

How to implement successfully a Quality Assurance System

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Assessment

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The academic changes of the late 20th and early 21st centuries are more extensive due to their global nature and the number of institutions and people they affect.

In the early 21st century, higher education has become a competitive enterprise.

In many countries students must compete for scarce places in universities and in all countries admission to the top institutions has become more difficult.

Universities compete for status and ranking, and generally for funding from governmental or private sources.

While competition has always been a force in academe and can help produce excellence, it can also contribute to a decline in a sense of academic community, mission and traditional values.



Assessment

ASSESSMENT is the systematic collection of data to monitor the success of a program or course in achieving intended learning outcomes (ILOs)* for students. Assessment is used to determine:

- What students have learned (outcome)
- The way they learned the material (process)
- Their approach to learning before, during, or after the program or course

Types of Assessment

<http://tll.mit.edu/help/types-assessment-and-evaluation>

1 Formative Assessment

Formative assessment implies that the results will be used in the formation and revision process of an educational effort (e.g. Quizzes or mud cards).

They are used in the improvement of educational programs.

2 Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is used for the purpose of documenting outcomes and judging value (e.g. Final exams).

It is used for providing feedback to instructors about the quality of a subject or program, reporting to stakeholders and granting agencies, producing reports for accreditation, and marketing the attributes of a subject or program.

3 Process Assessment

Process assessment begins with the identification of project milestones to be reached, activities to be undertaken, products to be delivered, and/or projected costs likely to be incurred in the course of attaining a project's final goals.

The process assessment determines whether the project has been on schedule, deliverables produced, and cost estimates met. The degree of difference from the expected process is used to evaluate success.

Methods of Measuring Learning Outcomes and Value Added

	Education Researchers/IR	Faculty
Indirect Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freshman/senior surveys• Alumni surveys• Graduation rates• Number of students progressing to advanced degrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grades¹• Course evaluations (during the semester and end-of-semester)• Concept questions, “muddy cards,”² and other in-class techniques
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surveys of student attitudes about new pedagogy, curriculum, etc.; surveys asking students for reflections on their learning• Exit interviews	<p>NOTE: Methods spanning the vertical axis may be used by researchers or faculty.</p>
Direct Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standardized tests of general education skills (e.g., Collegiate Learning Assessment)• Think-aloud protocols³	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grades¹• Standardized tests of disciplinary knowledge (e.g., Force Concept Inventory)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-post tests• Analysis of assignments designed to test conceptual understanding (e.g., concept maps, pro/con grids)⁴• Observations of students performing a task• Analysis of student work products (e.g., exams, essays, oral presentations)• Senior thesis• Portfolios compiled over course of undergraduate study	



Successful Assessment Policy

A successful assessment policy is derived from choosing the best combination of methodologies that can be implemented using the available resources.

The grid is designed to help institutions make decisions along those lines.

Feedback Sheet (Mud Card) Example

Mud Cards is one type of formative assessment. Students are asked to identify the “muddiest point” that remains for them after the class. The duration is at most 2 minutes and is given at the beginning of the lecture, so that the student can write on them whenever he wants .

Could be asked the following questions:

1. What is the main unanswered question you leave class with today? What is the muddiest point?

All the muddy points become the first section in the next class. Eventually students realize that the sheet provides a safe place to ask questions anonymously (and they mention this feature favourably on the end-of-term evaluations).

2. What example, teaching technique, problem, derivation, or question helped or did not help you? Please say whether it helped or harmed!

It gives at the professor timely, specific feedback about activities that are most (and least) helpful to learning.

3. Other comments?


This free-form spot often produces helpful corrections, interesting references, comments about the pace, and suggestions for more applications of the theoretical material.



Feedback Sheet (Mud Card) Example (Cont.)

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Center for Teaching Services

- Help academics to articulate the goals and objective of the Learning Outcomes (knowledge, skills or values that result from instruction)
- Consultation on Interpreting Student's Course Assessment
- Techniques for teaching improvement
- How to increase students participation in the class
- Effective Grading
- Teaching with Technology

Feedback Sheet (Mud Card) Directions

- If there are n students in the class, make $n/2$ copies and cut the sheets in half. The **small format** suggests, correctly, that students don't need to write a book – just a **few well-chosen phrases** or sentences is useful.
- The feedback sheet is **anonymous**
- **Hand it out at the beginning of class** so that students can write down confusing or enjoyable points (questions 1 and 2) as class progresses rather than reconstructing them at the end.

Students Engagement (1)

- The involvement of student in the representatives is essential: they can model appropriate behaviour and voice students' concerns in an **anonymous way**.
- The department or faculty has encouraged **trusting, open relationships of staff with students**.
- Create a **sense of home** for the students.
- Different students will feel comfortable giving feedback in different ways. Therefore, best practice seems to be a combination of approaches (written and oral; formal and informal)

Students Engagement (2)

- ▶ Persuade respondents that **their responses will be used**. The issue here is whether students believe that the academics will take the feedback seriously.
- ▶ Create surveys that **seek constructive criticism**
- ▶ Faculty should **remind** students **about the assessment** and encourage them to give **honest** and **constructive feedback** for the improvement of the course.
- ▶ QA office should **push the survey** by sending:
 - reminder e-mails to academics
 - the process and the usefulness of the assessment to everybody
 - the URL link of the survey to students (for on-line surveys)



Problems in the Assessment Procedure

- As QA systems are introduced, mature and change. They initially – albeit not always – stress academic values, go through a phase of bureaucracy and managerialism and, in the best case scenario, go back to academic values in an attempt to have more **effective internal quality cultures** that can be embraced by the academic community.
- A certain degree of debate and disagreement should be expected, particularly in an academic community
- Low participation of the students in the assessment process
- Many institutions have moved to on-line questionnaires, but it has generally resulted in a lower return rate.
- There is always the danger that a student conducts a course assessment irresponsibly or without/barely having attended the class



What is Quality Culture?

- *Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual (Wilson, 1989)*
- All organizations have individual and unique cultures

Have you ever shopped at a store where the service was poor?

Such organization has cultural problem.

Employees don't care about the customers.



Quality Culture

(European University Association, 2006)

Quality culture refers to an organizational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterized by two distinct elements:

- a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality and,
- a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts.


Thus, the cultural/psychological element refers back to individual staff members while the structural/ managerial refers back to the institution.



Benefits of a Quality Culture

Quality Cultures:

- increases co-operation,
- gives students a voice that is heard,
- provides a strong front for an institution in a competitive higher education world,
- provides a context for change. Indeed, a strong quality culture encourages and enables change,
- champions innovation and
- allows staff to take risks, admit failure and learn from mistakes.



However, even a strong quality culture can be characterised by lack of risk taking where:

- the external quality evaluations are ‘high stakes’ activities and
- they encourage compliance rather than improvement

Subcultures

- Quality culture is not necessarily a uniform concept for a complete higher education organisation.
- It is most likely to occur in plural form – Quality cultures, especially in such diverse organisations like higher education institutions.
- Quality cultures can vary from department to department, might have a few elements in common while others being different.



Factors that promote effective quality cultures (1)

- The institutional culture stresses democracy and debate and values the voice of students and staff equally
- The university is located in an “**open**” **environment** that is not overly regulated and enjoys a high level of **public trust**
- The university is **self-confident** and does not limit itself to definitions of quality processes set by its national QA agency
- The quality system – even if it is defined centrally – **allows a degree of local adaptation** and therefore broad ownership.



Factors that promote effective quality cultures (2)

- The institutional leadership provides room for a grass-roots **approach to quality** (wide consultation and discussion) and to avoid the risk of **over-bureaucratisation keeping the QA system as simple as possible.**
- The definition of academic professional roles stresses **good teaching** rather than only academic expertise and research strength
- Quality assurance processes are grounded in **academic values**, while giving due attention to the **necessary administrative processes.**



Factors that promote effective quality cultures (3)

- It is essential to invest in people through **staff development** providing support services to administrative staff as well as to academics.
- Avoid internal quality assurance arrangements becoming punitive.
- There must be a mix of **several instruments** to ensure good intelligence. Not rely only to the student questionnaires.
- Subcultures must be aligned to the Organizational **Vision**.