

Choosing A Methods Worksheet

Types of Assessment:

1. Check the box next to the type of assessment that matches the overall purpose or goal of your assessment or your specific outcome?

Tracking Usage - track participation in programs or services

- Consider the following methods: existing data, tracking system

Needs Assessment - determine the needs of a specific group or intended audience

- Consider the following methods: survey, focus group, visual methods, existing data

Program Effectiveness - level of satisfaction, involvement, effectiveness, helpfulness, etc.

- Consider the following methods: survey, focus group, observation, existing data

Cost Effectiveness - how does a program/service being offered compare with cost?

- Consider the following methods: existing data, document analysis

Environmental, Culture or Climate Assessment - assess the behaviors/attitudes on campus

- Consider the following methods: focus group, document analysis, survey, existing data, case study, observation, rubric

Benchmarking - compare a program/service against a comparison group or standard

- Consider the following methods: survey, rubric, existing data

Program Review – comprehensive review of department including self-study and external review

- Consider the following methods: survey, focus group, existing data, document analysis, case study

Assessing Learning – assess how a participant will think, feel, or act differently as a result of your program/course/service

- Overall, your assessment method should be a reflection of the learning that you are seeking to assess. Thinking about Bloom's taxonomy, the different levels of thinking would require different assessment methods. In other words, a more in-depth thinking level would necessitate more in-depth assessment.
- For example, an assessment of the synthesis and evaluation levels would be more in-depth and require more complex assessment methods such as rubrics, content analysis or interviews/focus groups, compared to knowledge or comprehension levels that are less complex and can be assessed using surveys and quizzes.
- Consider the following methods: survey/quiz, rubric, portfolio, classroom assessment, focus group

1a. List the possible methods you can use given the type of assessment you selected. (Reminder: even if you are unfamiliar with the method, list it for now and you can learn more later)

Indirect or Direct Measures of Learning:**2. If you are measuring learning, do you need a direct or indirect measure? Check the corresponding box.**

Direct Methods - any process employed to gather data that requires students to display their knowledge, behavior, or thought processes.

- For example: Where on campus would you go, or whom would you consult with if you had questions about which courses to register for in the fall?
- Consider the following methods: “quiz” type survey, rubric, document analysis, observation, portfolio, visual methods, classroom assessment, and/or case study

Indirect Methods - any process employed to gather data that asks students to reflect upon their knowledge, behaviors, or thought processes.

- For example: I know where to go on campus if I have questions about which courses to register for in the fall. (Strongly agree, Moderately agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Moderately disagree, Strongly disagree)
- Consider the following methods: survey, focus group, document analysis, and/or one-minute assessment

2a. List the possible methods you can use.**3. Do you need to use quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods? Check the corresponding box.**

Note: Both methods can produce data/information that can be presented in number or narrative form. So at this point, your decision should be made on the depth of the information that you need.

Quantitative Methods - produce data that shares simple facts or figures

- Looks at questions that concern who, what, where, when
- Matches with outcomes about remembering and understanding (define, classify, recall, recognize)
- Consider the following methods: survey, existing data, rubric (if assigning #'s)

Qualitative Methods - produce data with more depth and description

- Looks at questions that concern why and/or how
- Matches with outcomes about applying, creating, evaluating, analyzing
- Consider the following methods: focus group/interview, portfolio, rubric (if descriptive), visual methods, one-minute assessment, open-ended survey question, observation, document analysis, case study

Mixed Methods – often you may need to use a combination of both qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to capture the depth and breadth of the information needed.

- For example, a social responsibility outcome such as “student articulates the unfair, unjust, or uncivil behavior of other individuals or groups,” might best be assessed through interview or focus group and through rating a role-play exercise on a rubric.

3a. List the possible methods you can use based on your answer.

4. Is your assessment intended to be formative or summative? Check the corresponding box.

Note: Formative and summative tell you more about the timeline for your assessment and can narrow down what method you use based on how quickly you need the data.

Formative Assessment – assessment conducted with the intention of using the data immediately while the program/service is taking place to make changes as the experience progresses.

- For example, an orientation program that is repeated over 6 different sessions in the summer may assess a diversity program during each of the sessions in order to improve the program as the summer progresses, making changes for each consecutive session.
- Consider the following methods: survey, classroom assessment, observation, existing data

Summative Assessment – assessment conducted with the intention of using the data in the future, or summarizing an entire experience.

- For example, an orientation program sends out an evaluation of the entire Orientation process to all students who participate over the entire summer. They then use this information for improving orientation for the following year.
- Consider the following methods: surveys, focus groups, rubrics, existing data, document analysis, visual methods

Putting it Together:

4. Combine the answers to 1a, 2a, 3a and 4a to list all of the possible methods.

5. Determine most effective method.

Weight the risks/rewards of different methods (see next section). Based on your list:

Methods Guide

Existing Data: Sometimes referred to as secondary data analysis, this refers to any data that has already been collected, usually from previous assessments, student information systems, office systems, card swiping or other tracking systems.

Strengths:

- No time needed to collect data
- No risk of survey fatigue, response rate issues
- Utilize processes/systems already in place
- Capitalizes on previous assessment efforts
- Unobtrusive in nature

Challenges:

- Reliant on the reliability/validity or trustworthiness of the source
- Non-responsive in nature (aka no follow-up option)
- Response rates are pre-determined by the data that exists
- Gaining access to data that may be housed elsewhere or have restrictions
- You may need to create a system or adjust current systems in order to better track data
- Data may not be sufficient, may require follow-up

Things to Consider:

- How will you gain access to data?
- Will you have the ability to analyze/manipulate the data in the way you need? (e.g., if you are getting NSSE results from your Institutional Research office, are they just providing summary data or the entire raw data set?)
- Where are the data coming from and in what forms will you receive it? This will lead to decisions on how you analyze data. If you need to know how to conduct a document analysis, use a database or know how to analyze data in excel or SPSS.

Learn More:

- <http://nsse.iub.edu/?cid=315>
- <http://spelmanandjohnson.com/blog/index.php/at-the-cabinet-level-student-affairs/>
- <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/develop-key-performance-indicators-4676.html>
- Research in the college context: Approaches and methods. By Frances Stage and Kathleen Manning

Survey: A set of open and closed-ended questions in a questionnaire type format, a survey is a self-report of anything, including opinion, actions, and observation.

Strengths:

- Include large numbers
- Relatively fast and easy to collect data
- Lots of technology and analysis resources available
- Requires minimal resources
- Fast to analyze
- Good for surface level or basic data

Challenges:

- Survey fatigue and response rates
- Non-responsive
- Limited in type of questions asked
- Lacks depth in data
- Need skills set in both designing questions and analyzing data properly

Things to Consider:

- What is the best administration method (phone, paper, web, tablets, QR codes, etc.)?
- Who will draft and review the questions?
- Do you want to offer incentives for completing the survey?
- Do you have a data analysis plan? Do you need to compare this data to data collected in the past?
- To whom will you send the survey? Do you need to use a sampling technique?
- How will you make sure your survey instrument is valid and reliable?

Learn More:

- www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/assessment/iar/teaching/plan/method/survey/
- <http://blog.surveymonkey.com/blog/2012/04/13/10-online-survey-tips/>
- www.hsc.unt.edu/departments/cld/AssessmentReliabilityValidity.cfm
- <http://blog.noellewitz.com/2011/08/18/strategies-avoiding-survey-fatigue-campus/>

Rubric: a scorecard used to rate student learning either through observation or artifacts. Includes a scale, key dimensions, and descriptions of each dimension on the scale

Strengths:

- Clearly states standards and expectations
- Can be used as a learning tool and an assessment tool
- Provides for consistency in rating/grading
- Participant can use rubric to gauge his/her own performance
- Provides both individual and program-level feedback
- Provides both numbers and descriptive information

Challenges:

- Developing a rubric takes time and often collaboration
 - Training of raters is needed
- Most often limited to use with student learning, but has seen some recent use in reviewing applications, observing interviews, determining funding and other areas
- Beware of inter-rater and intra-rater reliability
 - Depending on technology resources, combining aggregate data can take time

Things to Consider:

- How will you design and test your rubric? Do you have a faculty or student partner in education that can assist you?
- How will you train raters?
- Do you have a way to observe a situation (e.g., performance, role play exercise) or collect an “artifact” (e.g., reflection paper, application, video, etc.)?

Learn More:

- <http://bbourke.blogspot.com/2013/02/how-to-use-rubrics-in-student-affairs.html>
- www.humboldt.edu/celt/tips/rubrics_as_learning_guides/
- www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/assessment/iar/students/report/rubrics.php
- <http://college.lattc.edu/assessment/assessment-toolbox/rubrics/>
- www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/assess.cfm
- <http://faculty.ccp.edu/dept/viewpoints/w06v7n2/rubrics1.htm>

Focus Groups or Interview: the process of asking face-to-face open-ended questions in a group or one-on-one setting.

Questions are meant to be a discussion

Strengths:

- Helps to understand perceptions, beliefs, thought processes
- Small number of participants
- Encourages group interaction and building upon ideas
- Responsive in nature
- Relatively low costs involved

Challenges:

- Getting participants (think of time/places)
- Data collection and analysis take time
- Data is as good as the facilitator
- Beware of bias in analysis reporting
- Meant to tell story, may not help if numbers are needed
- Data is not meant to apply to larger groups or outside of your context

Things to Consider:

- How will you develop questions and protocols?
- Who is the best facilitator of the interview or focus group? What level of objectivity does he/she need and what knowledge of the subject/situation?
- How will notes be taken? Do you have recording devices?
- What logistics do you need to consider as far as finding space, etc.?
- Do you need consent forms?

Learn More:

- www.rowan.edu/colleges/chss/facultystaff/assessment.php (Focus Group Guides)
- http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/vpsa/word_doc/Focus%20group%20protocol.docx
- http://studentaffairs.arizona.edu/assessment/toolbox_toolkits.php

- <http://prezi.com/xjhjovfroej4/using-focus-groups-to-support-student-affairs-assessment/>

Portfolio: a collection of artifacts or work that provide evidence of student learning or program improvement

Strengths:

- Shows progress over time
- Reflective in nature (encourages reflective learning)
- Provides deep examples
- Multidimensional (shows learning in different ways)
- Provides both individual and program-level feedback
- Provides both numbers and descriptive information

Challenges:

- Requires planning ahead (pre-determined outcomes, criteria for meeting outcome, experiences to be included, type of reflection, rating tool)
- Takes time to implement and see progress
- Need trained evaluators
- Need system of collecting portfolios (electronic, hard copy)
- Depending on technology resources, combining aggregate data can take time

Things to Consider:

- Do you have outcomes, criteria, learning experience, and reflection prompts prepared?
- Do you need to train evaluators?
- Do you have a system for collecting portfolio materials?
- Do you have time to look through portfolios and analyze evidence?

Learn More:

- <http://ag.arizona.edu/sfcs/cyfernet/cyfar/Portfo~3.htm>
- www.washington.edu/1st/help/teaching_guides/design_portfolio_assignment
- <http://tedeschim2.wikispaces.com/Portfolio+Design+Checklist>
- www.park.edu/cetl/quicktips/portfolio.html

Observation: a systematic method of collecting data through unobtrusive visual means (e.g., watching people or places) in order to collect information

Strengths:

- Unobtrusive – does not require participant engagement
- Requires seeing beyond natural perspective
- Often effective with looking at patterns of student behavior
- Useful for gathering initial data to couple with survey or focus group
- Provides both numbers and descriptive information

Challenges:

- Requires planning ahead (e.g., protocols, charts, journals)
- Non-responsive in nature
- Limited in the type of data it can collect
- Need trained observers
- Need system of collecting information

Things to Consider:

- Do you have a plan for what you are observing and tracking what is being observed (hint: a rubric or checklist is often needed)?
- Do you need to train observers?
- What is your timeline?

Learn More:

- <http://images.rbs.org/assessment/observation.shtml>
- <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=63>
- www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/assessment/iar/research/plan/method/observ.php

Document Analysis: a form of qualitative research, sometimes referred to as content analysis, in which documents are

used to give voice, interpretation and meaning. Any document can be used, common documents may be: application materials, duty logs, reflection papers, student newspaper or publications, marketing materials, meeting minutes, strategic planning documents, etc.

Strengths:

- Documents are readily available
- Documents are already collected or easily collected
- Low costs
- Documents are a stable data source (they don't change)
- Can be collected on a quick timeline

Challenges:

- Non-responsive in nature
- Documents are context and language specific
- Documents are often disconnected from their creator
- All documents are written through a lens, need to be aware of lens in order to assess objectivity
- Data analysis takes time

Things to Consider:

- How do you gain access to the documents?
- Do you know how to set up a coding system? (see qualitative analysis section)

Learn More:

- www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/
- www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/assessment/iar/programs/plan/method/doc-analysis.php
- <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=61>

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A form of short formative evaluations used by facilitators to monitor student learning before, during and between workshops, learning experiences, exams or assignments and to then adapt instructional strategies to better meet student needs

Strengths:

- Provides a quick summary of take away from student perspective
- Quickly identifies areas of weakness and strengths for formative assessment
- Can track changes over time (short-term)
- Non-verbal (provides classroom feedback from all students)
- Captures student voice
- Short time commitment
- Provides immediate feedback

Challenges:

- Non-responsive
- Short (so you may lose specifics)
- Sometimes hard to interpret
- Need very specific prompts in order to get "good" data
- Plan logistics ahead of time and leave time during program/course
- May need to be collected over time

Things to Consider:

- Which strategy can best be integrated into the learning experience?
- If needed, do you have a strong prompt that will get you the information you need?
- Have you reserved time to collect data?
- Do you have a system for collecting data in a non-rushed manner?

Learn More:

- <http://ir.trinity.edu/collaborative/classroom-assessment-techniques>
- <http://ebookbrowse.com/classroom-assessment-techniques-handout-doc-d138180782>
- <http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/vpsa/pdf/Quick%20Assessment%20Techniques.pdf>

Visual Methods: captures images as a main form of data collection, usually also includes captions or a journal to accompany images. Most often used for photo journals, video projects, and visual art projects

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More detail and depth to data • Visual aspect allows for depth in sharing results • High levels of student investment • Can use images captured for multiple uses • Very descriptive in nature 	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beware of threats to alterations of images (especially with technology) • Usually smaller number of perspectives • Time for implementation and follow-through • Analysis takes time • Resources may be needed in order to capture images
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<p>Things to Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will your participants capture images (e.g., digital cameras, disposable camera)? • What prompt will you use to make sure participants have a clear direction? • Do you have time to gather and process information in your timeline? • Have you accounted for time for member checking?
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<p>Learn More:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://ws1.roehampton.ac.uk/guidetogoodpracticeinassessment/assessmentmethod/visualassessments/index.html • Research in the college context: Approaches and methods, By Frances Stage and Kathleen Manning
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Case Study: a form of qualitative descriptive research, the case study looks intensely at an individual, culture, organization or event/incident

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More detail and depth to data • Multiple perspectives are gathered • Tells a story • Very descriptive in nature 	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes significant time to gather information and analyze • More perspectives = more time • Narrow purpose as far as sharing data afterward • Analysis takes time • Resources may be needed in order to capture data • Not meant to be directly applied to another situation but can be used as learning tool
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<p>Things to Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you capture data? • Do you have a clear understanding what you are profiling and why? • Do you have time to gather and process information? • Have you allocated time for member checking?

<p>Learn More:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=60 • www.ischool.utexas.edu/~ssoy/usesusers/l391d1b.htm • http://explorable.com/case-study-research-design
