

**UCSC Symposium on Assessment
November 2015**

Survey of symposium participants about criteria-based assessment

At the conclusion of Session 3, we conducted a brief survey about participants' experiences with and interest in criteria-based assessment, course learning outcomes, and Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment. Graduate students, faculty, and staff from five UC campuses participated in the survey (n=24). This survey included open-ended questions about the usefulness and impact of using rubrics with explicit criteria. In addition, respondents were asked about existing opportunities at their campus for graduate students to learn about and engage in criteria-based assessment.

- The majority (77%) of respondents who have taught or TAed a course have used criteria-based assessment to evaluate student work.
- The majority (82%) of respondents who have taught or TAed a course have included learning outcomes on their course materials.
- About half of all survey respondents (54%) and the vast majority of faculty (89%) have participated in Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) Assessment.
- Graduate students (100%) and faculty (89%) expressed widespread interest in participating in faculty-led committees or groups that work on PLO Assessment.

Experience with Criteria-based Assessment and Learning Outcomes

The majority (77%) of respondents who have taught or TAed a course have used criteria-based assessment to evaluate student work, and 82% have included learning outcomes on their course materials. These graduate students, faculty, and staff find criteria-based assessment and learning outcomes useful to their work in a variety of ways.

Respondents described criteria-based assessments as useful to students for establishing clear expectations of their performance, and outlining the steps needed to achieve their desired grade. In addition to linking instructor standards to student outcomes, criteria-based assessments helped students identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, this promoted better understanding of their course grades.

Criteria-based assessments were useful to instructors as well: they allowed instructors to identify, clarify, and articulate their own expectations, and established an explicit shared vocabulary with the students. Instructors were able to better assess gaps in students' learning, and thus customize assignments and design effective review materials to meet students' individual needs. Moreover, respondents found that through providing meaningful feedback that was aligned with instructors' specific teaching and learning goals, criteria-based assessments made the grading process more effective.

According to survey respondents, learning outcomes were influential in multiple facets of teaching. Learning outcomes were instrumental in planning broader course goals and developing syllabi, as well as for designing daily activities and assignments. Instructors used learning outcomes to clarify their objectives for themselves as well as their students. In this way, learning outcomes served as focal points throughout the academic term for instructors and students alike: using learning outcomes, instructors stayed on track with their goals, and students successfully targeted key areas to study.

Program Learning Outcomes Assessment Opportunities

The majority of faculty (89%) in this sample have participated in the PLO process. Several of these faculty serve as coordinators, facilitators, consultants, coaches, and analysts for PLO Assessment.

Opportunities for graduate students to learn about and engage in these assessment processes varied widely based on UC campus. Respondents from UC Merced, UC Davis, and UC San Diego emphasized more formal resources, such as on-campus teaching and learning centers (e.g., UC Merced Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning, UC Davis Center for Educational Effectiveness, UCSD Center for Engaged Teaching) that provide workshops, courses, seminars, TA orientations, and need-based consultations to graduate students. In contrast, respondents from UC Santa Cruz and UC Berkeley described more informal resources, such as conversations with instructors, pedagogy-centered courses, course-specific TA training, summer courses, and GSI resource centers. Some respondents from UC Santa Cruz voiced the need for more consistent implementation and focus on criteria-based assessment.

Graduate students (100%) and faculty (89%) alike expressed widespread interest in participating in faculty-led committees or groups that work on PLO Assessment through designing and revising rubrics, evaluating student work, analyzing data, discussing results, and developing action plans.