Module 2: Designing an Assessment Study
What Will We Do?
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Resources

- Let’s spend the next 45 minutes quietly reading Schuh, chapters 3 and 4
- Just kidding.
- But I do recommend reading those chapters after we conclude today
- Chapter 2 is good too, but fits better with module 1
What will we do?

• Time to start designing your study!
• Each group will need to address:
  – What types of assessment instrument(s) you will need
  • We will work on locating / creating / modifying instruments in later module
  – Practical considerations (who will participate? How will they be encouraged to participate?)
  – Timeline for the study
  – Ethical and IRB considerations

Assessment: General Principles

• No "gold standard" assessment method
• What works in one place, for one group of students, may not work well somewhere else

Assessment: General Principles

Reasonable, manageable, and meaningful
• Is this something that could realistically be implemented?
• Do we have the expertise, time, and resources to implement this?
• Will the results be meaningful to the staff and to external constituents?
Assessment: General Principles

Can use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods

Whatever the choice, the methods should be sufficiently rigorous

Aside: Qualitative or Quantitative Study?

Quantitative:
- More closed-ended
- Cause / effect (why did it happen?)
- Use of theory
- Assessing differences and magnitude

Qualitative:
- More open-ended
- Descriptive (what happened?)
- Interpretive (what was the meaning to people?)
- Process-oriented

Source: Creswell, 2002

Aside: Qualitative or Quantitative Study?

- As a pragmatist, I suggest using whatever “works”
- Some questions are more qualitative and others are more quantitative (and some are mixed methods)
Assessment: General Principles

• Use of multiple methods recommended
• Unlikely any single method will give a complete picture or allow you to completely answer your question(s)
  – Focus group with follow-up survey
  – Satisfaction survey and rubric evaluation of minute papers
• This is particularly important if you are making important decisions about students (e.g. who gets into a program or who gets a scholarship, etc.)

Direct methods
• Standardized or locally developed test or instrument (e.g. depression screening)
• Existing institutional data
• Survey
• Papers, projects, written assignments (evaluated with rubrics)
• Presentations
• Portfolios
• Observation / performance
• Evaluation by supervisor
• External reviewers

Indirect methods (perceptions)
• Satisfaction survey
• Participation counts
• Focus groups
• Interviews
• Self-assessment
• Case studies
• Narratives

Pros and Cons of Assessment Instruments / Methods
(see handout)
Practical Considerations

- Who will participate in your assessment study?
- How will participants be encouraged to participate?
- What's in it for them?
- Who will be responsible for encouraging participation?
- Who will be responsible for gathering the data? For writing the report and sharing results?

Who should participate?

- Which participants are best able to answer your question? What is your target group (sampling frame)?
- An appropriate sampling strategy should be considered
  - Sampling allows you to use more resources to obtain a higher response rate from a smaller number of students

How will participants be encouraged to participate?

- Relevance of study for the individual works better than almost any prize or food
How will participants be encouraged to participate?
- Use existing group of students (e.g., advisory board for a focus group)
- “Captive audience” – get them when you can!
- A small up-front token works better than a few large prizes in a drawing
- “Large” may not have to be as “large” as you think
- Phone calls work
- Make assessment a routine part of the program or service

Benefits of the study to participants
- Participants are giving their time to you – can you give them something in return (beyond the incentive to participate)?
- If you are gathering information on student learning / development, can you share that information with the participants?
- Can you share information about how you will (or have) used the results?
- Could you share examples from how you’ve used results in previous years?

Study Timeline
- Work backwards, starting with when you want to have results analyzed and shared
- General elements:
  - Identify purpose of study and study questions
  - Design study
  - Create or locate assessment tools
  - Administer assessment tools according to study design
  - Analyze results
  - Write report
  - Share results and take action
SA³ Timeline

Spring, 2014: Modules 1-3 (planning)
Summer / Fall, 2014: Implement and analyze results
Spring, 2015: Use results
April, 2015: Celebration event (2013 cohort ends)

Making the news for the wrong reason

Potential Assessment Ethical Issues (examples)

- Collecting samples of student work for assessment without consent from students, staff members, or faculty members
- Breach of confidentiality of sensitive information (e.g., sexually transmitted disease status)
- Releasing only those assessment results that make the program / department / institution look good
  - Intentionally misreporting results to make the institution look good
- Frugging: a survey under the guise of assessment but with an actual agenda of soliciting donations
Share at your table

Have you ever been a participant in a study where you felt like your rights were violated (that you know of)?

What ethical issues concern you most regarding your assessment work?

Many Professional Standards Available to Guide Practice

- Follow your professional standards
- SEPT includes guidance on:
  - Reliability
  - Validity
  - Test development
  - Scales, scores, comparability
  - Fairness in testing and test use

Division Expectations

Criteria from VP Mathew
1. Right vs. Wrong: (“Is it the right thing to do?”)
2. Legal vs. Illegal (and follow NDSU and NDUS policy)
3. Do the right thing for the right reason (must hold up to public scrutiny – would you want your assessment project to be on the front page of the Forum?)
General Ethical Principles

- Highest standards of honesty and integrity
- Respect the rights of students, faculty and staff members, and community members
- Avoid conflicts of interest
- Follow the principles of the local IRB (even if you do not submit your project for IRB approval)
  - Strongly recommend IRB training for everyone involved in your assessment project

General Ethical Principles

- Recognize strengths and limitations of assessment instruments and methods
- Assessment as a responsibility to students, the Division, and the public
- Score use:
  - Fairness (for both students and those to whom inferences of scores are applied)
  - (e.g., evaluating staff performance only on a satisfaction survey filled out after an event)
  - Evidence of validity needed when the use has big consequences (will discuss more in future module)

IRB

- IRB approval not required for assessment projects
- IRB approval should be pursued when:
  - You want to publish or present results at national conference (many publishers and conferences require IRB approval for projects) or if it is a research project
  - Topic of assessment is of sensitive nature (e.g., illegal activity, sexual behaviors, drug or alcohol use, etc.)
  - Involves protected populations (e.g., children, prisoners, pregnant women) or non-minimal risk
  - Need access to sensitive data gathered elsewhere
- I can help you with this!
- ndsu.edu/irb
Worksheets

Module 2 worksheet will get your team started on this portion of the task

Presentations

• Each team will prepare a short (5-7 minute) presentation for the group
• Please use PowerPoint
• In contrast with presentations this morning, we have limited team work time, so fine to share “where you are” instead of a polished or final summary
• We will have more time to work on this module between now and next meeting (more discussion on this in closing section)

Viewers of the Presentation

• Use the rubric and provide feedback
• Will collect rubrics and give to the team
• Be prepared to ask questions or provide feedback
• Be constructive – coaching model