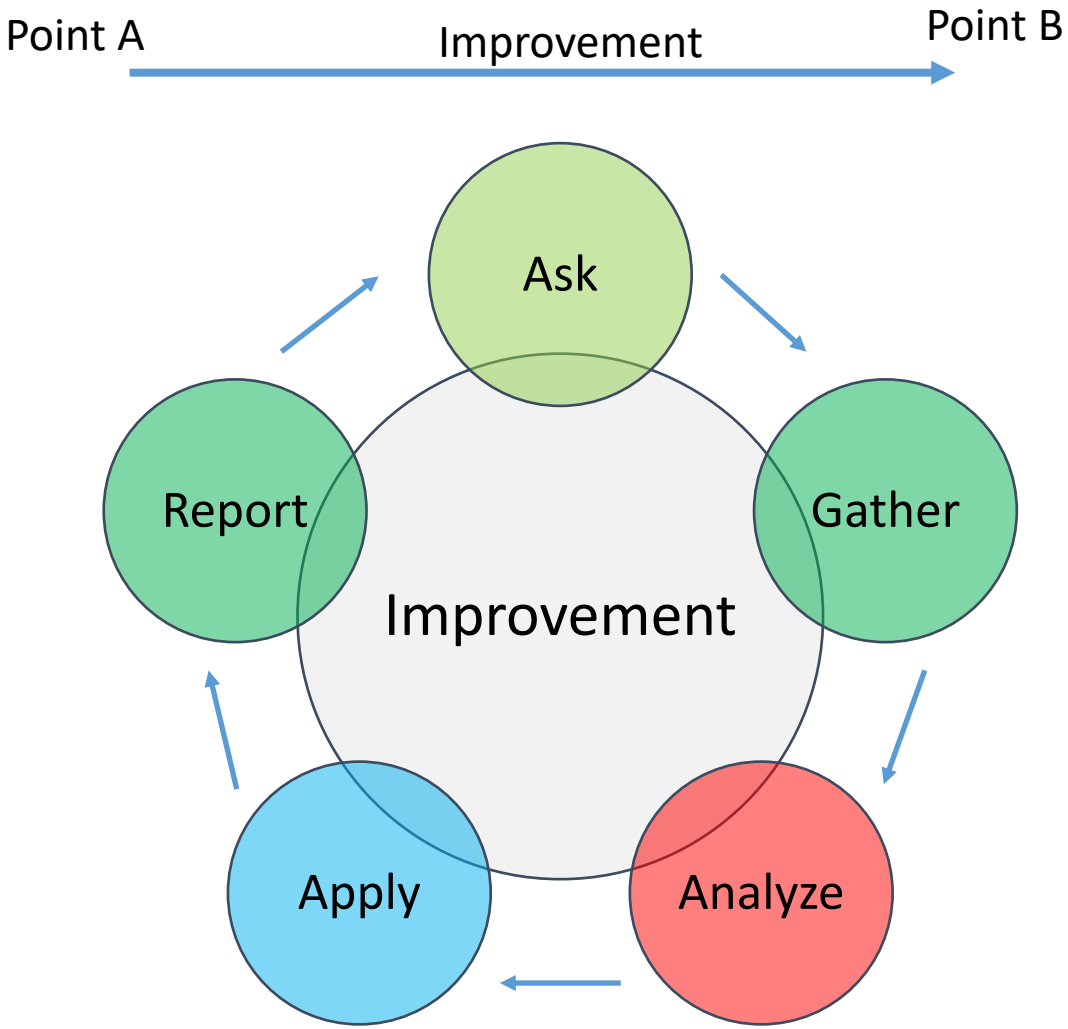
- A list of things done by the department – activity reporting
- Evaluation of individual employees
- Based on a single measure/metric
- A comparison of administrative units or divisions
- Primary research designed to create knowledge

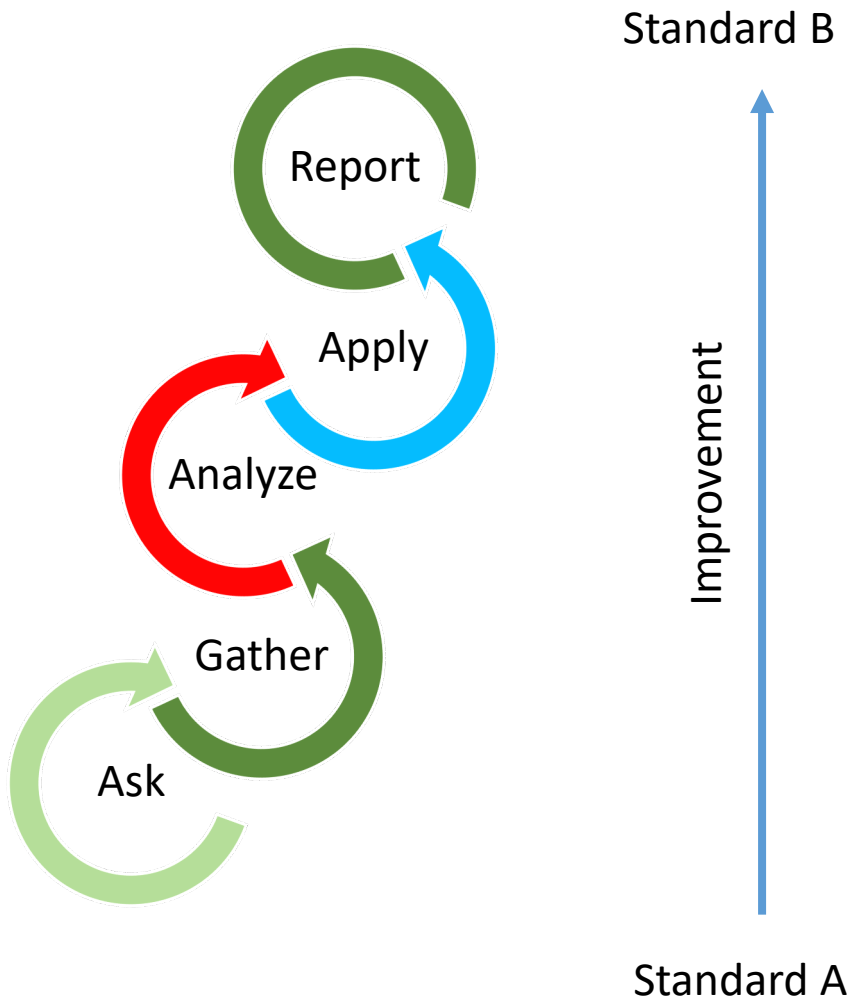
Guardrails of Assessment

Is the assessment ***meaningful*** and ***manageable***?

1. Is it something we want to know about student learning or my office/program that is relevant to my context?
2. Does it provoke learning/growth/development in students?
3. Does it help us understand how students learn/develop or to better serve and stretch them?
4. Does it produce results that intentionally inform decision making?
5. Can it be completed within the yearly assessment cycle, or does it need to span multiple years?
6. Can it help the institution in broader assessment of student learning/development – think connection to strategic plan?
7. Does it fit the context of the program, department, institution?

The Assessment Steps - Improvement Process





The Assessment Cycle:
Stepwise Progress Towards Closing the Loop

1. **Ask –** What do I want students to learn, know, be able to do, what do I want to improve in my program or department?
2. **Gather -** What data am I collecting? How will I collect data?
3. **Analyze -** What does the data communicate?
4. **Apply -** How will I use what I learned for improvement?
5. **Report -** Who else needs to know what I learned?

The Functions of Each Step

Function	**Ask**	**Gather**	**Analyze**	**Apply**	**Report**
The Question	Learning, Development, Improvement	Collect Data	Data Reveal	Use	Share
The Exercise	Goals & Outcomes	Methods, Practices, Metrics, Targets	Analyze, Interpret, Convey	Recommendations for improvement	Celebrate and begin new cycle

The Assessment Cycle – Yearly Timeline

Yearly Cycle	Plan	Project	Report
April-May	Step 1 Step 2		
Semesters/Blocks		Step 2 Step 3 Step 4	
October-November			Step 4 Step 5

Step 1: Ask

- What/how do I want students to learn or develop? *(Student Learning Goals and Outcomes)* What/How do I believe my office can improve? *(Operational goals and outcomes)*
- What essential knowledge, skill, and/or disposition will students gain?
- What process or element of the program/department will I improve?
- How does my office/program facilitate student learning and development? Through processes, through outcomes, through satisfaction, through all or some of the above?
- What is the target for success?
- How does past assessment cycles inform present action? “Closing the Loop”

Step 1: Ask – Example of Student Centered Outcome

- Good Example

As a result of completing Transfer Student Orientation, **incoming transfer students** will be able to list four academic resources on campus.

- Poor Example

Facilitators will deliver a presentation about academic resources on campus. *(Focuses on what the facilitator will do, not what students will learn.)*

Step 1: Ask – Example of a Reasonable Outcome

- Good Example

  As a result of completing UNIV 101 freshmen students will participate in **four of the eight wellness habits**.

- Poor Example

  As a result of completing UNIV 101 freshmen students will write a 20 page research paper on **each of the eight wellness habits.** *(For a 100 level course such assignments are likely to discourage student participation)*

Step 1: Ask – Example from a math program

Goal:

Math graduates communicate specific content and ideas effectively and persuasively to relevant audiences

Outcome:

- Students effectively communicate mathematical ideas by precisely formulating them in proper mathematical language (M333, M 383, M 384, M 431).
- Students write solutions to problems and proofs of results that meet rigorous standards based on content, organization, coherence, logical arguments, and style. (M333, M 383, M 384, M 431)

Step 1: Ask – Example from advising

Goal:

Students develop awareness and ability to articulate knowledge of their degree requirements and their role in the advising process

Outcome:

- Students collaborate with their advisor to develop a 4-year plan
- Students curate a 4-year plan for their major

Step 2: Gather

- Do I have direct and indirect measures of student learning/development?
- Are my goals and outcomes tightly connected to how and where I will collect data?
- Does the office/program include enough measures/interventions to substantially inform leaders of student learning/development… of process efficiency?
- What are the specifics of my improvement project design? Pre-Post, satisfaction survey, standardized testing, internal/external benchmarking, reviews, descriptive, etc.?
- What questions will I ask of the data? What are my performance indicators/targets?
- Will my sample size be large or small? Data be Quantitative and/or Qualitative?

Step 3: Analyze

- What is my present understanding of the demographics of the students I serve?
- What descriptive data did I collect?
- What is the data telling me about the questions I asked?
- How does the qualitative and quantitative data I collected complement each other?
- Did I meet or not meet my target?
- What does the project data mean given my understanding of the context and the nature of the questions I asked?

Step 4: Apply

- How do/did I apply the data I collected for improvement?
- Is the data actually helpful?
- What specific goals were met or not met, and why were they met or not met?
- What do I know now that I did not know, or fully understand, last year and how does it help me improve student learning?
- Where did I “Close the Loop” this year, where didn’t I?

Step 5: Report

- Who else needs to know about the results of my report? (Cataloging)
- Who else do I need to discuss these results with? (Examination)
- How does this years report shape what I ask and do next year?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