

Andrews University Philosophy of Assessment

Andrews University believes that assessment is an integral part of good educational practice. Assessment occurs at admission, in the classroom, in departments, in schools, and at the administrative level. Routine assessments are made of faculty and staff effectiveness, and quality of services offered across the university. Assessment is also conducted within non-academic programming and residence halls.

The ultimate goal of assessment at Andrews University is the improvement of student learning. This includes not only competence and skills in one's field, but also goals relating to spiritual and ethical development, service, and the ability to work with people of diverse backgrounds. Results from a well thought-out assessment plan provide evidence of how well students are learning what is expected of them. They also identify areas where students may not have learned as well as intended. This information provides a starting place for useful discussions among faculty to inform teaching and improve learning. Assessment results also assist administrators as they develop strategies and policies to help ensure an institutional culture and environment that facilitates improvement and change.

Effective assessment is cyclical in nature. Assessment of student learning is an ongoing process of:

- Establishing clear, measurable, expected outcomes
- Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes
- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches . . . expectations
- Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning (Suskie, 2009, p. 4)

Effective assessment utilizes a variety of methods. These methods may be quantitative or qualitative, direct or indirect, objective or subjective, embedded within courses or add-on assessments, and may be formative or summative. There is a place for standardized tests and for the informed professional judgment of faculty.

Assessment at Andrews is integrated across all levels. Assessment in courses includes routine measures such as assignments, quizzes, and tests. The aggregation and examination of these measures provides comprehensive information about students' progress towards mastery of key points of instruction. At the program level, assessments indicate not only students' mastery of knowledge and skills learned in courses, but also the ability to apply what they've learned to the broader context. Program assessment, the assessment of co-curricular programs and campus environment, and university-wide assessments, such as major field tests and student

surveys, inform the institution how well it is achieving its mission that students will Seek Knowledge, Affirm Faith, and be prepared to Change the World.

Andrews University believes that assessment information should be shared at several levels. Student learning outcomes are shared with students in course outlines, program handbooks, and in program descriptions in the bulletin. Assessment results are shared with program faculty to facilitate discussions on program improvement. Program goals, outcomes, and results are evaluated during regular program reviews by external reviewers. Assessment results that span entire schools are shared with school faculty, who discuss what improvements may be needed. Institutional assessments are shared in committees, general faculty meetings, and board meetings, as well as electronically with all faculty. Through an electronic recording system, all assessment information is available for review by the Office of Institutional Assessment, the deans, the provost, and our external accreditors. Highlights of assessment results and improvement initiatives are shared on the university's assessment website, and more details are available on request.

At Andrews University, the systematic collection and analysis of data on student learning in order to improve the instructional experience is part of our routine practice. Andrews believes that assessment is an important part of good teaching and learning. Assessment results substantiate the quality of an Andrews education so that students, parents, employers, and other stakeholders can feel assured that their investment in the institution is of value.

Bibliography

Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing student learning* (2nd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Walvoord, B. E. (2004). *Assessment clear and simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments, and general education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.