



Needs Assessment

AGEP California - Summer Teaching Institute 2019

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The Beginning of the Term Poses a Perfect Opportunity to Learn about Your Students

- Course Content does not exist in a vacuum – the relationship between the student and the content is what brings the course to life.
- Beginning the term without learning about your students can end up being detrimental to both students and instructors.
- The process of learning about your students' needs should be ongoing throughout the semester.

Performance-Based Prior Knowledge Assessments (Direct Evidence)

- A reliable way to assess and gain insight into students' prior knowledge is to assign a task (e.g., quiz, paper, other in-class assignments) that gauges their relevant background knowledge.
- These assessments are for diagnostic purposes only, and should ideally not be graded (other than points for completion). They can help provide an overview of students' preparedness and identify areas of strengths and weakness, so that you can adjust the pace of the course as needed at the beginning of the semester.
- To create a performance-based prior knowledge assessment, you should begin by identifying the background knowledge and skills that students will need in order to understand the foundational subject matter at the beginning of the semester, in order to begin working towards meeting the outcomes of the course. Your assessment can include tasks or questions that test students' capabilities in these areas.

Prior knowledge self-assessments (Indirect Evidence)

Prior knowledge self-assessments ask students to reflect and comment on their perceived level of knowledge and skill across a range of topics and outcomes related to class (and the larger university). Questions can focus on knowledge, skills, or experiences that:

- you assume students have acquired and are prerequisites to your course
- You believe will be valuable to learning
- you intend to address in the course
- Ask about student expectations for the course

Needs Assessment can also be Instructional

- Asking a student about their own expected study time for the course, also provides the chance to follow up with the actual estimated time.
- Following up by sharing trends in Needs Assessments with students is key.
- Posing questions about content demonstrates that the content is valued in the course and informs students about important concepts, formulas, etc.
- Following up by sharing trends in Needs Assessments with students is key.

Who are our students?

Simply knowing about what they know and understand in terms of course content is not always enough.

Classroom climate and student performance are often affected by life circumstances of the students in the course. Students come from a wide range of experiences and situations that determine how they react to classroom activities.

Trying to Understand Our Students' Needs

- Refer to Institutional Demographic Data to learn more about overall background of student population.
- Announce that you are eager to accommodate students' needs if they are working with special campus services, but they will need to inform you.
- Encourage open lines of communication and office hour visits.
- Be approachable and be a good listener...

All Assessments of
student work should be
viewed as Needs
Assessments!

Any time we assess an
assignment, we are
learning not just about
what our students know
and what their
perceptions of their own
learning are, but also
about what their
academic *needs* are...

Institutional Needs Assessment

- Student Services
 - Degree Programs
 - Academic Departments
 - Offices of Campus Climate
 - Facilities
 - Student Residential Living
 - Health and Wellness Services
 - Career Center
 - Academic Units
- Needs assessment can apply to any organization as a systematic examination of the gap that exists between the current state and desired state of an organization and the drivers that can be attributed to this gap.
 - Needs assessment at the program or institutional level is an important process in that it can help educators at all levels successfully identify, understand, and better address challenges.
 - Institutionally, the needs assessment process is a critical initial step in improving the effectiveness of campus, program, etc., all ultimately contributing to student success

FOR DISCUSSION

Review the sample Needs Assessments from former Assessment as Pedagogy Project participants

- What type of evidence (direct or indirect) will the Needs Assessment Reveal?
- What are some strengths of the Needs Assessment?
- What questions do you have about the Needs Assessment?
- How do you think a Needs Assessment of this kind would be most effectively administered?