

Assessment

1. Assessment involves the use of empirical data on student learning to refine programs and improve student learning. (Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education by Allen 2004)
2. Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. (Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: shifting the focus from teaching to learning by Huba and Freed 2000)
3. Assessment is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. It is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using information to increase students' learning and development. (Assessing Student Learning and Development: A Guide to the Principles, Goals, and Methods of Determining College Outcomes by Erwin 1991)
4. Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. (Assessment Essentials: planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education by Palomba and Banta 1999)

Assessment is subdivided into many phases as follows

Phase 1: Plan

The purpose of the planning phase is to design and prepare for the assessment. Conducting an assessment is typically the first stage of a larger effort to engage the private sector and raise awareness about its potential contribution to advancing national health goals. As such, the **planning** phase is the first opportunity to reach out to stakeholders and build relationships. Your goal should be to get a sense of the key actors and local dynamics, begin to make connections, and identify ways to build support for the **action** phase.

Phase 2: Learn

The learning phase—*especially the fieldwork step*—is the cornerstone of the assessment process. Building on a comprehensive desk review, supported by secondary data analysis, the team synthesizes available information to further refine the approach and focus of in-country data collection. Fieldwork consists of interviews with local stakeholders, and site visits to address information gaps and gather insights and perceptions from multiple perspectives on the role of the private health sector. Before leaving the country, the team typically debriefs key stakeholders, sharing preliminary findings and recommendations.

Information gathered in this phase should answer these questions:

- What are pressing public health concerns in the country? How does the open source softwares contribute to development in IT?
- Who comprises the private IT sector? What services do they provide and to whom?
- What strategic IT areas can and should the private sector expand into?
- What are the main barriers to private sector expansion?

Phase 3: Analyze

A private sector assessment is an analytic endeavor, examining quantitative and qualitative data to increase knowledge about the private health sector. In the analytic phase, the team organizes and examines the information amassed, to develop a clear understanding of the role of the private health sector. Following this step, the team undertakes further analysis to identify key issues, constraints, and potential solutions. The findings inform recommendations that balance opportunities with the realities of context, available funding and political will. The steps in this phase culminate in a draft report, which undergoes a quality assurance review before becoming the “master draft” that is sent to external reviewers and local stakeholders for validation and feedback.

Phase 4: Share

During the sharing phase, the team draws on external reviewers to strengthen and finalize the assessment report. The team may also seek input from local stakeholders to ensure the validity of the findings and recommendations. Increasingly this has been accomplished through in-country consultations with a cross-section of stakeholders that participated in the assessment. After feedback has been received and changes incorporated, the report is published—ideally shared (electronically) with all stakeholders and made available on a website. All notes and documents related to the assessment are archived for easy retrieval.

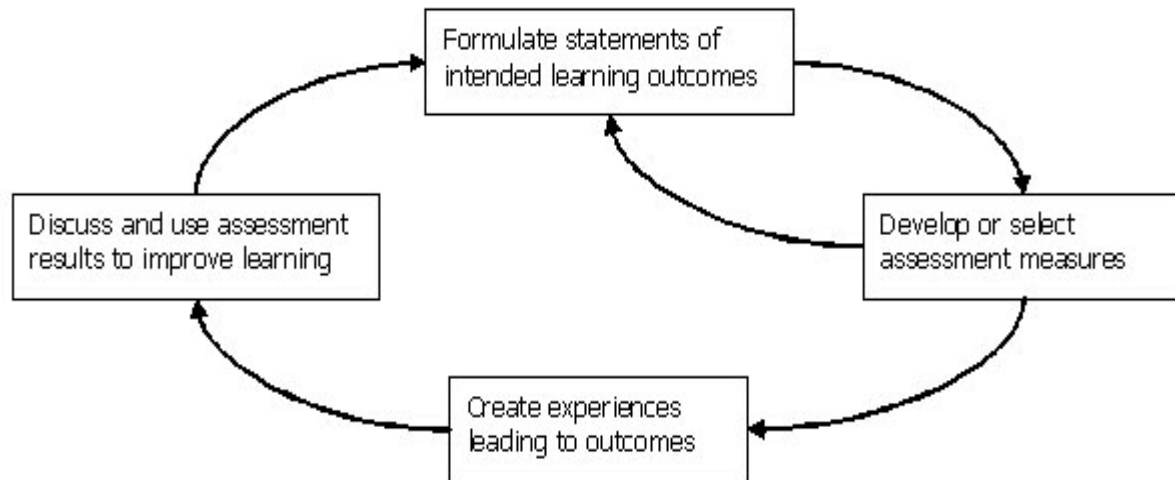
Phase 5: Act

The purpose of the action phase is to put the assessment’s findings and recommendations into practice. At a minimum, this may mean encouraging local actors to follow through on plans discussed at the in-country validation meeting. For assessments conducted with the goal of informing a broader health initiative, this phase will include program design and laying the groundwork for implementation.

The action phase has three main steps, each shaped by assessment findings and recommendations, donor goals and available resources, and local stakeholder capacity. Unlike other phases in the assessment process, these are sometimes iterative, rather than sequential.

Fundamental Components of Assessment

Four fundamental elements of learner-centered assessment:



1. Formulating Statements of Intended Learning Outcomes - statements describing intentions about what students should know, understand, and be able to do with their knowledge when they graduate.
2. Developing or Selecting Assessment Measures - designing or selecting data gathering measures to assess whether or not our intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Includes
 1. Direct assessments - projects, products, papers/theses, exhibitions, performances, case studies, clinical evaluations, portfolios, interviews, and oral exams - which ask students to demonstrate what they know or can do with their knowledge.
 2. Indirect assessments - self-report measures such as surveys - in which respondents share their perceptions about what graduates know or can do with their knowledge.
3. Creating Experiences Leading to Outcomes - ensuring that students have experiences both in and outside their courses that help them achieve the intended learning outcomes.
4. Discussing and Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning - using the results to improve individual student performance.

(Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: shifting the focus from teaching to learning by Huba and Freed 2000)

The Assessment Cycle

Westminster has translated these fundamental components into an assessment cycle that includes four stages: Plan-Do-Check-Act.

- **Plan - What do I want students to learn?**
This stage includes the first fundamental component of assessment: Formulating Statements of Intended Learning Outcomes

- **Do - How do I teach effectively?**

This stage includes the second and third fundamental components: Developing or Selecting Assessment Measures & Creating Experiences Leading to Outcomes.

- **Check - Are my outcomes being met?**

This stage involves evaluation of assessment data (part of the fourth component).

- **Act - How do I use what I've learned?**

This stage involves reinforcing successful practices and making revisions to enhance student learning (part of the fourth component).