

Educational Outcomes: The Role of Competencies and The Importance of Assessment

Nearly all [employers] surveyed (93%) agree, “a [job] candidate’s demonstrated capacity to **think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems** is more important than their undergraduate major.”

From: *It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success*. 2013. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities and Hart Research Associates.

Competency = knowledge + skill

Competencies and Curricula

Employers and faculty agree that students must have these key competencies and also be flexible or nimble in applying them to new and changing situations.

This requires practicing competencies over multiple courses in multiple disciplines.

Guiding Questions

- How do we assure that our students are learning the skills necessary for success in today's dynamic and demanding workplaces and in life?
- How do we assure that our curricula are robust and helping students develop those skills?

Goals

- Review and identify competencies
- Identify and address assessment challenges
 - Pilot assessment approaches
 - Recommend assessment strategy
- Examine connection of competencies to curricula

Identifying Competencies

Critical Thinking

Written Communication

Subcompetencies

Critical Thinking

- Define the problem/issue
- Evaluate the evidence and data on the topic
- Consider context or assumptions in the evidence
- Propose an interpretation or hypothesis
- Identify alternatives, conclusions, or implications

Written Communication

- Define the purpose of the writing to be done
- Select relevant and compelling content
- Comply with norms or conventions
- Select credible sources and evidence
- Use correct syntax and mechanics

Existing Assessment at UNC

Our Time Our Future (2013)

“There are major challenges to effectively using student learning outcome data as a tool to improve the effectiveness of the curriculum and the quality of our higher education programs. There is no national consensus about a single methodology, sampling design, or test that can provide the types of robust and granular student learning outcome data necessary to inform institutional or program improvement strategies.”

Goals of Assessment

Principles of Good Assessment

- Must be reliable, valid, fair, and authentic
- Provide useful information about student learning
- Provide useful information about how to improve teaching & the curriculum

GEC Recommendation

Creating a System-wide Assessment of Core Competencies

Systematic, sustainable approach

- Measurement perspective – critical aspects of good assessment
- Must not only provide good results, but continually strive to improve teaching and learning

Buy-in and investment

- Must be collaborative, system-wide effort involving faculty, students, administration
- Requires financial, human, and temporal resources

Test construction

- Write test questions that tap into subcompetencies
- Pilot the test to be sure the test and the individual items are reliable and valid
- Determine standards of proficiency

Test administration

- Who to test, when and how often to test
- Format (paper & pencil/computer)
- Maximizing student motivation
- Secure test administration

Scoring and analysis

- Scoring must be efficient and comprehensive
- Must be able to score variety of types of questions
- Must include analyses of consistency and validity, fairness

Presentation of Results

- Format of score reports – useful to students, faculty, administrators, leadership
- May require different formats at individual, institutional, or system level
- Must inform teaching and learning – connect to teachable skills or content

Next steps for the GEC

- Develop and pilot the new instrument (Fall 2014 – Spring 2015)
- Incorporate additional lessons from the pilot projects
- Identify how competencies and subcompetencies are connected to courses and curricula

Competencies, Courses, & Curricula

- Connecting subcompetencies and general education courses/course domains
- Using assessment results to improve teaching and learning
- Providing students with information about this framework

Returning to the Goal

- GEC's focus is to assist the Board in its goal to
 - Monitor system-level data regarding students' achievement of competencies
 - Provide faculty and academic leaders with information that helps them evaluate and improve the curriculum
 - Produce graduates with the skills and flexibility to meet the needs of the 21st-century workforce