

**Practical Best Practices: Choosing Assessment Methods That Are “Best” For Your Campus**

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## Practical Best Practices: Choosing Assessment Methods That Are “Best” For Your Campus

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SACS 2010 Annual Meeting  
 Louisville, Kentucky – December 6, 2010

## Overview of the Session

- Why Assessment?
  - SACS Standards Discussed
- Practical Best Practice Tips
- Three Institutional Case Studies/Approaches
- This Sounds Good...But What Can I Use on My Campus?
  - “Best” Assessment Methods by SACS Standard
- Conclusion
  - Words of Wisdom
- Questions/Comments

## Why Assessment?

- Assessment...
  - tells the story of an institution,
  - is an ongoing process,
  - is required by SACS and other agencies/entities,
  - is not going away, and
  - demonstrates the successes of the campus.

## What is 3.3.1?

**Comprehensive standard 3.3.1 addresses five institutional effectiveness areas:**

- 3.3.1.1 - Educational Programs
- 3.3.1.2 - Administrative Support
- 3.3.1.3 - Educational Support
- 3.3.1.4 - Research within Educational Mission
- 3.3.1.5 - Community/Public Service within Educational Mission

## SACS Guidance on 3.3.1

- The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas:
  - 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
  - 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
  - 3.3.1.3 educational support services
  - 3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate
  - 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

## Practical Best Practice Tips

- Bells and whistles are optional; simple systems work as well as fancy (and expensive) ones.
- A one-size-fits-all approach may not work.
- Focus on using available information (i.e., discipline specific accreditation, internal audits, efficiency reviews, changes to procedures/policies).

**Use What You've Got!**

### Practical Best Practice Tips

- Increase awareness of what assessment is – department/unit heads may not know what will suffice.
- Present assessment as an opportunity for departments to highlight their work and accomplishments.






### Practical Best Practice Tips

- Can't be a subject expert in all areas – collaboration with department/ unit heads may be necessary.
- This may be the first time some units have encountered formal assessment.






### Practical Best Practice Tips

- Programs with specific accrediting bodies generally have lots of information collected.
  - However, it may have a different emphasis, format, or tone.
- Programs which do not undergo accreditation may resort to more informal means of information collection.

### The Institutions

INSTITUTION	TYPE	LOCATION	ENROLLMENT	FULL-TIME FACULTY	FULL-TIME STAFF
Valdosta State University	Public, 4-Year Regional University	South Georgia	12,898	500 (80.3%)	725 (97.8%)
Macon State College	Public, 4-Year State College	Central Georgia	6,250	187 (64.7%)	241 (78.2%)
Gulf Coast Community College	Public, 2-Year Community College	North Florida	7,863	83 (26.9%)	288 (77.6%)

### Who are We and When is our SACS Visit?





INSTITUTION	TITLE	REPORTS TO	OFF-SITE	ON-SITE
Valdosta State University	Assistant to the President for Strategic Research & Analysis; SACS Liaison	President	Sept. 2009	April 2010
Macon State College	Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning	Vice President for Academic Affairs	Mar. 2012	Late 2012
Gulf Coast Community College	Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness; SACS Liaison	President	April 2010	Oct. 2010





### Chronological Steps - VSU

- Required Institutional Effectiveness Reports (IERS) and Plans (IEPs) from all departments.
  - Reports address completion of goals for the current year.
  - Plans address goals for the coming year.
- IERS were also needed for the previous three years.



### Chronological Steps - VSU

- Off-Site review requested additional information.
- Departments were given 3 months to revise, elaborate, and clarify reports and plans.
- Strategic Research & Analysis (SRA) reviewed the revised reports and plans.
- If additional revisions were necessary, they were sent back to the department representative. One-on-one meetings were necessary in select departments.

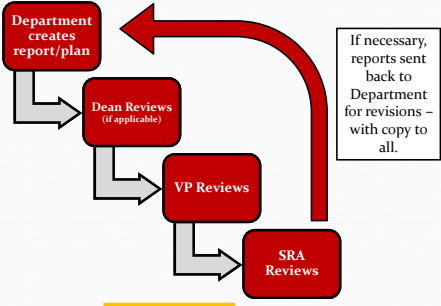




### Chronological Steps - VSU

- Most common areas for revision:
  - No clear connection of modifications to goals
  - Need elaboration on methods, measures, and data used
  - Need explanation of discipline-specific acronyms






### Process


### Chronological Steps - MSC

- Departments submitted annual reports for 2009 – 2010 by July 15, 2010.
- Revised assessment plan is being implemented fall 2010 with starting point being 2009 – 2010 annual reports.



### Chronological Steps - MSC

- IRP developed a check-list that includes all of the NEW items in the assessment process as a beginning point.
- Begin working with the Deans, Department Chairs, and Directors on information currently available.

### Chronological Steps - MSC

- Revised reports are scheduled to be submitted by December 15.
- Will review newly submitted reports and work with units to enhance areas of deficiencies.

### Chronological Steps - MSC


- Once reports are ready for final verification, will ask that the Dean/Director confirm their report with goals for the next year (2010 – 2011) provided.
- This report then becomes the basis for the 2010 – 2011 annual report with the goals already established.








### Chronological Steps - MSC

- Fall 2010 to Spring 2011:
  - In addition to modifying the existing annual report/assessment report, IRP is working with OTR (Office of Technology Resources) to develop electronic submission of annual assessment reports.



### Chronological Steps - MSC




- GOAL – fully functional electronic submission by October 2011.
- Long-term sustainability of assessment reporting and archive retrieval...not just for SACS.






### Chronological Steps - GCCC

- Required online submission of annual Unit Plans and annual Unit Reports of all departments.
  - Plans include unit objectives for the upcoming year tied to institutional Strategic Plan goals.
  - Reports detail performance on previous year objectives.
  - Institutional performance is tracked longitudinally, by department.

### Chronological Steps - GCCC





- Departments submit Unit Plans in summer.
- Reviewed by Cabinet-level supervisor.
- Reviewed by Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) for fidelity to the Strategic Plan and appropriateness of objectives/measures.
- Departments make requested revisions.
- Reviewed by OIE/Cabinet-level supervisor.
- Approved by the President.






### Chronological Steps - GCCC

- Common issues with Unit Plans include:
  - Not addressing institutional Priority Goals
  - Too much focus on operations activities/initiatives
  - Lack of objectives tied to SLOs
  - Inappropriate use of measures/data to identify success
  - Too few objectives
  - Too many objectives

### Chronological Steps - GCCC

- Plan Development Cycle
  - Department
  - Cabinet
  - OIE
  - Department
  - OIE/Cabinet
  - President

### Chronological Steps - GCCC

- Plan Development Cycle
  - Allows for comprehensive feedback
  - Departments work directly with Cabinet/OIE
  - Ensures fidelity to Strategic Plan and Priority Goals
  - Promotes a culture of reflective planning

***This sounds good....but what can I use on my campus?***

### Developing the List of Best Methods

- To create a practical starting point for the next assessment cycle, a list of the commonly used methods was created.
- This list was used to provide examples and guide discussions with departments.

### Developing the List of Best Methods

- Once the on-site review visit was complete, we realized the IERS could provide guidance for subsequent years.
- A secondary review of each IER was conducted by SRA to compile the assessment methods noted in the IERS into a single list.

### Developing the List of Best Methods

- In addition to the assessment method, the list includes:
  - SACS Program type (i.e., educational program, administrative support)
  - College/Unit reporting use of the method
  - Total number of occurrences of the method across the institution

### Developing the List of Best Methods

- 132 unique assessment methods were found.
- Checkmarks were placed to indicate which SACS program types used each method.
  - For example, if the Biology department indicated use of an exit exam, a check mark is placed in the Educational Programs column.

Assessment Item	Institutional Effectiveness Areas (as prescribed by SACS)				
	3.3.1.1 Educational Programs	3.3.1.2 Administrative Support Services	3.3.1.3 Educational Support Services	3.3.1.4 Research	3.3.1.5 Community/Public Service
Exit exam	✓				

### Developing the List of Best Methods

- Once all methods were compiled, a secondary review was conducted to determine which methods used by one program type may be applicable to others.
  - These potential methods are indicated with a "?".

Assessment Item	Institutional Effectiveness Areas (as prescribed by SACS)				
	3.3.1.1 Educational Programs	3.3.1.2 Administrative Support Services	3.3.1.3 Educational Support Services	3.3.1.4 Research	3.3.1.5 Community/Public Service
Feedback from students	✓	?	✓	?	?

### Developing the List of Best Methods

- To create a concise list of assessment methods most likely to be effective for departments, the methods were filtered by program type.
- This resulted in a list of the most common methods used for each of the five SACS assessment categories: educational programs, administrative support services, educational support services, research units, and public services.

### Most Common Overall Methods

Assessment Item	University-Wide Frequency	University-Wide Percentage	Assessment Item	University-Wide Frequency	University-Wide Percentage
Program exit survey	28	6.6%	Student evaluation via test (ex. pre/post-course test)	8	1.9%
Capstone portfolio review	24	5.6%	Defense of improved student learning through teaching	8	1.9%
Capstone project assessment/senior final presentations	24	5.6%	Participation in events/services offered	7	1.6%
Internship assessment	22	5.2%	Evaluation of teaching/counseling method/style	6	1.4%
Specialized discipline exam	22	5.2%	Teacher work sample assessment	6	1.4%
Exit exam	17	4.0%	A beginning-of-major and end-of-major test/taping comparison	5	1.2%
Completion of the COE Advanced Teacher Self-Assessment/Observation Instrument	15	3.5%	Survey of services offered	5	1.2%
Enrollment assessment	12	2.8%	Dispositions survey	5	1.2%
Employer survey assessment	9	2.1%	Oral presentation assessment	5	1.2%
Lesson plan assessment	9	2.1%	Program survey	5	1.2%
Student opinion of instruction assessment	9	2.1%	Successful creation and defense of dissertation	5	1.2%
Literature review assessment	8	1.9%			

See handout for detailed list

### What does this list tell us?

Assessment Item	University-Wide Frequency	University-Wide Percentage
Program exit survey	28	6.6%

↑  
Type of assessment used

↑  
Number of times used in reports

↑  
Percentage of times used in reports

### Most Common Methods used for 3.3.1.1.

Assessment Item	3.3.1.1 Educational Programs	College/Division	College/Division (if used by multiple)
Capstone portfolio review	✓	Multiple	College of Education, College of Arts and Sciences, College of the Arts
Program exit survey	✓	Multiple	College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education, No College/Other*, College of the Arts
Capstone project assessment/senior final presentations	✓	Multiple	College of Arts and Sciences, College of the Arts, College of Business Administration, College of the Arts
Internship assessment	✓	Multiple	College of Education, College of Arts and Sciences, College of the Arts, College of Business Administration
Pass specialized discipline exam	✓	Multiple	College of Education, College of the Arts, College of Arts and Sciences
Exit exam	✓	Multiple	College of Education, College of the Arts, College of Arts and Sciences, No College/Other*
Completion of the COE Advanced Teacher Self-Assessment/Observation Instrument	✓	College of Education	
Enrollment assessment	✓	Multiple	College of Education, College of the Arts, No College/Other*, Unilateral**
Employer survey assessment	✓	College of Education	
Lesson plan assessment	✓	Multiple	College of Education, College of the Arts

See handout for detailed list

### What does this list tell us?

Assessment Item	3.3.1.1 Educational Programs	College/ Division	College/ Division (if used by multiple)
Capstone portfolio review	✓	Multiple	College of Education, College of Arts and Sciences, College of the Arts

↑ Type of assessment used      ↑ Used for 3.3.1.1?      ↑ Number of Colleges using method      ↑ List of Colleges using method

### Distribution of Methods Used

- From the 132 assessment methods indicated, results were distributed across program types as shown below.

### Distribution of Methods Used

- Results were distributed across colleges and divisions as shown below.

### Words of Wisdom

- 100% compliance *is possible*
- Although departments may say they have limited assessment evidence, they typically have something. The right questions (and many of them) need to be asked.

### Words of Wisdom

- It's never too late...even to retrieve information about past years.
- Keep it simple – complexity creates unnecessary opportunities for mistakes.
- Take the time to provide tailored examples and feedback.

### Words of Wisdom

- Develop a network of trusted colleagues at other institutions as a resource.
- Put yourself in “their” shoes...help them to help you.
- Focus on continuous improvement – don't focus on “preparation for SACS” – assessment culture evolves.

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### Words of Wisdom


- Flexibility is key to the success of new processes.
- Avoid unnecessary standardization.
- Instructors already do this; help them to use classroom assessment activities to communicate effectiveness.




### Words of Wisdom


- Most books are discipline or general education specific.
- With a \$150 book budget, consider buying:
  1. Revisiting Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education
  2. Planning and Assessment in Higher Education
  3. A Road Map for Improvement ...
  4. Assessment Clear and Simple

*A selected list of assessment books is available on the last slides of this presentation.*




### Selected Assessment Books

- Allen, M. J. (2004). *Assessing academic program in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Allen, M. J. (2006). *Assessing general education programs*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.
- Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- *Assessing student competence in accredited disciplines: Pioneering approaches to assessment in higher education*. (2001). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Astin, A. W. (1991). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. Westport, CT: The Oryx Press.
- Banta, T. W., Jones, E. A., & Black, K. E. (2009). *Designing effective assessment: Principles and profiles of good practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Banta, T. W., Lund, J. P., Black, K. E., & Oblander, F. W. (1996). *Assessment in practice: Putting principles to work on college campuses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.
- Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (Eds.). (2007). *Rethinking assessment in higher education: Learning for the longer term*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Boudett, K. P., & Murnane, R. J. (Eds.). (2008). *Data wise: A step-by-step to using assessment results to improve teaching and learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Bresciani, D. M., Zelna, D. C., & Anderson, D. J. (2004). *Assessing student learning and development: A handbook for practitioners*.




### Selected Assessment Books

- Bryan, C., & Clegg, K. (Eds.). (2006). *Innovative assessment in higher education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Driscoll, A., & de Noriega, D. C. (Eds.). (2006). *Taking ownership of accreditation: Assessment processes that promote institutional improvement and faculty engagement*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Fetterman, D. M., Kalfarian, S. J., & Wandersman, A. (Eds.). (1996). *Empowerment evaluation: Knowledge and tools for self-assessment & accountability*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Heron, P., Dugan, R. E., & Schwartz, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Revisiting outcomes assessment in higher education*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Keeling, R. P., Wall, A. F., Underhille, R., & Dungey, G. J. (2008). *Assessment reconsidered: Institutional effectiveness for student success*.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2005). *Assessing conditions to enhance educational effectiveness: The inventory for student engagement and success*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Middaugh, M. F. (2010). *Planning and assessment in higher education: Demonstrating institutional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, B. A. (2007). *Assessing organizational performance in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nichols, J. O., & Nichols, K. W. (2005). *A road map for improvement of student learning and support services through assessment*. Flemington, NJ: Agathon.



### Selected Assessment Books


- Palomba, C. A., & Banta, T. W. (1999). *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schuh, J. H., Uprcraft, M. L., & Associates, &. (2001). *Assessment practice in student affairs: An applications manual*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sherlock, B. J. (Ed.). (2009). *Integrating planning, assessment, and improvement in higher education*. Washington D. C.: NACUBO.
- Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2005). *Introduction to Rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback and promote student learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Walvoord, B. E. (2004). *Assessment clear and simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments, and general education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Walvoord, B. E., & Anderson, V. J. (1998). *Effective grading: A tool for learning and assessment*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



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Assessment Item	3.3.1.1 Ed. Prgrms	3.3.1.2 Admin. Supp.	3.3.1.3 Ed. Supp.	3.3.1.4 Rsch	3.3.1.5 Comm./ Pub. Serv.
Program exit survey	✓				
Capstone portfolio review	✓				
Capstone project assessment/senior final presentations	✓				
Internship assessment	✓				
Pass specialized discipline exam	✓				
Exit exam	✓				
Completion of the COE Advanced Teacher Self-Assessment/Observation Instrument	✓				
Enrollment assessment	✓	✓	?	?	✓
Employer survey assessment	✓				
Lesson plan assessment	✓				
Student opinion of instruction assessment	✓		✓		✓
Literature review assessment	✓				
Student evaluation via test (ex. pre/post-course test)	✓		✓		
Students' successful defense of improved student learning through teaching	✓				
Track participation in events/services offered		?	✓		✓
Evaluate teaching/counseling method/style	✓				
Teacher work sample assessment	✓				
Adminster survey on services offered		?	✓	?	?
A beginning-of-major and end-of-major test/taping comparison	✓				
Dispositions survey	✓				
Oral presentation assessment	✓		✓		
Program survey	✓	?	?		?
Successful creation and defense of dissertation	✓				
Feedback from students	✓	?	✓	?	?
Focus groups for program evaluation	✓	✓	✓	?	?
Research project	✓				
Student self-evaluated teaching method/style	✓				
Amount of money raised/donations		✓	?	?	✓
Assessment of the impact of services offered on users	?	?	✓	?	✓
Applied music jury examinations	✓				
Board of certification/licensure exam results	✓				
Capstone completion/evaluation	✓				
Coursework assessment	✓				
Embedded questions in test	✓				
Graduate/alumni survey assessment	✓	✓	✓	?	
Internal review and assessment of published products	✓	✓	?	?	?
Junior year assessment meetings with faculty	✓				
Mid-curriculum content assessment	✓				
Senior program assessments	✓				
Review and update/create publications	?	✓	✓	?	✓

Assessment Item	3.3.1.1 Ed. Prgrms	3.3.1.2 Admin. Supp.	3.3.1.3 Ed. Supp.	3.3.1.4 Rsch	3.3.1.5 Comm./ Pub. Serv.
Satisfaction survey	?	✓	✓	?	✓
Customer workshop survey		✓	✓		
Detail work completed and hours spent on tasks	?	✓	?	?	?
Increase efficiency on processing/ reporting	?	✓	?		
Informal communication with users on improvement needs	?	?	✓	?	?
Alumni success	✓				
Committee meetings to discuss possible reconfiguring/reassessment of program	✓	?	?	?	?
Course portfolio assessment	✓		✓		
Faculty opinion survey	✓	?	?	?	?
Project/presentation assessment	✓				
Standardized test assessment	✓				
Student self-assessment	✓				
Review need for new programs	?	✓	?		✓
Track card swipes to better understand users			✓		
Training evaluations assessment		?	✓	✓	
Amount of campus-wide printing report		✓			
Analysis of improved training to personnel/staff	?	✓	?	?	?
Annual review of fire drills procedures		✓			
Applications assessment	?	✓	?		?
Archival report assessment			✓		
Assess need for upgraded software	?	✓	?	?	?
Assess number of conference attendees		?			✓
Assess number of training services offered		?	?		✓
Assessment of placement tests such as TOEFL			✓		
Audition concert with survey evaluation	?				✓
Campus Tour Survey assessment		✓			
Career fair evaluations			✓		
Client survey		✓	?	?	?
Coordinate and discuss ways to improve current protocol		?	?	✓	?
Course Management Usage Report analysis	?	?	✓	?	
Creative project assessment			✓		
Daily statistical assessment		✓	?		?
Determine effect of program on participants	?	?	?		✓
Determine location of low frequency users		?	?		✓
Determine number of hours spent by function/task					✓
Determine total income from performances and coinciding attendance					✓
Evaluation of the orientation programs	?	?	?	✓	
GA-REAP is offered to the public for free				✓	
Grant recipient survey		?		✓	
Increase publications	?	✓	?	?	?
Increase sales		✓			?

Assessment Item	3.3.1.1 Ed. Prgrms	3.3.1.2 Admin. Supp.	3.3.1.3 Ed. Supp.	3.3.1.4 Rsch	3.3.1.5 Comm./ Pub. Serv.
Increase the number of services offered due to demand		?	✓		?
Increase the number of student opinion of instruction survey usage in online format instead of paper format		✓			
Assessment of career plan outline	✓				
Assessment of research conducted	✓				
Assessment of students' ability to plan for required professional responsibilities	✓				
Assessment of students' development of professional skills and ethics	✓				
Assessment of survey administered to all students currently enrolled/majoring in program	✓	?	?		
Comparison of program/department to other schools in system (curriculum, efficiency, etc.)	✓	?	?	?	?
Network and reduced productivity report		✓			
Comparisons of transcript audit results with accreditation curriculum requirements	✓				
Number of services offered		✓	?	?	?
Number of support group participants			?		✓
Complete a written budget	✓				
Completion of a portfolio assessing student learning improvement and achievement	✓				
Core curriculum completion with a "B" or better	✓				
Participation by all members				✓	
Development of interdisciplinary writing unit	✓				
Pre- and post-first year survey to better understand changes in customer needs	?	?	✓	?	?
Diagnosis and Correction of Reading Difficulties Study results assessment	✓				
Faculty course evaluations	✓				
Foundation of Literary Handbook assessment	✓				
Interviews with students on program	✓	?	?		?
Leadership activity assessment	✓				
Provide new training to personnel/staff		✓	?	?	?
Quarterly publications	?	?	?	✓	?
Quizzes and other written assignments assessment			✓		
Literacy coaching	✓				
Reduce error by using new software	?	✓	?	?	?
Literature unit assessment	✓				
LiveText electronic portfolio assessment	✓				
Major field test	✓				
Review work log to ensure efficient use of staff/personnel time		✓	?	?	?
Mid-term test and final exam grade comparison	✓				
New course offerings	✓				



Assessment Item	3.3.1.1 Ed. Prgrms	3.3.1.2 Admin. Supp.	3.3.1.3 Ed. Supp.	3.3.1.4 Rsch	3.3.1.5 Comm./ Pub. Serv.
Observation of an administration of tests and therapy sessions in the area of speech-language pathology in a laboratory experience with passing results for the student	✓				
Oral senior exit exam	✓				
Program assessment rubric	✓				
Program objective assessment of completion portfolio	✓				
Rating scales on senior exhibition, artist's statements	✓				
Regent's Exam data	✓				
Research proposal	✓				
Successful completion of annual fire drills		✓	?		
Simulated licensure exam pass rates	✓				
Survey of members to determine new topics to include in orientation		?	?	✓	
Student Learning Plan assessment	✓				
Tests embedded in coursework to determine performance of program compared to other similar programs	✓				
Track roster sheets and beginning of season and at each game			✓		
Track visitor log in and who staff contacts		?	✓	?	
Training sessions attendance		?	✓	?	?
Tutoring survey results assessment	?		✓		
Website usability survey		?	✓	?	?

✓ = Assessment method used for specified standard in 2005-2010 Institutional Effectiveness Reports and/or Plans by a department/unit.

? = Assessment method could be used for specified standard in Institutional Effectiveness Reports and/or Plans by a department/unit.