What is "Good" Assessment? A Variety of Perspectives

Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (American Association for Higher Education, 1991)
1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

Student Learning Principles (Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, 2004)
1. The institution is clear and public about the learning outcomes to which it aspires for its students.
2. The institution uses learning goals as well as knowledge about learning as drivers for organizing instruction.
3. The institution provides an environment which signals support for student learning at all levels.
4. The institution promotes an atmosphere of critical reflection about teaching and learning.
5. The institution sets clear learning goals, which speak to both content and level of attainment.
6. The institution collects evidence of goal attainment using appropriate assessment tools.
7. The institution applies collective judgment as to the meaning and utility of the evidence.
8. The institution uses evidence of goal attainment to effect improvements in its programs.
9. The institution derives evidence of student learning from multiple sources, such as courses, curricula, and co-curricular programming, and includes effects of both intentional and unintentional learning experiences. Evidence collected from these sources is complementary and demonstrates the impact of the institution as a whole on the student.
10. The collection, interpretation, and use of student learning evidence is a collective endeavor, and is not viewed as the sole responsibility of a single office or position. Those in the institution with a stake in decisions of educational quality participate in the process.
11. The institution uses broad participation in reflecting about student learning outcomes as a means of building a commitment to educational improvement.

Characteristics of Effective Outcomes Assessment (Banta, 2002)
1. Involves stakeholders (faculty members, administrators, students, student affairs professionals, employers, community representatives) from the outset to incorporate their needs and interests and to solicit later support
2. Begins when the need is recognized; allows sufficient time for development. Timing is crucial.
3. Has a written plan with clear purposes that is related to goals people value—to a larger set of conditions that promote change. Assessment is a vehicle for improvement, not an end in itself.
4. Bases assessment approaches on clear, explicitly stated program objectives.
5. Has knowledgeable, effective leadership.
6. Involves recognition that assessment is essential to learning, and therefore is everyone's responsibility.
7. Includes faculty and staff development to prepare individuals to implement assessment and use the findings.
8. Devolves responsibility for assessment to the unit level.
9. Recognizes that learning is multidimensional and developmental and thus uses multiple measures, therefore maximizing reliability and validity.
10. Assesses processes as well as outcomes.
11. Is undertaken in an environment that is receptive, supportive, and enabling—on a continuing basis.

12. Incorporates continuous communication with constituents concerning activities and findings. Effective outcomes assessment produces data that guide *improvement* on a continuing basis.
13. Produces credible evidence3 of learning and organizational effectiveness.
14. Ensures that assessment data are used continuously to improve programs and services.
15. Provides a vehicle for demonstrating accountability to stakeholders within and outside the institution.
16. Encompasses the expectation that outcomes assessment will be ongoing, not episodic.
17. Incorporates ongoing evaluation and improvement of the assessment process itself.

Characteristics of a Good Assessment Program (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
A good assessment program does the following:
1. Asks important questions
2. Reflects institutional mission
3. Reflects programmatic goals and objectives for learning
4. Contains a thoughtful approach to assessment planning
5. Is linked to decision making about the curriculum
6. Is linked to processes such as planning and budgeting
7. Encourages involvement of individuals from on and off campus
8. Contains relevant assessment techniques
9. Includes direct evidence of student learning
10. Reflects what is known about how students learn
11. Shares information with multiple audiences
12. Leads to reflection and action by faculty, staff, and students
13. Allows for continuity, flexibility, and improvement in assessment

Hallmarks of Successful Programs to Assess Student Academic Achievement (Huba & Freed, 2000)
Successful assessment:
1. Flows from the institution's mission.
2. Has a conceptual framework.
3. Has faculty ownership/responsibility.
4. Has institution-wide support.
5. Uses multiple measures.
6. Provides feedback to students and the institution.
7. Is cost-effective.
8. Does not restrict or inhibit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution.
9. Leads to improvement.
10. Includes a process for evaluating the assessment program.

Assessment Guidelines (Driscoll & Cordero De Noriega, 2006)
1. Define and clarify program goals and outcomes for long-term improvement.
2. Make assessment-for-improvement a team effort.
3. Embed assessment into campus conversations about learning.
4. Use assessment to support diverse learning abilities and to understand conditions under which students learn best.
5. Connect assessment processes to questions or concerns that program decision makers or internal stakeholders really care about.
6. Make assessment protocols and results meaningful and available to internal and external stakeholders for feedback and ultimately improvement.
7. Design an assessment model that aligns with the institutional capacity to support it.

Attributes of Meaningful Assessment (Bresciani, 2003)
Assessment must be:
1. Meaningful: useful to faculty and co-curricular specialists
2. Manageable: considering the varying resources of the institution or program engaged in the process, including financial resources committed to the process, the institution's assessment expertise, and faculty and co-curricular specialists' time

3. Flexible: accounting for institutional culture and the learning curves of people involved with implementation
4. Trustworthy: characterized as truth-seeking/objective/ethical
5. Accountable: informs decisions for continuous improvement or provide evidence that what you believed was being learned is, after, being learned
6. Influential: helps institute a culture of accountability, learning, and improvement at the institution

Principle of Assessment (Steen, 1999)
1. Assessment is not a single event, but a continuous cycle.
2. Assessment must be an open process.
3. Assessment must promote valid inferences.
4. Assessment that matters should always employ multiple measures of performance.
5. Assessment should measure what is worth learning, not just what is easy to measure.
6. Assessment should support every student's opportunity to learn important [mathematics].

Good Assessment Practices (Suskie, 2004)
Good assessments:
1. Give use *useful* information.
2. Give us *reasonably accurate, truthful* information
3. Are *fair* to all students.
4. Are *ethical* and protect the privacy and dignity of those involved.
5. Are *systematized.*
6. Are *cost-effective*, yielding value that justifies the time and expense we put into them.

Fair Assessment Practices (Suskie, 2000)
1. Have clearly stated learning outcomes and share them with your students.
2. Match your assessment to what you teach and vice versa.
3. Use many different measures and many different *kinds* of measures.
4. Help students learn how to do the assessment task.
5. Engage and encourage your students.
6. Interpret assessment results appropriately.
7. Evaluate the outcomes of your assessments.

Core Principles of Effective Assessment (Australian Universities Teaching Committee, 2002)
1. Assessment is treated by staff and students as an integral and prominent component of the entire teaching and learning process rather than a final adjunct to it.
2. The multiple roles of assessment are recognised. The powerful motivating effect of assessment requirements on students is understood and assessment tasks are designed to foster valued study habits.
3. There is a faculty/departmental policy that guides individuals' assessment practices. Subject assessment is integrated into an overall plan for [program] assessment.
4. There is a clear alignment between expected learning outcomes, what is taught and learnt, and the knowledge and skills assessed – there is a closed and coherent 'curriculum loop'.
5. Assessment tasks assess the capacity to analyze and synthesize new information and concepts rather than simply recall information previously presented.
6. A variety of assessment methods is employed so that the limitations of particular methods are minimized.
7. Assessment tasks are designed to assess relevant generic skills as well as subject-specific knowledge and skills.
8. There is a steady progression in the complexity and demands of assessment requirements in the later years of [programs].
9. There is provision for student choice in assessment tasks and weighting at certain times.
10. Student and staff workloads are considered in the scheduling and design of assessment tasks.
11. Excessive assessment is avoided. Assessment tasks are designed to sample student learning.
12. Assessment tasks are weighted to balance the developmental ('formative') and judgemental ('summative') roles of assessment. Early low-stakes, low-weight assessment is used to provide students with feedback.
13. Grades are calculated and reported on the basis of clearly articulated learning outcomes and criteria for achievement.

14. Students receive explanatory and diagnostic feedback as well as grades.
15. Assessment tasks are checked to ensure there are no inherent biases that may disadvantage particular student groups.
16. Plagiarism is minimized through careful task design, explicit education and appropriate monitoring of academic honesty.

Elements of Good Assessment Practice (Greater Expectations Project on Accreditation & Assessment, 2004)
Good assessment practice ought to include the following elements:
1. The use of both formative assessment, for the purpose of giving feedback and making improvement, and summative assessment, for the purpose of identifying levels of attainment
2. Multiple methods that include both qualitative and quantitative evidence
3. Authentic methods that arise from students' actual assignments and learning experiences, which might be both curricular and co-curricular
4. Assessments that are developmental, so that students and others can observe progress toward valued outcomes, perhaps through the use of portfolios
5. A focus on higher, more sophisticated knowledge and capacities rather than on more easily measured basic skills
6. Faculty ownership of not just the education but also, because it is inherent to the learning process itself, the assessment of students; whether they teach major or general education courses, faculty need to create, implement, and sustain the program to educate and assess students
7. Assessment as continuous, systematic, and multi-dimensional
8. An ongoing, systematic process for using assessment results to improve teaching, learning, and the curriculum

General Characteristics of Good Assessment Evidence (Ewell, n.d.)
1. Comprehensive: Covers knowledge and skills taught throughout course or program
2. Multiple sources: Involves more than one source or multiple judgments of student performance
3. Multiple dimensions: Provides information on multiple dimensions of student performance, i.e., more than a single summative grade
4. Direct: Includes at least one type of evidence based on direct observation or demonstration of student capacities, i.e., more than simply a self-report
5. Relevant
6. Verifiable
7. Representative
8. Cumulative
9. Actionable

Six Principles that Lead to Reflective, Scholarly Practice of Assessment (Eder, 1999)
1. Clear goals: State the basic principles of assessment work clearly; define objectives that are realistic and achievable; identify important questions in the field.
2. Adequate preparation: Show an understanding of existing scholarship in the field; bring the necessary skills to assessment work; bring together the resources necessary to move the project forward.
3. Appropriate methods: Use methods appropriate to the goals; apply effectively the methods selected; modify procedures in response to changing circumstances.
4. Significant results: Achieve the goals of the assessment project; add consequentially to the field; open additional areas for further exploration.
5. Effective presentation: Use a suitable style and effective organization to present assessment work; use appropriate forums for communicating work to intended audiences; present the message with clarity and integrity.
6. Reflective critique: Critically evaluate one's assessment work; bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to the critique; use evaluate to improve the quality of future work.

Key Findings Regarding Measuring Institutional Performance Outcomes (American Productivity & Quality Center, 1999)
1. The best [assessments] communicate the institution's core values.

2. Good [assessments] are chosen carefully, are reviewed frequently, and point to action to be taken on results.
3. External requirements and pressures can be extremely useful as starting points for developing [assessment] systems.
4. [Assessments] are best used as "problem detectors" to identify areas for attention and further exploration.
5. Clear linkages between [assessments] and resource allocation are critical, but the best linkages are indirect.
6. [Assessments] must be publicly available, visible, and consistent across the organization.
7. [Assessments] are best considered in the context of a wider transformation of organizational culture.
8. Organizational culture supportive of [assessments] take time to develop, require considerable "socialization" of the organization's members, and are enhanced by stable leadership.
9. [Assessments] change the role of managers and the ways in which they manage.

Ten Recommendations for a New Accountability Framework (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2004)
1. Make liberal education the new standard of excellence for all students.
2. Articulate locally owned goals for student learning outcomes.
3. Set standards in each goal area for basic, proficient, and advanced performance.
4. Develop clear and complementary responsibilities between general education and departmental programs for liberal education outcomes.
5. Charge departments with responsibility for the level and quality of students' most advanced work.
6. Create milestone assessments across the curriculum.
7. Set clear expectations for culminating work performed at a high level of accomplishment.
8. Provide periodic external review and validation of assessment practices and standards.
9. Make assessment findings part of a campus-wide commitment to faculty inquiry and educational improvement.
10. Provide public accountability and transparency.

Criteria for Recognizing "Good Practice" in Assessing Liberal Education (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2002)
1. Institutional mission is the ultimate source of the goals and objectives for assessment of student learning.
2. The implementation of the institution's strategic plan accords high priority to assessment practice that determines the effectiveness with which the institution is achieving its goals and objectives.
3. The institutions constituencies (especially the faculty and administration, but also students, board members, employers of graduates, and the general public) are active advocates (by discussion and promotion) of the assessment plan and the goals and objectives on which it is based.
4. Assessment is continuous, systematic, multi-dimensional, and based on well-defined outcomes for student learning (e.g., Bloom's taxonomy).
5. There is an ongoing, systematic process for using assessment results to improve teaching/learning and to identify areas needing improvement (and ways to do so).
6. Assessments are designed to demonstrate successful integration of the major and the general education components of the degree program.
7. There is both formative and summative assessment of student learning.
8. Learning outcomes addressed in assessment are consistent and cumulative, building throughout the educational program in tune with a longitudinal view of student development.
9. Assessment activities arise from and connect to actual student learning experiences, both curricular and co-curricular.
10. Assessments are created, implemented, sustained and rated collaboratively by faculty responsible for general education and the majors.
11. There are integrative courses and assignments embedded in the curriculum in which (a) students not only master knowledge and skills but practice integration; (b) faculty coach students to make connections between the major and general education; and (c) students are engaged in some culminating activity or product that demonstrates their ability to integrate their undergraduate experiences.

Responsibilities of Those Who Interpret, Use, and Communicate Assessment Results (National Council on Measurement in Education, 1995)

1. Interpret, use, and communicate assessment results in an informed, objective, and fair manner within the context of the assessment's limitations and with an understanding of the potential consequences of use.
2. Provide to those who receive assessment results information about the assessment, its purposes, its limitations, and its uses necessary for the proper interpretation of the results.
3. Provide to those who receive score reports an understandable written description of all reported scores, including proper interpretations and likely misinterpretations.
4. Communicate to appropriate audiences the results of the assessment in an understandable and timely manner, including proper interpretations and likely misinterpretations.
5. Evaluate and communicate the adequacy and appropriateness of any norms or standards used in the interpretation of assessment results.
6. Inform parties involved in the assessment process how assessment results may affect them.
7. Use multiple sources and types of relevant information about persons or programs whenever possible in making educational decisions.
8. Avoid making, and actively discourage others from making, inaccurate reports, unsubstantiated claims, inappropriate interpretations, or otherwise false and misleading statements about assessment results.
9. Disclose to examinees and others whether and how long the results of the assessment will be kept on file, procedures for appeal and rescoring, rights examinees and others have to the assessment information, and how those rights may be exercised.
10. Report any apparent misuses of assessment information to those responsible for the assessment process.
11. Protect the rights to privacy of individuals and institutions involved in the assessment process.

Responsibilities of Those Who Evaluate Educational Programs and Conduct Research on Assessments (National Council on Measurement in Education, 1995)

1. Conduct evaluation and research activities in an informed, objective, and fair manner.
2. Disclose any associations that they have with authors, test publishers, or others involved with the assessment and refrain from participation if such associations might affect the objectivity of the research or evaluation.
3. Preserve the security of all assessments throughout the research process as appropriate.
4. Take appropriate steps to minimize potential sources of invalidity in the research and disclose known factors that may bias the results of the study.
5. Present the results of research, both intended and unintended, in a fair, complete, and objective manner.
6. Attribute completely and appropriately the work and ideas of others.
7. Qualify the conclusions of the research within the limitations of the study.
8. Use multiple sources of relevant information in conducting evaluation and research activities whenever possible.
9. Comply with applicable standards for protecting the rights of participants in an evaluation or research study, including the rights to privacy and informed consent.

Compiled by Linda Suskie, Middle States Commission on Higher Education
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What is "Good" Assessment?
A Synthesis of Principles of Good Practice

1. Good assessments are used to inform important decisions, especially those to improve curriculum and pedagogy but also regarding planning, budgeting, and accountability.

- Successful assessment leads to improvement. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- The institution uses evidence of goal attainment to effect improvements in its programs. (C-RAC, 2004)
- Good [assessments] point to action to be taken on results. (APQC, 1999)
- Assessment evidence should be actionable. (Ewell, n.d.)
- Good assessments give us *useful* information. (Suskie, 2004)
- Assessment must be meaningful: useful to faculty and co-curricular specialists (Bresciani, 2003)
- Assessment must be influential: helps institute a culture of accountability, learning, and improvement at the institution (Bresciani, 2003)
- Effective outcomes assessment ensures that assessment data are used continuously to improve programs and services. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Effective outcomes assessment produces data that guide *improvement* on a continuing basis. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- A good assessment program leads to reflection and action by faculty, staff, and students (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- The implementation of the institution's strategic plan accords high priority to assessment practice that determines the effectiveness with which the institution is achieving its goals and objectives. (AAC&U, 2001)
- There is an ongoing, systematic process for using assessment results to improve teaching/learning and to identify areas needing improvement (and ways to do so). (AAC&U, 2001)
- A good assessment program is linked to decision making about the curriculum (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Good assessment practice includes an ongoing, systematic process for using assessment results to improve teaching, learning, and the curriculum (Greater Expectations Project, 2004)
- Successful assessment provides feedback to students and the institution. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- [Assessments] are best used as "problem detectors" to identify areas for attention and further exploration. (APQC, 1999)
- Clear linkages between [assessments] and resource allocation are critical, but the best linkages are indirect. (APQC, 1999)
- A good assessment program is linked to processes such as planning and budgeting (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public. (AAHE, 1991)
- Effective outcomes assessment provides a vehicle for demonstrating accountability to stakeholders within and outside the institution. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Assessment must be accountable: informs decisions for continuous improvement or provide evidence that what you believed was being learned is, after, being learned (Bresciani, 2003)

> *A. Assessments that are used are planned and purposeful; they start with a clear understanding of why you are assessing.*
>
> - Connect assessment processes to questions or concerns that program decision makers or internal stakeholders really care about. (Driscoll & Cordero De Noriega, 2006)
> - Effective outcomes assessment has a written plan with clear purposes that is related to goals people value—to a larger set of conditions that promote change. Assessment is a vehicle for improvement, not an end in itself. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
> - Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about. (AAHE, 1991)
> - A good assessment program asks important questions (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
> - Identify important questions in the field. (Eder, 1999)
> - The assessment of student learning begins with educational values (AAHE, 1991)
> - Successful assessment flows from the institution's mission. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
> - Institutional mission is the ultimate source of the goals and objectives for assessment of student learning. (AAC&U, 2001)
> - The best [assessments] communicate the institution's core values. (APQC, 1999)
> - A good assessment program reflects institutional mission (Palomba & Banta, 1999)

- The multiple roles of assessment are recognised. The powerful motivating effect of assessment requirements on students is understood and assessment tasks are designed to foster valued study habits. (AUTC, 2002)

B. Assessments that are used focus on clear and important goals. (See separate section below.)

C. Assessments that are used involve the active participation of those with a stake in decisions stemming from the results.

- Effective outcomes assessment involves stakeholders (faculty members, administrators, students, student affairs professionals, employers, community representatives) from the outset to incorporate their needs and interests and to solicit later support (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved. (AAHE, 1991)
- The collection, interpretation, and use of student learning evidence is a collective endeavor, and is not viewed as the sole responsibility of a single office or position. Those in the institution with a stake in decisions of educational quality participate in the process. (C-RAC, 2004)
- The institution applies collective judgment as to the meaning and utility of the evidence. (C-RAC, 2004)
- The institution uses broad participation in reflecting about student learning outcomes as a means of building a commitment to educational improvement. (C-RAC, 2004)
- Make assessment-for-improvement a team effort. (Driscoll & Cordero De Noriega, 2006)
- Good assessment practice includes faculty ownership of not just the education but also, because it is inherent to the learning process itself, the assessment of students; whether they teach major or general education courses, faculty need to create, implement, and sustain the program to educate and assess students (Greater Expectations Project, 2004)
- The institution's constituencies (especially the faculty and administration, but also students, board members, employers of graduates, and the general public) are active advocates (by discussion and promotion) of the assessment plan and the goals and objectives on which it is based. (AAC&U, 2001)
- Effective outcomes assessment devolves responsibility for assessment to the unit level. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- A good assessment program encourages involvement of individuals from on and off campus (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Successful assessment has faculty ownership/responsibility. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- Assessments are created, implemented, sustained and rated collaboratively by faculty responsible for general education and the majors. (AAC&U, 2001)
- Assessment must be an open process. (Steen, 1999)

D. Assessments that are used are communicated widely and transparently (clearly and understandably).

- [Assessments] must be publicly available, visible, and consistent across the organization. (APQC, 1999)
- Present the results of research, both intended and unintended, in a fair, complete, and objective manner. (NCME, 1995)
- A good assessment program shares information with multiple audiences (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Effective outcomes assessment incorporates continuous communication with constituents concerning activities and findings. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Provide public accountability and transparency. (AAC&U, 2004)
- The institution is clear and public about the learning outcomes to which it aspires for its students. (C-RAC, 2004)
- Make assessment protocols and results meaningful and available to internal and external stakeholders for feedback and ultimately improvement. (Driscoll & Cordero De Noriega, 2006)
- Use a suitable style and effective organization to present assessment work; use appropriate forums for communicating work to intended audiences; present the message with clarity and integrity. (Eder, 1999)
- Provide to those who receive assessment results information about the assessment, its purposes, its limitations, and its uses necessary for the proper interpretation of the results. (NCME, 1995)
- Provide to those who receive score reports an understandable written description of all reported scores, including proper interpretations and likely misinterpretations. (NCME, 1995)

- Communicate to appropriate audiences the results of the assessment in an understandable and timely manner, including proper interpretations and likely misinterpretations. (NCME, 1995)
- Students receive explanatory and diagnostic feedback as well as grades. (AUTC, 2002)
- Attribute completely and appropriately the work and ideas of others. (NCME, 1995)
- Qualify the conclusions of the research within the limitations of the study. (NCME, 1995)
- Inform parties involved in the assessment process how assessment results may affect them. (NCME, 1995)

E. Assessments that are used are used fairly, ethically, and responsibly.

- Conduct evaluation and research activities in an informed, objective, and fair manner. (NCME, 1995)
- Good assessments are fair to all students. (Suskie, 2004)
- Good assessments are ethical and protect the privacy and dignity of those involved. (Suskie, 2004)
- Interpret assessment results appropriately. (Suskie, 2000)
- Interpret, use, and communicate assessment results in an informed, objective, and fair manner within the context of the assessment's limitations and with an understanding of the potential consequences of use. (NCME, 1995)
- Successful assessment does not restrict or inhibit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- Assessment tasks are checked to ensure there are no inherent biases that may disadvantage particular student groups. (AUTC, 2002)
- Avoid making, and actively discourage others from making, inaccurate reports, unsubstantiated claims, inappropriate interpretations, or otherwise false and misleading statements about assessment results. (NCME, 1995)
- Disclose any associations that [those who evaluate educational programs] have with authors, test publishers, or others involved with the assessment and refrain from participation if such associations might affect the objectivity of the research or evaluation. (NCME, 1995)
- Preserve the security of all assessments throughout the research process as appropriate. (NCME, 1995)
- Disclose to examinees and others whether and how long the results of the assessment will be kept on file, procedures for appeal and rescoring, rights examinees and others have to the assessment information, and how those rights may be exercised. (NCME, 1995)
- Report any apparent misuses of assessment information to those responsible for the assessment process. (NCME, 1995)
- Comply with applicable standards for protecting the rights of participants in an evaluation or research study, including the rights to privacy and informed consent. (NCME, 1995)
- Protect the rights to privacy of individuals and institutions involved in the assessment process. (NCME, 1995)

Good assessments are cost-effective, yielding value that justifies the time and expense we put into them (Suskie, 2004)**.**

- Successful assessment is cost-effective. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- Design an assessment model that aligns with the institutional capacity to support it. (Driscoll & Cordero De Noriega, 2006)
- Assessment must be manageable: considering the varying resources of the institution or program engaged in the process, including financial resources committed to the process, the institution's assessment expertise, and faculty and co-curricular specialists' time (Bresciani, 2003)

A. Cost-effective assessments focus on clear and important goals. (See separate section below.)

B. Cost-effective assessments start with what you have.

C. Cost-effective assessments are simple and have minimal paperwork.

- Excessive assessment is avoided. Assessment tasks are designed to sample student learning. (AUTC, 2002)

D. Cost-effective assessments have realistic expectations: they are flexible; they don't aim for perfection; they recognize that some important learning outcomes, especially those related to attitudes, values, and dispositions, may be difficult if not impossible to assess accurately; and that not everyone will engage in assessment.

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- Student and staff workloads are considered in the scheduling and design of assessment tasks. (AUTC, 2002)
- Assessment must be flexible: accounting for institutional culture and the learning curves of people involved with implementation (Bresciani, 2003)

Good assessments yield reasonably accurate and truthful results, of sufficient quality that they can be used with confidence to make decisions about curricula and pedagogy (Suskie, 2004).

- Effective outcomes assessment produces credible evidence of learning and organizational effectiveness. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Assessment must be trustworthy: characterized as truth-seeking/objective/ethical (Bresciani, 2003)
- Assessment must promote valid inferences. (Steen, 1999)

A. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results flow from clear and important goals. (See separate section below.)

B. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results represent a balanced sample of key goals, including multidimensional, integrative thinking skills.

- Assessment evidence should be representative and cumulative. (Ewell, n.d.)
- Assessment evidence should cover knowledge and skills taught throughout course or program (Ewell, n.d.)
- Assessment should measure what is worth learning, not just what is easy to measure. (Steen, 1999)
- Assessment is multi-dimensional. (AAC&U, 2001)
- Assessment evidence should provide information on multiple dimensions of student performance, i.e., more than a single summative grade (Ewell, n.d.)
- Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time. (AAHE, 1991)
- Assessment tasks assess the capacity to analyze and synthesize new information and concepts rather than simply recall information previously presented. (AUTC, 2002)
- Assessment tasks are designed to assess relevant generic skills as well as subject-specific knowledge and skills. (AUTC, 2002)
- Good assessment practice includes authentic methods that arise from students' actual assignments and learning experiences, which might be both curricular and co-curricular (Greater Expectations Project, 2004)
- Good assessment practice includes a focus on higher, more sophisticated knowledge and capacities rather than on more easily measured basic skills (Greater Expectations Project, 2004)
- Assessment activities arise from and connect to actual student learning experiences, both curricular and co-curricular. (AAC&U, 2001)

C. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results use a variety of approaches, including direct evidence of student learning.

- Successful assessment uses multiple measures. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- Use multiple sources and types of relevant information about persons or programs whenever possible in making educational decisions. (NCME, 1995)
- A variety of assessment methods is employed so that the limitations of particular methods are minimized. (AUTC, 2002)
- Use multiple sources of relevant information in conducting evaluation and research activities whenever possible. (NCME, 1995)
- Use many different measures and many different *kinds* of measures. (Suskie, 2000)
- Assessment that matters should always employ multiple measures of performance. (Steen, 1999)

- Good assessment practice includes multiple methods that include both qualitative and quantitative evidence (Greater Expectations Project, 2004)
- Assessment evidence should involve more than one source or multiple judgments of student performance (Ewell, n.d.)
- Effective outcomes assessment recognizes that learning is multidimensional and developmental and thus uses multiple measures, therefore maximizing reliability and validity. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- The institution derives evidence of student learning from multiple sources, such as courses, curricula, and co-curricular programming, and includes effects of both intentional and unintentional learning experiences. Evidence collected from these sources is complementary and demonstrates the impact of the institution as a whole on the student. (C-RAC, 2004)
- A good assessment program includes direct evidence of student learning (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Assessment evidence should include at least one type of evidence based on direct observation or demonstration of student capacities, i.e., more than simply a self-report (Ewell, n.d.)
- Assessment evidence should be verifiable. (Ewell, n.d.)

D. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results recognize diverse approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment.

- A good assessment program reflects what is known about how students learn (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- The institution uses learning goals as well as knowledge about learning as drivers for organizing instruction. (C-RAC, 2004)
- Use assessment to support diverse learning abilities and to understand conditions under which students learn best. (Driscoll & Cordero De Noriega, 2006)
- There is provision for student choice in assessment tasks and weighting at certain times. (AUTC, 2002)
- Help students learn how to do the assessment task. (Suskie, 2000)
- Engage and encourage your students. (Suskie, 2000)

E. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results assess teaching-learning processes as well as outcomes.

- Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. (AAHE, 1991)
- Effective outcomes assessment assesses processes as well as outcomes. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- There is both formative and summative assessment of student learning. (AAC&U, 2001)
- Good assessment practice includes the use of both formative assessment, for the purpose of giving feedback and making improvement, and summative assessment, for the purpose of identifying levels of attainment (Greater Expectations Project, 2004)
- Assessment tasks are weighted to balance the developmental ('formative') and judgemental ('summative') roles of assessment. Early low-stakes, low-weight assessment is used to provide students with feedback. (AUTC, 2002)
- Good assessment practice includes assessments that are developmental, so that students and others can observe progress toward valued outcomes, perhaps through the use of portfolios (Greater Expectations Project, 2004)
- Learning outcomes addressed in assessment are consistent and cumulative, building throughout the educational program in tune with a longitudinal view of student development. (AAC&U, 2001)
- There is a steady progression in the complexity and demands of assessment requirements in the later years of [programs]. (AUTC, 2002)
- There are integrative courses and assignments embedded in the curriculum in which (a) students not only master knowledge and skills but practice integration; (b) faculty coach students to make connections between the major and general education; and (c) students are engaged in some culminating activity or product that demonstrates their ability to integrate their undergraduate experiences. (AAC&U, 2001)
- Create milestone assessments across the curriculum. (AAC&U, 2004)

F. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results are developed thoughtfully.

- Good [assessments] are chosen carefully. (APQC, 1999)

- Take appropriate steps to minimize potential sources of invalidity in the research and disclose known factors that may bias the results of the study. (NCME, 1995)
- A good assessment program contains a thoughtful approach to assessment planning (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Effective outcomes assessment begins when the need is recognized; allows sufficient time for development. Timing is crucial. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Apply effectively the methods selected. (Eder, 1999)

G. Assessments yielding reasonably accurate and truthful results are perpetual works in progress.

- A good assessment program allows for continuity, flexibility, and improvement in assessment (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic. (AAHE, 1991)
- Assessment is continuous. (AAC&U, 2001)
- Assessment is not a single event, but a continuous cycle. (Steen, 1999)
- Effective outcomes assessment encompasses the expectation that outcomes assessment will be ongoing, not episodic. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Good assessment practice includes assessment as continuous, systematic, and multi-dimensional (Greater Expectations Project, 2004)
- Assessment is systematic. (AAC&U, 2001)
- Good assessments are *systematized.* (Suskie, 2004)
- Evaluate the outcomes of your assessments. (Suskie, 2000)
- Successful assessment includes a process for evaluating the assessment program. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- Good [assessments] are reviewed frequently. (APQC, 1999)
- Effective outcomes assessment incorporates ongoing evaluation and improvement of the assessment process itself. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Provide periodic external review and validation of assessment practices and standards. (AAC&U, 2004)
- Critically evaluate one's assessment work; bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to the critique; use evaluation to improve the quality of future work. (Eder, 1999)
- Modify procedures in response to changing circumstances. (Eder, 1999)

Good assessments are valued.

A. Valued assessment efforts yield results that inform important decisions on important goals. (See separate section below.)

B. Valued assessment efforts are recognized and honored through meaningful incentives and rewards.

C. Valued assessments are part of an institutional climate in which innovation, risk-taking, and efforts to improve teaching and learning are recognized and honored through meaningful incentives and rewards.

- The institution provides an environment which signals support for student learning at all levels. (C-RAC, 2004)
- The institution promotes an atmosphere of critical reflection about teaching and learning. (C-RAC, 2004)
- Assessment is treated by staff and students as an integral and prominent component of the entire teaching and learning process rather than a final adjunct to it. (AUTC, 2002)
- Embed assessment into campus conversations about learning. (Driscoll & Cordero De Noriega, 2006)
- Make assessment findings part of a campus-wide commitment to faculty inquiry and educational improvement. (AAC&U, 2004)
- Effective outcomes assessment involves recognition that assessment is essential to learning, and therefore is everyone's responsibility. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change. (AAHE, 1991)

- [Assessments] are best considered in the context of a wider transformation of organizational culture. (APQC, 1999)
- Organizational culture supportive of [assessments] take time to develop, require considerable "socialization" of the organization's members, and are enhanced by stable leadership. (APQC, 1999)

D. Valued assessments are supported with appropriate resources, including time, guidance, support, and feedback.

- Successful assessment has institution-wide support. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- Effective outcomes assessment is undertaken in an environment that is receptive, supportive, and enabling—on a continuing basis. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Effective outcomes assessment has knowledgeable, effective leadership. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Successful assessment has a conceptual framework. (Huba & Freed, 2000)
- There is a faculty/departmental policy that guides individuals' assessment practices. Subject assessment is integrated into an overall plan for [program] assessment. (AUTC, 2002)
- State the basic principles of assessment work clearly. (Eder, 1999)
- Effective outcomes assessment includes faculty and staff development to prepare individuals to implement assessment and use the findings. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Show an understanding of existing scholarship in the field; bring the necessary skills to assessment work; bring together the resources necessary to move the project forward. (Eder, 1999)

Good assessments focus on and flow from clear and important goals.

- Assessment is based on well-defined outcomes for student learning. (AAC&U, 2001)
- The institution sets clear learning goals, which speak to both content and level of attainment. (C-RAC, 2004)
- There is a clear alignment between expected learning outcomes, what is taught and learnt, and the knowledge and skills assessed – there is a closed and coherent 'curriculum loop'. (AUTC, 2002)
- Effective outcomes assessment bases assessment approaches on clear, explicitly stated program objectives. (Banta & Associates, 2002)
- Define and clarify program goals and outcomes for long-term improvement. (Driscoll & Cordero De Noriega, 2006)
- Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. (AAHE, 1991)
- Articulate locally owned goals for student learning outcomes. (AAC&U, 2004)
- Have clearly stated learning outcomes and share them with your students. (Suskie, 2000)
- A good assessment program reflects programmatic goals and objectives for learning (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Define objectives that are realistic and achievable (Eder, 1999)
- Use methods appropriate to the goals. (Eder, 1999)
- The institution collects evidence of goal attainment using appropriate assessment tools. (C-RAC, 2004)
- A good assessment program contains relevant assessment techniques (Palomba & Banta, 1999)
- Assessment evidence should be relevant. (Ewell, n.d.)
- Match your assessment to what you teach and vice versa. (Suskie, 2000)
- Grades are calculated and reported on the basis of clearly articulated learning outcomes and criteria for achievement. (AUTC, 2002)

A. Assessments with clear goals have clear, appropriate standards for acceptable and exemplary student performance.

- The institution sets clear learning goals, which speak to both content and level of attainment. (C-RAC, 2004)
- Set standards in each goal area for basic, proficient, and advanced performance. (AAC&U, 2004)
- Set clear expectations for culminating work performed at a high level of accomplishment. (AAC&U, 2004)
- Evaluate and communicate the adequacy and appropriateness of any norms or standards used in the interpretation of assessment results. (NCME, 1995)

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A Five-Dimensional Model of "Good" Assessment

Characteristics of good-quality assessment results	Characteristics of good assessment processes that engage faculty	Good assessments…
✓	✓	**1. Are used.**
✓	✓	Are planned and purposeful; start with a clear understanding of why you are assessing.
✓	✓	Focus on clear and important goals.
	✓	Involve the active participation of those with a stake in decisions stemming from the results.
	✓	Are communicated widely and transparently.
✓	✓	Are used fairly, ethically, and responsibly.
	✓	**2. Are cost-effective.**
	✓	Focus on clear and important goals.
	✓	Start with what you have.
	✓	Are simple.
	✓	Have realistic expectations.
✓		**3. Yield reasonably accurate and truthful results.**
✓		Flow from clear and important goals.
✓	✓	Represent a balanced sample of key goals, including multidimensional, integrative thinking skills.
✓		Use a variety of approaches, including direct evidence of student learning.
✓	✓	Recognize diverse approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment.
✓	✓	Assess teaching-learning processes as well as outcomes.
✓		Are developed thoughtfully.
✓		Are perpetual works in progress.
	✓	**4. Are valued.**
	✓	Yield results that inform important decisions on important goals.
	✓	Are recognized and honored through meaningful incentives and rewards.
	✓	Are part of an institutional climate in which innovation, risk-taking, and efforts to improve teaching and learning are recognized and honored through meaningful incentives and rewards.
	✓	Are supported with appropriate resources, including time, guidance, support, and feedback.
✓	✓	**5. Focus on and flow from clear and important goals.**
✓	✓	Have clear, appropriate standards for acceptable and exemplary student performance.

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SUGGESTED READINGS ON CHARACTERISTICS OF "GOOD" ASSESSMENT

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