The Assessable Roo
A UMKC Outcomes Assessment Newsletter

Leadership Change in Assessment Office
Calls for Fresh Ideas and Plans for Future

Dear Colleagues,

I am most pleased to be contributing my first column to The Assessable Roo. While I am still very much in the learning mode, I have been greatly impressed by the substantial progress that has been made over the last few years in assessing student learning achievement in academic programs, in the General Education core, in student affairs programs, and in high impact practices across the institution. Over the next few weeks, I will continue to work my way around campus, meeting with individuals, programs, and departments. I look forward to learning about assessment efforts and to sharing information concerning expectations for assessment, as well as to talking about how the assessment office, the University Assessment Committee, and the FaCET’s Faculty Fellow for Assessment, Barbara Glesner-Fines, can support your program’s assessment activities. We are available to provide individual mentoring, as well as professional development workshops targeted to the specific needs of individual units.

During the Spring 2015 semester, the University Assessment Committee will engage in developing the next five-year Assessment Plan http://www.umkc.edu/assessment/downloads/assessment-plan-timeline-3-21-12.pdf, as well as in revising the Handbook for Learning Outcomes Assessment http://www.umkc.edu/assessment/downloads/handbook-2011.pdf. We welcome your suggestions as we move forward with updating these documents.

Looking ahead, please note that the deadline for posting reports for the 2014-15 assessment cycle in Weave is October 15, 2015. The process for submitting assessment reports for the 2014-15 cycle will be the same as last year. In addition to making any updates to mission statements, program goals, student learning outcomes, or... Continued on Page 3

Reminder
Learning Outcomes for Graduate and Professional Coursework Due May 1, 2015.

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TEA and TEACHING Seminars Available!!!
Barbara Glesner-Fines, FaCET Faculty Fellow for Assessment is available to help you or your group by appointment.
Email: glesnerb@umkc.edu Phone: 816-235-2380
When we first heard about the new assessment cycle at UMKC, the faculty in the music therapy department weren’t worried as we were used to assessments. We frequently assess our undergraduate students’ progress on over 100 competencies related to music foundations, clinical foundations, and music therapy skills. Similarly, the graduate students enrolled in the music therapy degree at UMKC are assessed on their progress for 50 competencies related to music therapy theory, advanced clinical skills, clinical administration, music development, and research. The competencies for the undergraduate and graduate degrees were developed by our national organization the American Music Therapy Association.

The first time we completed the assessment report, we realized that the assessment cycle was more than just providing students with feedback on their progress towards competencies. In actuality, the assessment cycle required us to examine the data from the assessment reports and use that as the foundation for curricular discussions. For the music therapy department, it was a beneficial time for the assessment cycle to occur, because we were in the process of revising our undergraduate and graduate curricula. By looking at the data from the assessment measures we were able to identify the benchmarks students were meeting with ease, and which benchmarks were not met. This allowed us to identify courses that needed to occur earlier in the degree plan. For example, in the undergraduate degree, the clinical musicianship courses used to occur in the junior or senior year. We realized that students needed to be introduced to the topics earlier in the degree plan and moved the courses to the sophomore year.

As a result of this change, students are consistently meeting the benchmarks set in the assessment measure. We used to offer two different music therapy degrees at the master’s level, based on the student’s undergraduate degree. During our curriculum revisions, we created one master’s degree with two tracks based on the student’s undergraduate degree. However, once we designed the degree it was difficult for us to identify appropriate assessment measures that would give us the information that we needed. Once again we needed to have discussions about what benchmarks we wanted all of our master’s students to meet. Fortunately, we were able to create measures and experiences that were easy to implement and exciting for the students. For example, we now have a measurement that assesses students’ conference proposals for national and regional conference presentations. As a result of this new measure, we have seen an increase in graduate students’ proposal submissions and acceptance at regional, national, and international music therapy conferences.

Participation in the assessment cycle at UMKC has also improved our teaching and student advising in the music therapy department. We were able to identify which concepts students struggled with by analyzing our assessment data. We have now incorporated review and assessment of those concepts into multiple courses to improve students’ success. We have also developed practice modules for students to use outside of courses to continue developing those concepts. Additionally, during advising appointments the faculty have shared resources and suggestions for students to use to improve their success with any concepts that are difficult.

Our journey from the first assessment report to our current assessment measures and curricular discussions has been filled with challenges and triumphs. We believe that the music therapy curriculum for the undergraduate and graduate degree is stronger, as a result of participating in the assessment cycle at UMKC.

~Melita Belgrave
Sampling the Landscape
REDCap Replaces Survey Monkey

One of the keys to relevant and rewarding assessment in higher education is the ability to produce rich and meaningful instruments at the student, faculty, and administrative levels of an institution. Among these tools, likely the best indirect assessment comes through use of focus groups and surveys in and around each of the aforementioned populations. Generally, the heart of such assessment is the use of surveys.

The primary application that has been used at the university in the past few years by schools and departments is Survey Monkey. However, that tool no longer complies with FERPA guidelines for student privacy. Thus, the need for a new survey aid became necessary. That new web-based application is REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture). REDCap meets the security standards set by FERPA and offers a resilient survey management system that can improve the efficiency of any assessment projects programs intend to perform. Further, it can develop surveys and databases both, using online and offline methods. Data can also be seamlessly exported to statistical software packages including SPSS, SAS, STATA, and R.

Other features of the application include a built in calendar, a module for scheduling, and branching logic, file uploading, and calculated field features.

In an effort to facilitate widespread use of REDCap, a project overview manual is available for UMKC faculty and staff at http://www.umkc.edu/ia/it/redcap/documents/redcap-overview.pdf. This feature offers step-by-step instructions and clear screen shots of the software as it is laid out for ease of use. It includes the following sections:
1. Create a Project
2. Main Project Settings
3. Data Collection Instruments
4. Practice Data Collection
5. Project Users
6. Moving the Project to Production

An easy-to-use tool bar (pictured on the side) allows a user to organize data in many different ways. The package also offers an ability to generate reports that could be useful to the researcher during an ongoing data collection period. Registration with REDCap is as easy as going to the UMKC REDCap login portal, entering your SSO username and password, then hitting the button. The company itself offers an array of online training videos, as well as help with initial training on the package.

~ Dan Stroud

Planning for Assessment Future (Continued from Page 1)

assessment methods, programs are required to enter their assessment findings and action plans into the Weave template, as well as to upload a short narrative that describes the process, positives, challenges, and support received or needed for your assessment activities. As part of the report, address the comments from the University Assessment Committee in response to last year’s reports. Please contact me if you have questions about the required reports or need assistance interacting with the Weave assessment reporting system.

~ Ruth Cain
The Importance of Course Based Assessment

"I'm going to teach [subject]. Students will read this book, complete these assignments, and take this test at the end." [Anonymous Faculty Member]

Does this sound familiar? I will admit that this used to be my train of thought when I first started teaching. Assessment is one of those terms that becomes confusing because we practice it in everyday life, but many of us do not have a formal understanding or standard practice that translates into a number we can easily measure and report.

Many instructors are socialized to assess based on personal experience or how they were assessed during their post-secondary education. I have taken a particular interest in assessment because of my personal experience and the real-world consequences that resulted in a misalignment of assessment and learning outcomes.

Let’s start with a foundation of how I approach assessment. Assessment is establishing clear, measurable, expected outcomes of student learning. You often hear the first two adjectives “clear” and “measurable” as a way to write learning outcomes, but often the adjective expected may not be discussed in our understanding and practice of writing learning outcomes.

To go back to the quote at the beginning of this article, this shows that the instructor may not have developed skills or awareness that are based on education research and how people best learn. If this is you, then there are steps you can take to begin to develop this skill. The first is have a good understanding of what you are teaching and how students will best show you that skill. Ask yourself these questions: First, what am I teaching students and how can students best demonstrate that learning growth? If I am teaching a foreign language, my goal might be proficiency in that language in speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Students are given reading quizzes and some speaking exercises in class, but their major assessments are a written midterm and final test. Then, if students demonstrate proficiency in writing and reading, but not listening and speaking, did I accomplish my goal as a teacher? In this case, you may need to realign your goals and assessments.

After you have a clear understanding of what you want to teach and how students will demonstrate knowledge gained or skills developed, what are you doing along the way to help students learn? A thoughtful reflection on the learning opportunities can help you parse out what activities are essential and necessary and what activities are optional.

The learning opportunities you give students should be purposeful and meaningful for the summative assessment. Summative assessment is what you would often give students at the end of a unit or semester. This is what you would think of as a cumulative test, final project, or final paper. What is important is what road signs you are putting up for students to let them know they are heading in the right direction. This is why formative assessments are an integral part of the assessment process. Formative assessments are checkpoints throughout the student’s learning journey and they give both the instructor and student insight on how the material works or does not work.

How do you know if you have alignment in your course? Here is an exercise you can use to help determine whether your learning outcome, assessment, and learning opportunities align:

1. Take a learning outcome. Look at how it is written. Is it clear to you that there is a type of assessment that is used to measure that outcome? Ask a colleague or student to tell you what assessment is used to measure this outcome. If they have a hard time answering you or give you many answers, then you may need to rewrite your outcome.

2. After you have your learning outcome and assessment established, what activities and formative assessments are used to help the student achieve the learning outcome? Take a look at the Alignment Strategies chart on pp. 5-6 to better understand this approach and how you can create your own alignment chart.

What is essential is communicating on the same level as the students on what they are learning and how they can demonstrate that learning. Good assessment is having a clear vision of what your course looks like, how it will progress throughout the semester, and what the student will know by the time they leave your course. We are responsible for preparing students to succeed in life. There cannot be a silo between the student and instructor where the instructor puts forth content without thought about alignment and have an expectation that the student will learn.

In my sad case, a misalignment in learning outcome and assessment resulted in psychological distress that resulted in a divorce from my best colleague or student to tell you what assessment is used to measure that outcome? Ask a colleague or student to tell you what assessment is used to measure this outcome. If they have a hard time answering you or give you many answers, then you may need to rewrite your outcome.

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Importance of Assessment (Continued from Pg 4)

friend that I have known for a third of my life. It has caused me to become dispassionate for a subject matter that I have been involved in for about 10 years. In all, a lot of heartache and self-embarrassment. Many of you may think that my case might be an outlier. And you are right; I might be an outlier, but that does not take away from the importance of making sure your goals and assessments are clearly aligned and communicated. Instructors are in a position of power. Instructors have the power to judge. Sometimes that judgment is warranted, but make sure that judgment is based on sound alignment of outcome and assessment.

References


~David Ta

Editor’s Note: David Ta is an instructional designer at UMKC Online. He specializes in assessment strategies and student engagement for technology-mediated courses.

Assessment Strategies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Summative</th>
<th>Formative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>Final draft research paper</td>
<td>• Summary of research topic&lt;/br&gt;• Annotated reference list&lt;/br&gt;• Concept map of paper&lt;/br&gt;• Outline of paper&lt;/br&gt;• Research analysis worksheet&lt;/br&gt;• Assignments based on specific outcomes related to the research</td>
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<td>Literary analysis paper</td>
<td>Analysis of large book</td>
<td>• Analysis of individual chapter&lt;/br&gt;• Short writings on different themes</td>
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Chart continued on Page 6

The Weave Deadline is just seven months away!!!
Start looking at your findings and talking about future action plans now.

The Assessment Office is available to help!!!
Ruth Cain (Ext 6084) and Dan Stroud (Ext 1128) are always ready and willing to offer input and feedback.
The UMKC Assessment YouTube webpage is also available at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCptiBF00yx6pn2enFXGp-tQ.
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<th>Assessment</th>
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<td>Business proposal</td>
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<td>Project</td>
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<td>• Individual components of project</td>
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<td>Test</td>
<td>Final test that assesses deep understanding of knowledge</td>
<td>• Quiz that assesses basic foundational knowledge: multiple choice, T/F, match, fill in the blank, short essay</td>
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<td>Case study</td>
<td>Large case study that requires integration of major course concepts</td>
<td>• Short case studies that assess individual concepts, for instance, The National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science: [<a href="http://sciencecases.lib.buffalo.edu/cs/collection">http://sciencecases.lib.buffalo.edu/cs/collection</a> or Ethics in Mental Health Research: <a href="https://sites.google.com/a/narrativebioethics.com/embr/contact">https://sites.google.com/a/narrativebioethics.com/embr/contact</a></td>
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<td>Graded discussion</td>
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<td>• Share news article related to course concept</td>
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<td>• Assignment reflection</td>
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<td>Self-assessment or reflective assess-ments</td>
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