



## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Why do we assess student learning?*

There is considerable evidence that assessment drives student learning. Most importantly, our assessment tools tell our students what we consider to be important and make clear our expectations of what the student will do to be successful in the course or program. They will learn what we guide them to learn through assessment. By using appropriate assessment techniques, we can encourage our students to raise the bar. Think of assessment for learning as the “learning process” where our students and we received significant feedback to improve learning. It’s not always assessment, but the changes it can lead to, that is/are important. Change and innovation take courage; but they are also at the heart of the teaching profession!

### *How does assessment help faculty?*

Assessment provides instructors with useful information about their students, including the quality of learning and readiness for learning. Ongoing assessment informs the instructor about the pace and progress of student learning in the classroom.

### *Is assessment something extra that faculty have to do?*

No, it’s not extra; in fact, you’re already assessing! A large part of the time faculty devote to assessment outside of the classroom will be spent at intra- and inter-disciplinary discussions/workshops regarding what is most important for students to learn and what, if any, improvements should be made.

### *Do results of assessment affect faculty evaluation?*

No. Student learning assessment is about the effectiveness of programs/courses, not individuals.

### *How can assessment improve student learning?*

There are many ways that assessment can assist with the improvement of student learning; it is not assessment itself but how faculty, staff and institutional leaders use it that leads to improvements in student learning.

### *What is the difference between assessment and evaluation?*

Assessment is the analysis and use of data by students, faculty and/or departments to make decisions about improvements in teaching and learning. Evaluation is the analysis and use of data by faculty to make judgments about student performance. Evaluation includes the determination of a grade or a decision regarding pass/fail for an individual assignment or course. Assessment, on the other hand, focuses on a group of students (e.g. cohort) and their mastery of predetermined outcomes. For this reason, student grades are not sufficient for assessment data.

***How do faculty identify student learning outcomes for a particular program/course?***

Some learning outcomes may be mandated by outside agencies or advisory boards for certain programs. Others are identified through discussion among faculty who have tried to answer the question: “What knowledge or skills do we expect our students to demonstrate upon graduation or course completion?” Learning outcomes inform our decisions regarding curriculum, teaching and assessment.

***What is a program objective?***

Think about what students will need to be able to DO after graduation as a result of your program or course. When developing your program objectives, encompass several levers of learning through the learning sequence of the program. One program outcome may encompass more than one course. Look at the big picture, not tiny details of skills that could be checked off.

***Where can faculty get help with assessment plans?***

The members of the University Assessment Committee (UAC) are here to help. There are a number of individual members of the UAC who, through reading, attending conferences and hands-on experience, have gained expertise with assessment of student learning. In addition, the Director of Academic Assessment is always available for individual/group consultation regarding plan development. A list of current UAC members can be found through the Academic Assessment course in Blackboard.

***Does assessment affect my academic freedom?***

There is nothing inherent about assessment that infringes on the faculty member’s academic freedom. Assessment is about faculty determining whether or not students are learning and then using the information to inform change in the classroom. The process for assessing student learning at the University of New Haven does not standardize how faculty deliver course content or how they grade students.