

How to Engage Students in the Assessment Process

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Purpose:

The purpose of this guide is to support faculty and staff in engaging students in each phase of Syracuse University's assessment framework. Capturing student voices and providing opportunities for students to actively participate in the assessment process is mutually beneficial to faculty, staff, and students.

Benefits of Engaging Students in the Assessment Process for Faculty and Staff:

- Provides constructive feedback and input on assessment activities (e.g., students' feedback, co-creating/revising learning outcomes, assisting with rubric development, analyzing, and interpreting data).
- Encourages reflection on and improvement to the holistic teaching, learning, and student experience.
- Shifts the focus from an "add on" task to integrated teaching and learning conversations leading to compelling program/unit-level insights and improvements.
- Creates a reciprocal and inclusive community committed to advancing critical student learning practices and conversations.

Benefits of Engaging Students in the Assessment Process for Students:

- Empowers students to become agents of their own learning.
- Encourages reflective/metacognitive learning.
- Allows students to share their experiences and contribute to the assessment process in meaningful ways (e.g., serving on school/college, department, or program committees, surveys, course feedback, focus groups).
- Fosters skill development such as communication, research, analysis, and problem-solving.

Examples of Student Engagement in Assessment:

- Austin Zwick, Assistant Teaching Professor and Assistant Director of Policy Studies, Maxwell School at Syracuse University, worked on the academic program review with students: [PST410 Benchmarking: Policy Studies Program Review](#).
- Mona Eikel-Pohen, Associate Teaching Professor, College of Arts and Sciences at Syracuse University, shared her experience of engaging students in rubric development and exit tickets: [Awareness & Agency through Participatory Practices with a Focus on Rubrics and Exit Ticket Questions](#).
- Jessica M. Turos, Associate Director of Academic Assessment and Ad Hoc Instructor, Bowling Green State University describes a four-year-long project engaging students in assessment: [Turos, J. M. \(2020\). Actively engaging undergraduate students in the assessment process](#).
- The [Center of Assessment and Research Studies](#) at James Madison University offers [an undergraduate internship](#) for students interested in developing assessment skills.

Equity-Minded Approach:

For assessment to improve student learning and authentically document what all students know, engaging students in the assessment process is an important element of an equity-minded approach to assessment. Listening to the voices of those historically silenced is an essential element of equity-minded assessment.

“Assessment, if not done with equity in mind, privileges and validates certain types of learning and evidence of learning over others, can hinder the validation of multiple means of demonstration, and can reinforce within students the false notion that they do not belong in higher education” (Jankowski & Montenegro, 2017, p.5).

What does a focus on equity entail?

Check	Use	Include	Increase	Ensure	Make
Check biases and ask reflective questions throughout the data analysis process to address assumptions and positions of privilege	Use multiple sources of evidence appropriate for the students being supported and related learning experience or support offering	Include student perspective and take actions based on those shared perspectives	Increase transparency in results and actions taken Invite alternative interpretations	Ensure collected data are meaningfully disaggregated and interrogated	Make evidence-based changes that address issues of equity that are context specific


Adapted from Montenegro, E., & Jankowski, N. A. (2020).



Equity-Minded Strategies:

- Examine the ways in which your positionality influences your assessment practice.
- Consider the student populations your program or unit serves and involve students with different backgrounds and learning abilities.
- Employ methodological diversity and center marginalized voices in every stage of the assessment cycle.
- Use appropriate student-focused and culturally responsive language. It should be clear to students what outcomes are being assessed and the achievement expectations.
- Use multiple pieces of evidence or measures to account for diverse learning needs and strengths. Students demonstrate knowledge in varying ways. The same assessment tool used for all students may capture one way of knowing and marginalize other ways of knowing.
- When studying small populations, design data collection to best capture their experiences. This design may be different than the way in which the majority population is studied.
- Co-construct rubrics with students to clearly articulate learning expectations.
- Use reflection papers, signature assignments, and other forms of narrative writing to facilitate storytelling, foster counternarratives and capture learning from leadership positions, judicial/academic hearing sanctions, community service, or goal setting.
- Co-facilitate interviews, focus-groups, or talking circles with students to measure sense of belonging, equity and diversity issues, or students' success behaviors.
- Have students create portfolios where they compile multiple artifacts across different mediums to best portray demonstrated competency.
- Disaggregate data to study the impact on specific populations.
- Aggregate responsibly by noting limitations in the data including how small populations might have been combined or why the data for small groups may not be presented separately.

Useful Resources to Develop Your Own Equity-Minded Approach:

- National Institute of Learning Outcomes' (NILOA) [Equity & Assessment Case-Studies and Antiracist Resources for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment](#).
- [Transparency in Learning and Teaching \(TILT\)](#) features resources and assignment design practices to foster transparency in higher education.

 Phase 1: Specify and Plan	Strategies to Engage Students	Resources
<p>Clear statements of essential learning outcomes that describe what students will be able to do, know, or produce over time as a result of participation in the academic program are established.</p> <p>Co-curricular and functional programs/units also develop success outcomes to support operational excellence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can co-create student learning and success outcomes. 	<p>Student learning and success outcomes should be written using active verbs. The following resources can be used to create student learning and success outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Verbs by Domain: Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor • Action Verbs Using Bloom’s and Fink’s Taxonomies • Operational Outcomes Taxonomy • Learning Outcome Generator Tool
<p>An academic program’s curriculum map demonstrates the full progression of learning across the curriculum by aligning student learning outcomes to the program’s courses and experiences using the following scale: Introduced, Reinforced, and Mastered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can provide feedback on their learning across the curriculum. • Students can discuss program path-transparency. 	<p>Engage students in answering the following curriculum mapping questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With your course/program in mind, reflect with your students on the alignment between your course assignment, course learning objectives, and program learning outcomes. • How do your course and assignments contribute to the student learning outcome? • Does our program offer students sufficient learning opportunities for each outcome?
<p>Faculty and staff identify at least two measures for each outcome (two direct measures or one direct measure and one indirect measure). A specific target, or criterion for success, is identified for each measure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can reflect on signature assignments / experiences that enhance learning related to outcomes. • Students can identify criteria for success for selected measures. 	<p>To support students in identifying measures and criteria, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Strong Measures and Criteria for Signature Assignments and Capstone Projects. • Assessment Methods Application Exercise <p>Engage students in answering the following program evidence questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What assessments would provide faculty with the best evidence of student learning and achievement of the outcome? • What learning outcomes have been achieved through the selected student works (direct measures)? • What can surveys / interviews / focus groups tell us about students’ perceptions and experiences (indirect measures)?
<p>Programs and units align outcomes and courses with the Shared Competencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can create an Experiential Map presenting how their learning relates to the Shared Competencies. 	<p>Experiential maps allow students to make connections between their coursework, co-curriculum activities, leadership involvement, and career:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Guide on How to Build Experiential Maps to engage students in creating a map. • Institutional Effectiveness can facilitate sessions to create the Experiential Maps.

 Phase 2: Collect and Analyze	Strategies to Engage Students	Resources
<p>Evidence is gathered through direct measures, which are often embedded in courses and experiences, and supported by indirect measures, such as those that ask students to share perceptions of their learning and experiences in the program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can be asked how data can be collected and be involved in data collection efforts. • Students can conduct focus groups or interviews with their peers. • Students can design surveys and rubrics. 	<p>Learn how to collect and analyze data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review tutorials on Linkedin Learning for a range of data collection and analysis tools and guides. • Explore Syracuse University Libraries' research data services and Qualtrics resources. • Review Institutional Effectiveness' Rubric Library for examples and guides to create rubrics. <p>Learn more about student affairs assessment through free online modules.</p> <p>Discuss matters of confidentiality, sensitive information, and redacting students' names and demographic information before sharing publicly and check the National Survey Student Engagement (NSSE) Tips for More Inclusive Data Sharing and Analysis.</p>
<p>Interpretation of the results is comprehensively documented and summarizes the strengths and weaknesses found in student learning and program/unit operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can analyze and visualize data, such as infographics to communicate results to program constituents. • Faculty and staff can share assessment results with students and elicit feedback on how students interpret the findings. 	<p>After students review results, use the following questions to guide analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the strengths and weaknesses observed in student performance? • What processes and services are operating as expected? • What can be improved? <p>Discover LinkedIn Learning paths dedicated to interpreting results.</p>
 Phase 3: Action and Follow-Up	Strategies to Engage Students	Resources
<p>Assessment results inform decisions about the program/unit. Based on the findings, faculty and staff suggest and implement actions to improve student learning and operations.</p>	<p>Students can help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and prioritize the actions • implement actions where possible • identify stakeholders who can contribute to the assessment process 	<p>Reflect on the following questions with students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What actions might be taken to improve student learning and operations according to the results? • What is a preliminary timeline for carrying out actions? • Who is responsible for carrying out actions? <p>After actions have been implemented, determine a way to assess the impact of the actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review examples about closing the loop in assessment.

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