

Sound Assessment Practices

How course and program level assessment differ from classroom assessment

Although they are related, classroom and program and course level assessment practices differ primarily in scope and participants.

Classroom assessment involves instructor-led assessment practices in the classroom setting. Classroom assessment can be as simple as providing oral and written feedback on student assignments to the use of standardized rubrics for student evaluation. Grading in itself is one of the primary forms of assessment, a process to measure and improve student learning.

Course and program level assessment provide more large-scale initiatives to measure and improve student learning. Course level assessment includes assessment methods designed to measure achievement of learning outcomes by all students in a particular course. Program level assessment measures the effectiveness of an academic program. Program level assessment includes a combination of student assessment, review of curriculum and instructional practices, analysis of longitudinal data, and recommendations by external panels.

Examples of course assessment

Course assessment includes assessment methods designed to measure achievement of learning outcomes by all students in a particular course for the purpose of measuring the course's effectiveness.

Since each course has its own learning outcomes, the coursework should reflect those learning outcomes. Instructors use many different techniques and devices to measure those outcomes. Classroom assessment techniques can provide some measurement, but larger department initiatives are needed in order to improve assessment across all sections of the course. This is the precise area for course assessment. **Course level assessment includes assessment methods designed to measure achievement of learning outcomes by all students for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of a course.**

Department chairs and their faculty members lead course level assessment. Here are some assessment strategies that constitute basic assessment.

Basic level

- Devote a department meeting to assessment.
- Commit to a five-year cycle or the creation of a five-year cycle during the upcoming academic year.
- Plan to address student learning outcomes and assessment throughout the academic year.
- Align course learning outcomes with classroom assessment practices.
- Create a three-year course review cycle. During this review process, lead instructors will review the master concepts, student learning outcomes, and assessment practices for select courses. Based on the group's findings, departments will update or revise their courses.

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While much of the basic course level assessment involves planning, more advanced course level assessment includes course-specific assessment devices. These devices are measurement tools for student learning. The results of these devices can determine improvement areas for curriculum and instruction.

Advanced level

- standardized exams
- pre/post tests
- grading rubrics
- capstone assignments
- Insure syllabi currently in use are consistent with course outlines and model course syllabi housed in CurricuNET
- Insure that each course syllabus is in compliance with the college's Model Syllabus Format.

Examples of program assessment

Program level assessment involves a combination of student assessment, review of curriculum and instructional practices, analysis of longitudinal data, and recommendations by external panels for the purpose of evaluating program effectiveness. In other words, a myriad of factors and participants shape program assessment. Next to a major department overhaul or academic initiative, program level assessment is the most extensive academic assessment for a department at Moraine.

Basic level

- Devote a program meeting to assessment.
- Plan to address student learning outcomes and assessment in the program throughout the academic year.
- Hold brainstorming sessions related to assessment.
- Determine what areas of program curriculum need improvement.

Advanced level

- Create an assessment device for program level assessment. Examples include:
 - A comprehensive exam for program graduates
 - A pre/post test for incoming program students
- In order to track student achievement in the program's courses, build a database that houses assessment results for each academic year. This data will indicate where improvements can be made to curriculum and instruction.
- Form or seek the guidance of a panel from the program's fields. These individuals can keep departments current on job prospects, best standards and practices, and general changes to the fields.