

Assessment that Makes Sense:
Synthesizing and Measuring Educational Competencies

Direction

- The influences toward developing a culture of assessment
- Assessing institutional competencies
- A model for demonstrating the institutional effectiveness of these competencies

Foundational Assumptions

- Assessment within education is not just a trend or fad. It is here to stay.
- Assessment is proving problematic for most educational institutions, especially the assessment of learning.
- Assessment competency must be developed within our schools.
- Assessment, rightly understood and engaged, can foster important learning and improvement to teaching, learning, and overall institutional effectiveness.

Proposition



- The Institutional Research office is strategically positioned to foster this process.

- Organization
- Methodology
- Record-keeping

Are we aware of . . . ?

- What is Assessment?
- The modern assessment movement
- ATS's steps to foster schools' engagement in student outcomes assessment

Assessment Defined

- The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.

--Palomba & Banta, *Assessment Essentials*, 1999

- Assessment is more than just measurement, it is discernment; not just observation, but interpretation.

--Thanks to John Harris, Samford University

SACS Core Requirement 2.5

- The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1

- The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1

Undergraduate programs

- The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.

SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.6.2

Graduate programs

- The institution ensures that its graduate instruction and resources foster independent learning, enabling the graduate to contribute to a profession or field of study.

ATS

Orientation

Gene Pond
Three-way involvement:

- Institutional Research and Effectiveness
- Enrollment Services
- Teaching

Dallas Theological Seminary

- Graduate-only
- Private
- Accredited by SACS and the Association of Theological Schools

ATS Schools in Texas

Abilene Christian University
Graduate School of Theology
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary
Brite Divinity School at TCU
Dallas Theological Seminary
Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest
George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University

Houston Graduate School of Theology
Logsdon Seminary of Logsdon School of Theology of Hardin-Simmons University
Oblate School of Theology
Perkins School of Theology, SMU
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
University of St. Thomas School of Theology

Affiliations

Central Thesis

- Sustained success in the work of assessment cannot be accomplished by merely fulfilling a set of tasks to satisfy external interests. Rather, sustained success will require the emergence of cultures of learning and assessment fostered by internal interests.

Critical Questions

- How does one go about promoting cultural change?
- How does one go about fostering organizational learning and a culture of assessment?

A Few Resources for Assessment Structures

- Assessment of Faculty Work
- Assessment of Organizational Effectiveness
- Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of Faculty Work

- Faculty Load Reports
- Peer Review of Classroom Teaching
- IDEA Form Student Evaluation
- Annual Dean's Review
- Promotion and Tenure Process

Resource: Arreola



Assessment of Organizational Effectiveness

- Entering Student Survey
- Graduating Student Survey
- Alumni Survey
- All-Student Survey
- Faculty and Staff Survey
- Organizational Effectiveness Survey
- Course Evaluations
- Faculty Activity Report

Assessment of Curriculum

- Outcomes by Degree
- Curricular Mapping of Assessment
- Student Learning Portfolio
- Mid-point Assessment
- Assessment Projects

Resources: Bresciani;
Bresciani, Zelna, and Anderson



Assessment of Student Learning

- Outcomes by Degree
- Curricular Mapping of Assessment
- Student Learning Portfolio
- Mid-point Assessment
- Assessment Projects



Resources: Suskie; Myers

Characteristics of Academic Assessment

- Goal: understanding and improving student learning
- Explicit and public expectations
- Evidence is systematically
 - Collected
 - Analyzed
 - Interpretedaccording to those expectations
- Results are used to
 - Document
 - Explain
 - Improve performance

Ref. Thomas Angelo, *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, 2nd ed.

One helpful resource summary:
<http://www.utsystem.edu/aca/initiatives/assessment/FAQ.htm>

Academic Assessment: Not Just Grades



- A grade is our traditional way to express what a student accomplishes in class
- Assessment
 - breaks out the student learning component
 - compiles data across a program
 - provides information about the school

**Academic Assessment:
Authenticity**

Direct

- Student performs real-world tasks
- An external assessor evaluates
- Examples:
 - Portfolios
 - Class projects
 - Tests of applicable abilities

Indirect

- Student gives opinion about own ability, attitude, or actions
- No relevant evidence for others to assess
- Examples:
 - Surveys
 - Tests of tangential knowledge

**Academic Assessment:
Approaches and Timing**

Constructivist

- Uses students' regular classwork
- Helps build student while assessing
- "Embedding":
 - Final research paper
 - Lab project
 - Internship results
- Student incentive?

Summative

- Makes a judgment on what has happened
- Learning outcomes become mountains to climb
- "High stakes testing"
 - TAAS, ExCET, GRE
- Fairness?

**Defining and Assessing
Student Competencies**

- A process of assisting a faculty in synthesizing institutional and program outcomes
- How outcome levels can be assessed within courses
- How these assessments are planned and presented to demonstrate institutional effectiveness

"Competency" Defined

- A combination of knowledge, abilities, and values needed to accomplish a particular end or goal.
- (A student-focused assessable outcome)

A Process to Synthesize and Use Institutional Outcomes

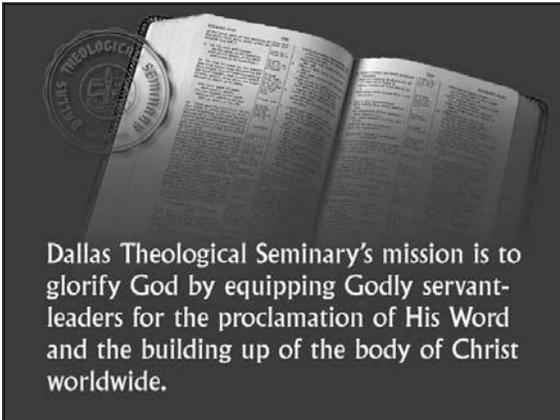
1. Mission
2. Identify outcome candidates
3. Involve and educate the faculty
4. Establish responsibility to lead
5. Draft competency definitions and levels
6. Refine the definitions and publish
7. Include competencies in your institutional effectiveness plans

A Process to Synthesize and Use Institutional Outcomes

8. Map curricula to competency levels
9. Gain agreement on where in the curricula will be the assessment points, and develop scoring rubrics
10. Start carrying out assessments
11. Discuss with faculty: what should we do to improve these results?
12. Report use of assessment results through the I.E. process

A Process to Synthesize and Use Institutional Outcomes

1. Mission



Expanded Statement of Purpose

- Educational commitment
- Character commitment
- Focus commitment
- Vision commitment

. . . As both a professional and a graduate-level educational institution, the Seminary is committed to providing the appropriate support services, departments, resources, and facilities to accomplish the mission of the institution.

In the past Dallas Seminary Goals

- The curricula and related seminary experiences are designed to help Dallas Seminary students grow in the following areas of knowledge, ministry skills, and character development. Depending on their vocational goals, Dallas Seminary students should:
 - Know how to study the Bible personally, using proven hermeneutical principles;
 - ... [12 more bullets]

A Process to Synthesize and Use Institutional Outcomes

1. Mission
2. Identify outcome candidates:
 - a. The I.R. Director and an education prof got educated and inspired in the area of learning abilities ("competencies").
 - b. The I.R. Director, working with our Dean's Office, proposed eight titles for competencies to be developed by our students.

A Process to Synthesize and Use Institutional Outcomes

1. Mission
2. Identify outcome candidates
3. Involve and educate the faculty
 - a. At the annual Faculty Workshop, each proposed topic was assigned to a cross-discipline group of faculty.
 - b. Besides refining whether their topic was feasible and desired, they learned and discussed the concept of competencies.

A Process to Synthesize and Use Institutional Outcomes

1. Mission
2. Identify outcome candidates
3. Involve and educate the faculty
4. Establish responsibility to lead
 - a. We began with three competencies we knew well and assigned each to a division of the faculty.
 - b. They were to discuss, define, refine, and propose that competency to the Faculty.

Assignments for Definition

Division

Competency Topic

Biblical Studies

Biblical Interpretation

Theological Studies

Theology

Ministries and Communication

Communication

A Process to Synthesize and Use Institutional Outcomes

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5. Draft competency definitions and levels

How I.R. Could Help the Refining Process

Theological Studies

Theology:
 — Definition
 — Levels of attainment

Faculty survey

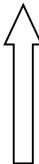
Faculty Survey for Each Competency Proposed

- Evaluate the proposed definition
 - Significance: is it a component of our mission?
 - Universality: should every student develop it?
 - (Implication of key terms)
 - Expression: is it clear, concise, directive?
- Evaluate each level of attainment:

● At matriculation	}	Is it appropriate?
● As a benchmark		Where might we
● By graduation		measure it?

Levels of Competency

- Level 6: Majors
- Level 5: Th.M. by graduation
- Level 4: Th.M. about 3/4 completed
- Level 3: All Masters-level students
- Level 2: Students after 1st year
- Level 1: Entering students



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Shepherding the Faculty (Potential Derailings)

- Dismissing the need
- The whisper campaign
- Wordsmith mania
- Questioning their value
- Questioning their measurability
- Questioning the accuracy of the measurements
- Refusing to participate in assessment

Appendix

Dallas Seminary Competencies

- The curricula and related seminary experiences are designed to help Dallas Seminary students develop competencies of knowledge, abilities and skills, and beliefs and values to help evangelize the world and build the Church. Specific competencies are developed in each professional degree program, but all masters-level Dallas Seminary students are to develop competency in: [6 bullets]

DTS Core Competencies

March 2007

- Biblical Interpretation
- Theology
- Communication
- Christian Spirituality
- Servant Leadership
- Cultural Engagement

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An I.E. Unit Plan

Mission of Our Sem			
Mission of department or program			
Goals and Objectives	Assessment Criteria	Assessment Results	Closing the Loop
What we want to	How we can tell when we	The data needed for	Changes that result from improvement

Every academic program
Every department
is involved

DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY		Biblical Interpretation—Institutional Competency	
Core Curriculum Planning and Assessment Form		for academic years 2007-08 and 2008-09	
Mission Statement Dallas Theological Seminary's mission is to glorify God by equipping godly servant-leaders for the proclamation of His Word and the building up of the body of Christ worldwide.			
Purpose Statement for Biblical Interpretation—Institutional Competency Every Dallas Seminary masters-level student will understand the Bible in its historical, literary, and theological contexts, in order to apply and communicate the Scriptures.			
Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes (What do you want to accomplish?)	Means of Assessment and Criteria for Success (How will you know you have accomplished each outcome?)	Assessment Results (What data do you need or have to measure criteria?)	Closing the Loop (What improvements were made from the assessment results?)
1. The entry-level student is able to carry out inductive Bible study (observation, interpretation, application, and communication).	1A. For each major assessment criterion (assessed separately) for BE101 book clubs from FA07 through SC08, 90% will be rated as at least "Satisfactory." 1B. 90% of masters students who enter in FA07 or SP08 will have completed BE101 by the end of summer 2008.	1A. 1B.	1.
2. The graduating student is able to interpret the Bible using a method that engages in the analysis and synthesis of Bible books and that reflects a broad knowledge of the content of all the Bible.	2A. Capstone project: For each major assessment criterion for BE106 final project (which is an argument of a New Testament book) from FA07 through SC08, 90% will be rated as at least "Acceptable."	2A.	2.
2007-09 II Plan Rev. 2/3/08		Biblical Interpretation Page 1 of 3	

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The Process of Developing Competencies



- Who are we?
- What do we want to turn out?
- What does that look like?
- What are we doing now?
- How can we work together?
- How is that measured?
- How can we pay for it?
- What do the results tell us?

Competencies in the I.E. Process

Definition of competency			
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Closing the Loop</i>
Level 1	Two assmts		
Level 3	Two assmts		
Level 5	Two assmts		

Why Assess our Educational Systems?

- ✓ Because we believe in accountability
- ✓ Because we want to strive for excellence in all that we do
- ✓ Because it's done by effective organizations
- ✓ Because it increases the value of our education
- ✓ And because we want to keep accreditation
