**Assessment Toolkit - General Principles of Assessment**

Assessment involves "...making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high expectations for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance..." (Thomas Angelo, *Reassessing and Redefining Assessment*. AAHE Bulletin, November 1995, Volume 48 Number 3, pages 7-9).

There are literally hundreds of guiding principles generated by various sources such as institutions of higher education, governmental agencies, educational organizations, and even individual scholars and faculty. In fact, recent search for "assessment principles" using the google.com search engine identified approximately 51,300 relevant websites. Below are a sampling some worth our consideration because most contain some form of truth and/or can be applied to any/every level of assessment -- course, discipline, or program. In many cases, these principles are adaptations of adaptations...of adaptations of principles.

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**American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) - 9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning**

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.** Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations -- those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way -- about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting sol examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable...
to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation -- to ourselves, our students, and society -- is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

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### Middle States Commission on Higher Education - 6 Guiding Principles of Assessment

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<th>Principle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Existing Culture.</strong> Begin by acknowledging the existence of assessment throughout the institution in order to ensure that the assessment plan is grounded in the institutional culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Realistic Plan with Appropriate Investment of Resources.</strong> Plans for assessment at the program, school, and institutional levels should be realistic and supported by the appropriate investment of institutional resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Involvement of Faculty and Students.</strong> Academic leadership is necessary in order to gain the support and involvement of faculty members, staff, administrators, and students across the institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Clear Goals.</strong> Assessment activities should be focused by a set of clear statements of expected student learning (knowledge, skills, competencies).</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Appropriate Methods.</strong> Assessment should involve the systematic and thorough collection of direct and indirect evidence of student learning, at multiple points in time and in various situations, using a variety of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods that are embedded in courses, programs, and overall institutional processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Useful Data.</strong> Data gained through assessment activities should be meaningful. They should be used, first, to enhance student learning at the institutional, program, and course levels; second, in institutional planning and resource allocation; and third, to evaluate periodically the assessment process itself for its comprehensiveness and efficacy.</td>
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### Indiana University - 8 Principles of Assessment

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The assessment of student learning is based on goals set by faculty and students in mutual activity.</td>
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<td>2. The assessment of student learning is a formative process.</td>
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<td>3. The assessment of student learning is a continuous process.</td>
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<td>4. The assessment of student learning emphasizes self-assessment as a natural part of the learning process.</td>
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<td>5. The assessment of student learning is embedded in the academic learning strategies.</td>
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<td>6. The assessment of student learning validates the goals established for the student's courses, program, and degree.</td>
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<td>7. The assessment of student learning must involve the sharing of the purposes and uses of assessment with students.</td>
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<td>8. The assessment of student learning contributes to the refinement of the program and curriculum.</td>
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### Southern Illinois University Edwardsville - 6 Principles for Reflective, Scholarly Assessment

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Clear Goals:</strong> Does the scholar state the basic principles of his or her work clearly? Does the scholar define objectives that are realistic and achievable? Does the scholar identify important questions in the field?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Adequate Preparation:</strong> Does the scholar show an understanding of existing scholarship in the field? Does the scholar bring the necessary skills to his or her work? Does the scholar bring together the resources necessary to move the project forward?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Appropriate Methods**: Does the scholar use methods appropriate to the goals? Does the scholar apply effectively the methods selected? Does the scholar modify procedures in response to changing circumstances?

4. **Significant Results**: Does the scholar achieve the goals? Does the scholar's work add consequentially to the field? Does the scholar's work open additional areas for further exploration?

5. **Effective Presentation**: Does the scholar use a suitable style and effective organization to present his or her work? Does the scholar use appropriate forums for communicating work to its intended audiences? Does the scholar present his or her message with clarity and integrity?

6. **Reflective Critique**: Does the scholar critically evaluate his or her own work? Does the scholar bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to his or her critique? Does the scholar use evaluation to improve the quality of future work?

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### Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross - 7 Characteristics of Classroom Assessment

1. **Learner-Centered**: Classroom Assessment focuses the primary attention of teachers and students on observing and improving learning, rather than on observing and improving teaching. Classroom Assessment can provide information to guide teachers and students in making adjustments to improve learning.

2. **Teacher-Directed**: Classroom Assessment respects the autonomy, academic freedom, and professional judgment of college faculty. The individual teacher decides what to assess, how to assess, and how to respond to the information gained through the assessment. Also, the teacher is not obliged to share the result of Classroom Assessment with anyone outside the classroom.

3. **Mutually Beneficial**: Because it is focused on learning, Classroom Assessment requires the active participation of students. By cooperating in assessment, students reinforce their grasp of the course content and strengthen their own skills at self-assessment. Their motivation is increased when they realize that faculty are interested and invested in their success as learners. Faculty also sharpen their teaching focus by continually asking themselves three questions: "What are the essential skills and knowledge I am trying to Teach?" "How can I find out whether students are learning them?" "How can I help students learn better?" As teachers work closely with students to answer these questions, they improve their teaching skills and gain new insights.

4. **Formative**: Classroom Assessment's purpose is to improve the quality of student learning, not to provide evidence for evaluating or grading students. The assessment is almost never graded and are almost always anonymous.

5. **Context-Specific**: Classroom Assessments have to respond to the particular needs and characteristics of the teachers, students, and disciplines to which they are applied. What works well in one class will not necessarily work in another.

6. **Ongoing**: Classroom Assessment is an ongoing process, best thought of as the creating and maintenance of a classroom "feedback loop." By using a number of simple Classroom Assessment Techniques that are quick and easy to use, teachers get feedback from students on their learning. Faculty then complete the loop by providing students with feedback on the results of the assessment and suggestions for improving learning. To check on the usefulness of their suggestions, faculty use Classroom Assessment again, continuing the "feedback loop." As the approach becomes integrated into everyday classroom activities, the communications loop connecting faculty and students -- and teaching and learning -- becomes more efficient and more effective.

7. **Rooted in Good Teaching Practice**: Classroom Assessment is an attempt to build on existing good practice by making feedback on students' learning more systematic, more flexible, and more effective. Teachers already ask questions, react to students' questions, monitor body language and facial expressions, read homework and tests, and so on. Classroom Assessment provides a way to integrate assessment systematically and seamlessly into the traditional classroom teaching and learning process.

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### Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross - 7 Assumptions upon which Classroom Assessment is based

1. The quality of student learning is directly, although not exclusively, related to the quality of teaching. Therefore, one of the most promising ways to improve learning is to improve teaching.

2. To improve their effectiveness, teachers need first to make their goals and objectives explicit and then to get specific, comprehensible feedback on the extent to which they are achieving those goals and objectives.

3. To improve their learning, students need to receive appropriate and focused feedback early and often; they also need to learn how to assess their own learning.

4. The type of assessment most likely to improve teaching and learning is that conducted by faculty to answer questions they themselves have
5. Systematic inquiry and intellectual challenge are powerful sources of motivation, growth, and renewal for college teachers, and Classroom Assessment can provide such challenge.
6. Classroom Assessment does not require specialized training; it can be carried out by dedicated teachers from all disciplines.
7. By collaborating with colleagues and actively involving students in Classroom Assessment efforts, faculty (and students) enhance learning and personal satisfaction.

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**University of San Francisco - 10 Principles of What Assessment Is... and 8 Principles of What It Is Not**

**ASSESSMENT IS:**

1. A goal-oriented process that is based on explicit criteria, including student learning outcomes, program goals and objectives, and the mission and goals of the University;
2. A collaborative and interactive process involving students, faculty, staff and administrators;
3. An ongoing process that promotes the lifelong learning of mature men and women in an atmosphere of academic freedom;
4. A professional responsibility of the faculty delivering instruction and the individuals delivering student development and support services;
5. A compendium of multiple methods, modes, and contexts that reflect the unique nature of each program, unit, or individual involved in the process; different methods of assessment are used at different times and with different programs;
6. A structure to incorporate feedback to students to help them improve as learners and develop as individuals;
7. A cumulative, long-term, and dynamic process;
8. A flexible process designed to meet changing needs of learning and teaching, as well as those of programs and the institution as a whole;
9. A process that actively involves students and includes student self-assessment components; and
10. A communication process that is regular and group results are distributed to the university community for discussion and decision making.

**ASSESSMENT IS NOT EXCLUSIVELY:**

1. A process in which general reporting is done on an individual or case-by-case basis;
2. A source of information for faculty evaluation, promotion or tenure;
3. A sporadic, unplanned process;
4. A singular process for gathering data for the purpose of making decisions about course, program, or college viability;
5. A singular process for gathering data for the purpose of making decisions about course, program, or college viability;
6. A singular process for gathering data for the purpose of making decisions about course, program, or college viability;
7. A process or procedure limited to, or by regular program reviews; or
8. Used to fulfill external regulations or accountability requirements.

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**Pellissippi State - Teaching Resources for Assessment and Innovations in Learning (TRAIL) - What is Academic Assessment?**

1. Academic assessment is the careful examination of student learning.
2. It is a process which requires that we review, respond, and reflect upon the teaching/learning practice.
3. Traditionally, academic assessment has focused upon student learning within programs, yet as classroom educators, we are concerned with evaluating this teaching/learning dynamic on a daily basis.
4. Much of what we know and believe about what occurs in our classrooms is often a product of our informed intuitions.
5. Essentially, we seek answers to two basic questions: (1) How well are our students learning? and (2) How effectively are we teaching?
6. Classroom assessments techniques (CATs) are ways to help make the task of assessment more comfortable and meaningful to faculty.
7. In addition to classroom assessment techniques which reflect student learning and development, surveys can be a useful method of gathering information which can be used to assess experiences, expectations, attitudes toward disciplines, learning strategies, learning styles, and student satisfaction.

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**FairTest - The National Center for Fair & Open Testing - 7 Principles and Indicators for Student Assessment Systems**

1. **The Primary Purpose of Assessment is to Improve Student Learning.** Assessment systems, including classroom and large-scale assessment, are organized around the primary purpose of improving student learning. Assessment systems provide useful information about whether students have reached important learning goals and about the progress of each student. They employ practices and methods that are consistent with learning goals, curriculum, instruction, and current knowledge of how students learn. Classroom assessment that is integrated with curriculum and instruction is the primary means of assessment. Educators assess student learning through such methods as structured and informal observations and interviews, projects and tasks, tests, performances and exhibitions, audio and videotapes, experiments, portfolios, and journals. Multiple-choice methods and assessments intended to rank order or compare students, if used, are a limited part of the assessment system. The educational consequences of assessment are evaluated to ensure that the effects are beneficial.

2. **Assessment for Other Purposes Supports Student Learning.** Assessment systems report on and certify student learning and provide information for school improvement and accountability by using practices that support important learning. Teachers, schools and education systems make important decisions, such as high school graduation, on the basis of information gathered over time, not a single assessment. Information for accountability and improvement comes from regular, continuing work and assessment of students in schools and from large-scale assessments. Accountability assessments use sampling procedures. Rigorous technical standards for assessment are developed and used to ensure high quality assessments and to monitor the actual educational consequences of assessment use.

3. **Assessment Systems Are Fair to All Students.** Assessment systems, including instruments, policies, practices and uses, are fair to all students. Assessment systems ensure that all students receive fair treatment in order not to limit students' present and future opportunities. They allow for multiple methods to assess student progress and for multiple but equivalent ways for students to express knowledge and understanding. Assessments are unbiased and reflect a student’s actual knowledge. They are created or appropriately adapted and accommodations are made to meet the specific needs of particular populations, such as English language learners and students with disabilities. Educators provide students with instruction in the assessment methods that are used. Bias review committees study and approve each large-scale assessment.

4. **Professional Collaboration and Development Support Assessment.** Knowledgeable and fair educators are essential for high quality assessment. Assessment systems depend on educators who understand the full range of assessment purposes, use appropriately a variety of suitable methods, work collaboratively, and engage in ongoing professional development to improve their capability as assessors. Schools of education prepare teachers and other educators well for assessing a diverse student population. Educators determine and participate in professional development and work together to improve their craft. Their competence is strengthened by groups of teachers scoring student work at the district or state levels. Schools, districts, and states provide needed resources for professional development.

5. **The Broad Community Participates in Assessment Development.** Assessment systems draw on the community’s knowledge and ensure support by including parents, community members, and students, together with educators and professionals with particular expertise, in the development of the system. Discussion of assessment purposes and methods involves a wide range of people interested in education. Parents, students, and members of the public join a variety of experts, teachers, and other educators in shaping the assessment system.

6. **Communication about Assessment is Regular and Clear.** Educators, schools, districts, and states clearly and regularly discuss assessment system practices and student and program progress with students, families, and the community. Educators and institutions communicate, in ordinary language, the purposes, methods, and results of assessment. They focus reporting on what students know and are able to do, what they need to learn to do, and what will be done to facilitate improvement. They report achievement data in terms of agreed-upon learning goals. Translations are provided as needed. Examples of assessments and student work are made available to parents and the community so they know what high quality performance and local students’ work looks like. Assessment results are reported together with contextual information such as education programs, social data, resource availability, and other student outcomes.

7. **Assessment Systems Are Regularly Reviewed and Improved.** Assessment systems are regularly reviewed and improved to ensure that the systems are educationally beneficial to all students. Assessment systems must evolve and improve. Even well-designed systems must adapt to changing conditions and increased knowledge. Reviews are the basis for making decisions to alter all or part of the assessment system. Reviewers include stakeholders in the education system and independent expert analysts. A cost-benefit analysis of the system focuses on the effects of
assessment on learning. These Principles, including "Foundations," provide the basis for evaluating the system.

**Funderstanding - Basic Elements of Classroom Assessment**

1. Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs), also known as Classroom Research or Action Research, are a series of tools and practices designed to give teachers accurate information about the quality of student learning.
2. Information gathered isn't used for grading or teacher evaluation. Instead, it's used to facilitate dialogue between students and teacher on the quality of the learning process, and how to improve it. CATs provide both teachers and students with "in process" information on how well students are learning what the curriculum intends.
3. The three basic questions CATs ask are: (1) What are the essential skills and knowledge I am trying to teach? (2) How can I find out whether students are learning them? and (3) How can I help students learn better?
4. The classroom assessment process assumes: (1) that students need to receive feedback early and often, (2) that they need to evaluate the quality of their own learning, and (3) that they can help the teacher improve the strength of instruction.
5. The basic steps in the classroom assessment process are: (1) Choose a learning goal to assess, (2) Choose an assessment technique, (3) Apply the technique, (4) Analyze the data and share the results with students, and (5) Respond to the data.
6. CATs provide teachers with a "menu" of evaluation tools that: (1) Check for student background knowledge, (2) Identify areas of confusion, (3) Enable students to self-assess their learning level, (4) Determine students' learning styles, and (5) Target and build specific skills.

**Western Washington University - Center for Instructional Innovative - How Assessment Works/Assessment Learning Cycle**

1. Step one is to define intended program learning objectives: specifically, what do we want our graduates to know and actually to be able to do?
2. Step two is to define measurable outcomes that will serve as evidence of how well each objective has been met, and then actually to measure them. Because this step requires explicit articulation of program success criteria, it often has the added benefit of clarifying faulty assumptions.
3. Step three is to compare actual observed outcomes to intended program objectives: how well did we meet our objectives in general, and our student learning objectives in particular?
4. Finally, in step four, based on how well or how poorly achieved outcomes compare to intended outcomes, elements of the program (including assessment elements) are redesigned as appropriate, and a new assessment cycle begins.

The assessment cycle is an integral part of student-centered education. It provides an ongoing mechanism for challenging tacit assumptions about program effectiveness, identifying conflicting program elements, and assuring that student learning objectives are met. It also allows for evolution of program goals over time. Although it is by no means an easy task to define learning objectives and measurable outcomes for an educational program, faculty engaged in the process inevitably and uniformly are rewarded by identifying with heightened clarity what it is they are trying to accomplish and how they can better go about it.

**Western Washington University - Center for Instructional Innovative - Basic Assumptions to Good Assessment Practices**

1. The first precept of good assessment practice is to assess what is most important.
2. Anything that can be taught or learned can be assessed.
3. Assessment should be applied at course, program, and institutional levels.
4. Every program and every course should be organized around clearly articulated learning goals and objectives, explicit assessment methods, and measurable outcomes.
5. An assessment process should be logistically feasible and practically manageable to insure that it is regular and ongoing.
6. What is important varies by program and program level, and program competencies are often sequentially developed; general education competencies tend to be first steps in the development of a range of integrative abilities across the curriculum.
7. Clearly major programs must focus on developing the specific competencies of their fields; but they also have responsibility to develop in their students this broad range of general abilities. These responsibilities include integrating the particular skills and abilities of the major with the general
Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson - 7 Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Learning

1. **Good practice encourages student-faculty contact.** Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of class is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students’ intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

2. **Good practice encourages cooperation among students.** Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one’s own ideas and responding to others’ reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding.

3. **Good practice encourages active learning.** Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

4. **Good practice gives prompt feedback.** Knowing what you know and don’t know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. In getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In class, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

5. **Good practice emphasizes time on task.** Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one’s time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis for high performance for all.

6. **Good practice communicates high expectations.** Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone— for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations for themselves and make extra efforts.

7. **Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning.** There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hand skills and articulate in thought may be all talk in the seminar room. Learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hand skills and articulate in thought may be all talk in the seminar room.

California Academic Press - Student Outcomes Assessment: Suggestions for Getting Started

1. **Start by framing outcomes assessment in terms of the program as a whole, not in terms of individual courses, particular experiences, or required parts.** E.g. What habits of mind do we want our MBA graduates to bring with themselves to the workplace?

2. **Frame questions from the perspectives of the clients, not the perspective of the providers.** E.g. What do the humanities faculty want students to have learned by studying the natural sciences?

3. **Use areas of overlap as focal points of consensus.** E.g. Faculty from across the entire college think of reasoning skills as important outcomes of their courses and programs, so let's take reasoning skills as one key outcome of our program.

4. **Conceive of the process as a research project.** E.g. What do our graduates believe they have learned as a result of their work in this program? E.g. How would a social scientist measure student attitudes? What sorts of student projects might reveal whether the exiting students had attained the technical skills and the depth of knowledge of our discipline?

5. **Make something happen as a result.** E.g. Since we have identified cultural sensitivity as an outcome of student development programming, let's plan how to focus staff time, creativity, and financial resources on nurturing that sensitivity.

6. **A small project with high validity and reliability is better than a massive project based on bad data.** E.g. Let's use taped focus group discussions, perhaps led by a trained senior undergraduate, of students talking with each other about decision making around current campus issues to see the extent to which ethical considerations and levels of moral reasoning are manifest.

7. **Use assessment to improve other processes.** E.g. Shift the focus of student course evaluations to student learning by designing course questionnaires around different identified learning outcomes. For example, if artistic sensitivity is an outcome of a course requirement in the fine arts.
one might build a course evaluation form using questions like, “In this course I experienced what it was like to express my emotions and ideas creatively and artistically.” “Through the assignments in this course I found myself being more conscious and aware of the artistic elements in life outside of class.” “I doubt that this course caused me to see anything creative or beautiful other than those things which I had already known about.”

8. Discuss the context, acknowledge and address the faculty’s deep concerns. Bright people have real anxieties with regard to why they are being asked to engage in student outcomes assessment. The culture of the faculty on most campuses would find the call to student outcomes assessment threatening, insulting, intrusive, and wrongheaded. But, in the final analysis, committed faculty want their students to learn. This professionalism, if tapped, can become a legitimate and powerful source of positive motivation to undertake a well-conceived assessment project.

9. Plan a systematic, first things first approach. E.g. Before leaping to the issue of data gathering tools or strategies to use, make sure a full exploration of the question: “What might we possibly count as evidence that our students are achieving the targeted outcome?” Use the expertise of those who know statistical analysis, instructional measurement, and social science research design as “consultants” in the development data gathering strategies and the analysis and presentation of findings. Treat the findings as the jumping off point for serious conversations regarding their interpretation and significance. Arguably, if the process is working well, rather than firm and univocal answers, intelligent people will see that deeper and more interesting assessment research questions emerge. Assessment research is like other kinds of research. We learn some things, and we also learn how much we do not yet know about how well our students are achieving those learning outcomes we intend.

### National Academy Foundation - 3 Fundamental Principles of Assessment

1. **The Content Principle.** Any assessment of learning should first and foremost be anchored in appropriate subject content. Assessment should do much more than test discrete procedural skills, as do many of today's topic assessment frameworks. Many current assessments distort subject area reality by presenting a subject as a set of isolated, disconnected fragments, facts, and procedures. The goal of assessment should be to measure students' knowledge of the meaning, process, and uses of subject area knowledge. The new vision requires curriculum and matching assessment that is broader and more integrated than traditional approaches. Assessment should emphasize problem solving, thinking, and reasoning. In assessment, as in curriculum activities, students should build models that connect knowledge to complex, real-world situations. Students should be encouraged to ask questions and formulate solutions of their own, not merely to respond to questions posed by their teachers.

2. **The Equity Principle.** Assessment should be used to demonstrate what students have learned and what they still need to learn in order to use knowledge well. Designing assessments to enhance equity requires conscientious rethinking not only of the entire assessment process, but also of how different individuals and groups are affected by assessment design and procedures. The challenge posed by the equity principle is to devise tasks with sufficient flexibility to give students a sense of accomplishment, to challenge the upper reaches of every student's understanding, and to provide a glimpse into each student's thinking. Assessments can contribute to students' opportunities to learn only if they are based on standards that reflect high expectations for all students.

3. **The Learning Principle.** To be an effective part of the educational process, assessment should be an integral part of learning and teaching, rather than merely the culmination of the process. Time spent on assessment will then contribute to the goal of improving the learning of all students. If assessment is to support learning, then assessment tasks must provide genuine opportunities for all students to learn significant content.

### Portland State University - University Assessment Council - 5 Guiding Principles

1. View assessment as a form of faculty development.
2. Capitalize on the assessment activities that already exist and to ensure faculty ownership of the process.
3. Emphasize the importance of using assessment data to continuously improve student learning and the importance of communicating assessment data to students, faculty and the community.
4. Treat assessment like all forms of scholarship as a well-designed scholarly activity.
5. Addressing the issue of resources required to conduct a meaningful assessment is essential.

### North Dakota State University - University Assessment Committee - 16 Principles for Assessment

1. The purpose of assessment is to improve student learning and development by identifying the intended student outcomes for each program, providing feedback on the progress toward these outcomes, and using the feedback to modify aspects of the programs to ensure that the outcomes
are being achieved and student learning is improved.

2. Assessment examines both the product (quality education) and the process (how achieved).
3. Assessment plans use multiple approaches to assessment including both quantitative and qualitative data, and multiple indicators of effectiveness that reflect the complexity of the goals of higher education and the diversity of the NDSU campus.
4. Effective assessment depends upon clearly stated, assessable outcomes; data collected which are meaningful, valuable, and accurate; data which are analyzed, not merely tabulated; and results that are communicated. Unit assessment activities are “driven” by the unit-identified outcomes.
5. Assessment demands a holistic approach to students and student development.
6. Assessment plans, where possible and appropriate, make use of existing databases and evaluation programs already in place, e.g., information of admissions, retention, and completion, results from surveys of students, alumni, and employers, findings of accreditation agencies, institutional program reviews, etc.
7. Instruments used for assessment are expected to measure the intended student outcomes determined by the faculty to be important for each program with acceptable levels of technical quality, e.g., validity, reliability, etc.
8. Faculty and students are to be involved in the development of assessment plans, in their implementation, and in the continuing efforts to use assessment to improve institutional and student performance.
9. Assessment resides in the unit; ownership for effective teaching lies with the teacher; responsibility for learning lies with the student.
10. Effective assessment provides feedback to students and units with implications for improvement.
11. Students will participate in assessment activities. (This will be so noted in the University bulletin and in orientation programs.)
12. Assessment results will be used for program improvement. Such results will not be used to penalize students or faculty. Student performance on assessment instruments will not become part of the transcript. Assessment is to be used to demonstrate current levels of achievement and to improve future performance.
13. Effective assessment is continuous, creating a self-correcting loop of experimentation and measurement. Choices about what/when/how to assess are continuously reviewed.
14. Units include assessment of student performance and satisfaction at appropriate times during college and of alumni after graduation.
15. Units will provide annual reports of assessment activities to the University Assessment Committee on the level of performance and trends over time, especially in relation to institutional outcomes. These reports will include changes in programs and activities that result from problems or possibilities identified in prior reports.
16. Assessment feeds into planning, continuous improvement, and institutional and unit resource allocations.

**Adrian Worsfold Website - 4 Principles of Assessment**

1. **Validity:** Validity is to ensure that assessment is focused in the correct area. It is not useful or purposeful to assess work unrelated to the intention of the study. The area of study derives from a syllabus which leads to a course outline and objectives for each lesson, and assessment is valid when it focuses on the objectives of the lesson. This is also related to producing work in the syllabus and from the student which is up to date and relevant. In certain cases validity is threatened when a course timescale is unable to contain the whole of a syllabus and therefore assessment is insufficient and the student’s strategy of revision for an examination may also be insufficient with an element of gambling involved about what may “come up”.

2. **Reliability:** Reliability is to ensure the repetition of assessment. It is not useful or purposeful if students cannot be compared across classes or for one year to the next. This means that assessment is reliable when it is the same across classes and times, so that the achievement of one student can be compared with another. Validity, in terms of updating knowledge and updating teaching fashion, may affect reliability over the medium and long term and this is the subject of much debate in the media.

3. **Beneficence:** Being beneficial assures the student that there is a positive purpose to assessment and that it can be used by him or her for the purposes of improvement or moving on to higher study. Being beneficial is linked to making sure that the learner’s own effort is involved because plagiarism by any means is (at the very least) not going going to benefit the student as well as translating material into his or her own output. It is not useful or purposeful if the student cannot see the point of the assessment being made and it carries no advantage or the teacher cannot use it to guide the student on. It is also important that the entry level is accurately gauged, otherwise assessment will not be beneficial if the assessment is too difficult or too easy. However, much summative assessment in subjects (if usually outside adult and further education) does carry a finality about it so that from the examination on no more may be seen or heard of that subject! So formative assessment should offer feedback and guidance, and summative assessment should give certification and a path to improvement.

4. **Efficiency:** Being efficient ensures that the student spends a minimal amount of time away from additional learning to give the formative feedback of
current learning and that summative assessment is not overbearing and overstressful or, in an opposite view, frustrating by repetition. This is linked to sufficiency, in that efficient assessment must also be sufficient. It is not useful or purposeful if the student is engaging too much time in formative assessment activities given the limited timescale of a course or having to produce a greater file of work than the syllabus would need or more exams than would cover the syllabus. Some syllabuses may work out at being repetitive in assessment, for example where the same skills are repeated in IT between "word" processing and "text" processing. In any case somewhere along the line more money is being spent by the student or authorities than is necessary and too much time may be given when a shorter course is just as efficient (being linked to the entry level and learning speed of a student).

Environmental Protection Agency - 7 General Characteristics of Assessment

1. They should be performed by a person or persons who have no business connections, interests, or affiliations that might influence their assessment capabilities.
2. They should be adequately planned and staffed; and assessment staff should be adequately supervised.
3. They should be performed by a person or persons who have adequate technical training and experience as assessors.
4. They should be conducted with an attitude of objective independence in all matters relating to the assessment.
5. Assessors should exercise due professional care in performing the assessment and preparing the final report.
6. All assessment findings and conclusions should be based on detailed study and evaluation of available information.
7. All findings made during the assessment should be based on sufficient objective evidence obtained through assessment, observation, inquiries, and confirmation.

The IDEA Center - IDEA Paper #35 - 8 Characteristics of Good Departmental-Level Assessment Plans

1. Principled. A good departmental assessment plan should be based on principles that are (ideally) defined at the university level.
2. Integrated. Department level assessment plans should be departmentally driven, but also tied to the university assessment initiatives and program review, carrying through themes related to outcomes in the major and general education.
3. Ongoing. Department level assessment should be part of the ongoing "business" of the department, not only a priority during program review cycles or prior to accreditation visits.
4. Comprehensive. Assessment activities should encompass students, faculty, and resources; inputs, process, and results.
5. Acculturated. Department level assessment can stand on its own, but to be optimally effective department level efforts need to be a valued and supported part of the university's culture.
6. Implemented gradually. Assessment needs to become part of the culture slowly, implemented in carefully orchestrated steps over time.
7. Practical. To be truly useful, department level assessment must stay on a practical level with obvious implications to faculty and students.
8. Self-Renewing. Assessment data and information must feed back into the system, both on the university level and departmental level.

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement - 7 Domains of an Institution's Student Assessment Strategy

1. Institutional context
2. External influences
3. Approach adopted
4. Institutional support patterns
5. Assessment management practices and policies
6. Assessment culture and climate
7. Institutional uses and impacts of student assessment

Steven M. Culver and Dennis R. Ridley - "How to Guarantee the Failure of Assessment at Any Institution by Following 17
1. Talk to the administration and make sure they understand that assessment is just a fad and that there is no reason to support it either with words or cash.

2. When sharing the results of assessment with others on campus, give no thought to the political fallout that may be caused by the information collected. Corollary: If a capital request is pending, the time is ripe to release any data showing that students do not need, would not use, the new facility.

3. Point out as quickly and clearly as possible that the purpose of assessment is to root out those faculty who have gotten by on inferior teaching skills for the past several years.

4. Always assume that results deeply buried in the assessment report's appendices will never be read or published in the newspaper because of the Freedom of Information Act.

5. To implement assessment policies and procedures on your campus, create a large committee of at least 40 individuals so that all possible insights can be gained before movement begins.

6. If no one on the faculty has asked to see the latest report on assessment, assume that they have no interest in assessment, wouldn't understand it anyway, or are living the unexamined academic life and are unworthy to receive your pearls. Corollary: Be assured that after you have affixed an attractive label on your report, your marketing efforts are complete.

7. Make sure that assessment information is interpreted apart from the context in which it was collected. This makes interpretation cleaner and less complex.

8. Never delegate to others the actual analysis and interpretation of data. To ensure that the conclusions reached are infallibly accurate and wise, act like an assessment oracle; that is, you are the one with all the answers.

9. Always assume that lightning only strikes the computer next door and that your computer's hard drive will never crash. Corollary: Only back up your files as a last resort, on particularly slow days at the office.

10. Rely heavily on standardized testing that has been developed outside the university and provides an objective view of student progress. Corollary: Adopting a "name brand" test will take care of your worries.

11. Always depend on slick PERT charts and checklists to manage your projects. Corollary: Once a report, its author, and the due date have been duly listed, you can relax and wait confidently for that report to arrive in your mailbox on the appointed date.

12. If you hear of something going on at another school, use it at your school without delay. Conversely, if someone on your campus suggests something that has never been done elsewhere, don't even consider trying it at your school.

13. Rely on standardized testing that has been developed outside the university and provides an objective view of student progress. Corollary: If you have used new software to generate information to share with colleagues elsewhere, you need not check the disks before putting them in the mail.

14. So that longitudinal comparisons can be made, once measures have been put in place, they should remain forever. Change is a sign of weakness.

15. No attempt should ever be made to evaluate the assessment process on your campus. Such an evaluation would just use up precious time and resources and disrupt your established procedures.