



Trends in Assessment: *Enduring Principles, Emerging Ideas*

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Session Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Describe enduring principles that have influenced assessment and improvement practices;
2. Explain emerging trends in assessment and improvement, informed by national perspectives;
3. Discuss the implications of enduring principles and emerging trends for higher education's future.



Assessment Institute in Indianapolis

- Conference hosted in Indianapolis every October since 1992
- Now the nation's oldest and largest event focused exclusively on outcomes assessment, with 1000+ participants from U.S. and several foreign countries
- Pre-Institute workshops, keynote panel, various thematic track keynotes and concurrent sessions, and a poster session; key partners such as NILOA provide content/resources
- Focuses on new techniques/proven approaches in assessment; offers an inclusive environment:
 - All sectors of higher education, both domestically and abroad
 - Academic disciplines and other areas of campus
 - Various types of programs and settings
 - Practitioners/scholars with significant experience and expertise, along with those newer to the assessment leadership and practice





Trends in Assessment

Ideas, Opportunities, and Issues for Higher Education

Edited by **Stephen P. Hundley** and **Susan Kahn**

Paperback

October 2019
9781642670936

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\$32.50

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Definition and purpose of assessment (Palomba & Banta, 2015)

- “Measurement of what an individual knows and can do”
- “*Outcomes assessment* has come to imply aggregating individual measures for the purpose of discovering *group* strengths and weaknesses that can guide improvement actions”
- To improve the effectiveness of instruction, programs, and services



Current status of assessment (in U.S.)

- Adopted by most higher education institutions
- Rapidly spreading from formal curriculum to co-curriculum
- Proliferation of methods and practices
- Booming assessment technology industry
- Debates about whether assessment has led to improved teaching, learning, and achievement



Questions about current assessment trends in higher education

1. How are we approaching the assessment of learning today?
2. How can assessment more effectively inform improvement efforts?
3. What are the implications for learning design?
Pedagogy? Higher education broadly?



Meta-Trends in Assessment

1. Assessment, done well, can make important contributions to understanding and improving student learning and success
 - Systematic assessment demonstrates that institutions/programs/staff take student learning and achievement seriously
 - Those engaged in assessment believe that it helps them better understand students' learning strengths and weaknesses
 - But too few institutions/programs/staff are collecting truly actionable data and using it to inform educational planning, decision-making, resource allocation



Meta-Trends in Assessment

2. The need to navigate tensions between accountability and improvement remains a key issue
 - Accountability is often (usually) the initial impetus for systematic assessment practice, but assessment for accountability alone rarely generates information meaningful for improvement
 - We need to re-focus on improvement to close the gap between assessment findings and improvement actions
 - We need more meaningful ways to design assessments, consider findings, identify and make warranted changes, re-assess



Meta-Trends in Assessment

3. Assessment requires leadership and broader stakeholder engagement

- Needs distributed leadership at multiple levels as assessment spreads from curriculum to co-curriculum
- Need to find more compelling ways to communicate with internal and external stakeholders about assessment



Meta-Trends in Assessment

4. Assessment strategies and approaches are becoming more inclusive, equity-oriented, and reflective of the diverse students our institutions serve
 - Equitable access to learning experiences and resources
 - Disaggregation of assessment findings to determine which groups of students are benefiting
 - Interventions to close equity gaps, including learning experiences that incorporate diverse perspectives



Meta-Trends in Assessment

5. Assessment is broadening its perspective on outcomes to include students' personal, academic, and professional development
 - Holistic development of students as citizens, professionals, scholars, and leaders
 - At post-graduate as well as undergraduate level
 - New majority students require holistic approach in order to develop self-awareness and habits of mind that will support success in education and beyond—"neurocognitive" and "dispositional" skills



Meta-Trends in Assessment

6. Assessment is beginning to focus on learning processes and experiences, in addition to its traditional focus on outcomes

- “Assessment” and “outcomes assessment” have become almost synonymous

But

- Outcomes alone don't necessarily yield information for improvement
- Examining the learning experiences, practices, and environments that support complex skills and powerful learning can move us toward more learner-centered assessment and improvement practices



Meta-Trends in Assessment

7. Authentic measures are increasingly necessary and valued
 - Students themselves can offer the most direct and richest information about their learning
 - Good authentic measures offer actionable insights into *how* and *why* students learn, in addition to *what* they learn
 - Current promising practices include ePortfolios, VALUE rubrics, and Comprehensive Learning Records



Meta-Trends in Assessment

8. Ongoing professional development continues to be essential to developing and sustaining systematic, well-designed assessment practices
 - Institutions committed to effective assessment practice strive to develop capacity for this across the campus
 - Common approaches: internal consulting, workshops, partnering with teaching and learning centers
 - “Development opportunities are essential during the entire assessment cycle,” (Banta & Palomba, 2015)



Meta-Trends in Assessment

9. Assessment work must be valued and recognized to result in sustained improvement
 - Most institutional mission statements place a high value on teaching and learning
 - How can we embed rewards and recognition for assessment work into institutional cultures?
 - We have external recognitions like the Excellence in Assessment Designation; we need internal ones as well



Meta-Trends in Assessment

10. Assessment remains a work in progress

- Experts agree that assessment has not realized its full potential
- We need to reconsider *what* and *how* we assess and how we can best foster genuine improvements in student achievement
- Assessment is more complex than some proponents have recognized and so is the relationship between assessment and improvement



Questions to Consider

1. Which trends are most salient to you? Why?
2. Have we missed any important trends?
3. Other reactions, questions, comments?

