

California State University, Stanislaus

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

PRINCIPLE 1

The primary purpose of assessment at California State University, Stanislaus is improving student learning.

This is accomplished by the use of assessment information to improve program structure, course content, and pedagogy. Assessment should be primarily formative in nature.

Formative assessment is often described as assessment *for* learning rather than assessment *of* learning and refers to all those activities undertaken by faculty that provide information used by faculty to modify teaching and learning activities.

PRINCIPLE 2

Assessment of student learning is based on goals reflected in the University's mission.

The faculty, given their curricular roles and responsibilities, have primary responsibility for the development, implementation, and ongoing use of academic assessment activities. Assessment is a process for educational improvement. The practice of assessment begins with a vision of the kinds of learning that faculty value most for students. The goals that faculty value determine what is selected for assessment as well as the assessment methods used.

PRINCIPLE 3

Assessment of student learning must have course and program significance.

Assessment strategies will be integrated into the curriculum and will be integral to the learning process. Faculty have primary responsibility for the development and maintenance of academic assessment activities and will identify the critical knowledge and skills that students need to master. Assessment activities are goal-oriented and involve comparing educational performance with the purposes and expectations of the faculty as expressed in program and course design. Assessment goals, objectives, and strategies should reflect the most important outcomes. Assessment processes are ongoing and open to modification and improvement.

PRINCIPLE 4

Assessment of student learning depends on clear and explicit learning goals.

Assessment is a continuous process aimed at understanding and improving curriculum, instruction, and services. It requires clearly defined objectives against which educational outcomes can be measured. Assessment goals at the course, program, or university level should be stated in terms that are clear and amenable to observation and measurement. Expectations are made explicit, appropriate criteria determined, information gathered and interpreted to determine how well performance matches those expectations and criteria. The resulting information is used to document and improve performance.

PRINCIPLE 5

Assessment involves a multi-method approach.

Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding that learning is a complex process. Assessment plans use multiple measures to assess student learning and multiple indicators of effectiveness reflecting the complexity of the goals of higher education. Assessment activities include a diverse array of methods and techniques, and faculty should choose those that are best suited to the program goals and student needs. In addition, faculty are encouraged to create innovative approaches to assessment that meet the needs of the students and programs.

PRINCIPLE 6

Assessment results will be used for decision making in planning and improvement processes.

Formative assessment involves using assessment information to feed back into the teaching/learning process. For assessment to function formatively, the results are used to adjust teaching, learning, and curriculum planning. To be effective, assessment results must be used appropriately to provide direction and guidance for improving curricula and related student experiences.

PRINCIPLE 7

The results of assessment activities will not be used for the evaluation of individual faculty.

Assessment activities are conducted solely for the purpose of program improvement. Distinguishing between faculty evaluation and the assessment of student learning is crucial to the success of any assessment program. Assessment is concerned with group level analysis rather than individual level analysis. Assessment must be understood as an evaluation of how the curriculum as a whole has affected student learning. Assessment data should be summarized to reflect programs, not to identify particular faculty.

Assessment data will not be used for individual faculty evaluation or as a part of personnel decisions. At the same time, faculty should know that their participation in assessment activities is valued when they are considered for retention, promotion, and tenure.

PRINCIPLE 8

Assessment data will not be used to make comparison across programs, departments, or colleges.

Assessment data will be used only for the facilitation of student, program, college, and university development, and are not intended for comparative judgments. Assessment data will be made available to those most closely involved in and responsible for the learning that is related to the data.

PRINCIPLE 9

Successful assessment requires University support.

Assessment works best when undertaken in an environment that is receptive and supportive. Development of sustainable assessment efforts by faculty and programs require additional faculty time and departmental resources. California State University, Stanislaus is committed to the development of an ongoing program of assessment and will provide the necessary resources for assessment activities, including professional development for faculty. Innovation, alterations, and activities undertaken by departments and programs as a result of the assessment process must be seriously considered in the allocation of resources.

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