

Institutional Statement on Assessment

New Mexico State University - Las Cruces

What is Assessment?

Assessment is the ongoing, systematic investigation of a program, unit or institution for the purpose of continually improving that program, unit or institution. It is a tool used to examine effectiveness and guide decision-making so that effectiveness is increased and/or sustained. In the process of assessment meaningful questions about the institution and/or programs are posed, information is gathered to answer those questions, and intentional choices about how to develop and improve programs and/or the institution are made.

All assessment should be authentic, meaning that it is tied to the unique environment in which the institution exists, and to the institutions' unique mission and purpose. Authentic assessment is meaningful, flexible, of interest to the entire campus community, and is used to guide decisions that affect student learning and the learning environment.

Authentic assessment brings unity in diversity, without compromising principles of autonomy.

Why Assessment?

At its core, assessment is intended to ensure students are provided the best opportunities possible to acquire desired skills, knowledge and values as determined by the institution at large and by the academic program in which the student is enrolled. Assessment is uniquely designed to facilitate this because of the involvement of all constituents in the process and the ongoing nature of assessment – it is collaborative and dynamic.

Assessment

- fosters collaboration among faculty, staff and students;
- allows for flexibility;
- uses direct evidence to determine achievement of goals and objectives;
- provides evidence for effective decision-making;
- unites action for common purposes;
- recognizes, values and accommodates faculty and staff autonomy in creating unique learning opportunities;
- sets a standard of success and articulates how that success is obtained and measured;
- communicates shared responsibility for student achievement on desired outcomes;
- provides institutional accountability of engagement in practices that ensure measurement of attainment of learning objectives; and
- promotes transparency.

In short, assessment aids all constituents of the higher learning institution to ‘put the pieces together.’ It helps paint the big picture, letting faculty, staff, students and administrators, as well as external constituents see how each unique piece of the learning experience, both academic and co-curricular, come together to create one unified picture of institutional success.

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Assessment at New Mexico State University

New Mexico State University's land-grant mission is to 'serve the educational needs of New Mexico's diverse population through comprehensive programs of education, research, extension education, and public service.' The success of this mission is dependent not only on the academic experiences of students, but also the social experiences and the comprehensive learning environment created in large part by support systems within the institutional community. Therefore, assessment at NMSU is viewed as the ongoing, systematic investigation of all aspects of the learning environment, both academic and support system, that contribute to creating an environment in which student success in learning is first and foremost.

Broad Statement

Assessment is an integral part of the higher education learning experience. While asserting the centrality of student learners to the success of the institution, assessment

- generates consensus and maintains focus on institutional, program and course objectives;
- encourages collaboration and cooperative endeavors;
- fosters and models critical thinking processes;
- promotes transparency; and
- communicates shared responsibility of the entire campus community for learning.

Vision Statement for Assessment

Assessment at NMSU- Las Cruces is integrated and contextual. It is owned by faculty and staff, is valued by administrators, and is supported through fiscal, personnel, and structural mechanisms. Faculty, staff and administrators view assessment as relevant and worthwhile. Evidence of student learning and a supportive learning environment impacts decision-making. Students are actively aware of and engaged in assessment activities, understand the value and implications of learning assessment, and invite feedback on personal, professional and academic development. Authentic assessment is considered essential to curricular and university development: It is used as a venue through which collaborative efforts between academic and co-curricular units are fostered, and provides the scaffolding to promote core values of scholarly teaching and learning.

Using Evidence to Guide Decision Making

The purpose of continuous assessment is to ensure that the university community, through its courses, programs and units, is engaged in a continuous process of intentional self-reflection and improvement driven by direct evidence of student learning and student academic support. A necessary and expected component of scholarly teaching, assessment is also a mechanism through which expectations are communicated to students. Findings are used to guide faculty, staff and administrators to determine appropriate allocation of time and resources so that student learning is enhanced. Evidence of student learning and support of the learning environment is not intended for the evaluation of faculty or staff. Regular engagement in the *process* of assessing student learning and/or using findings to improve learning or the learning environment is an expected component, and therefore the responsibility of faculty, staff and administrators.