**Subject:** DSAAAC Agenda Aug. 24  
**Date:** Tue, 21 Aug 2001 13:15:57 +0000  
**From:** Jeanne Canham <jeanne.canham@cgcmail.maricopa.edu>  
**Organization:** Chandler-Gilbert Community College  
**To:** DL-SLOOUTCOMES <dl-slooutcomes@memo.maricopa.edu>  

Agenda for District Student Academic Assessment Achievement Committee  
(DSAAAC), Friday, August 24, 2001  
District Office, 4th Floor, Baird room  2:00-3:30pm

**Agenda**

1. **Introductions**
2. **Determine Meeting Dates, see below**
   (I have a conflict with Sept. 21 and Oct. 19)
3. **Report on summer workshops or conferences**
4. **Revisit/Revise/Review the Goals of this committee**
   - discuss the two Articles for MCLI's newsletter "Forum"  
   - review the history of the Governing Board monitoring reports and  
   - determine the format for this year's report which  
     is due in February of 2002  
5. **Ideas for this year**:
   - continue an ongoing dialogue among our colleges of the challenges  
     we face in the practical implementation of assessment, (as well as  
     sharing the successes)
   - begin a dialogue of learning with our own consultant evaluators on  
     tips for the NCA/THLC self study
   - begin an ongoing dialogue of learning among our colleges, with  
     informal sharing from those who have just completed or are in the middle  
     of self studies (secrets to success). What are you finding in terms of  
     progress reports, issues, institutional electronic portfolios, or  
     questions, and any tips that would help.
   - announce and promote attendance at events such as the upcoming  
     Richard Paul Workshop on Critical Thinking, Oct. 4-5
   - ask our DI rep, Bryan Tippett to ask the DI Council for  
     suggestions on topics to address this year in assessment

**Meeting Dates 2001-2002** Generally the third or fourth Friday of the  
month, 2:00-3:30pm.

August 24  
September 21  
October 19  
November 16  
January 25  
February 22  
March 22  
April 19

Jeanne Canham
DSAAAC Members 2001-2002

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Andrea Greene</td>
<td>MCC</td>
<td>Research Office</td>
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<td>Brent Jameson</td>
<td>PC</td>
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<td>Bryan Tippett</td>
<td>EMCC</td>
<td>Dean of Instruction (Nora Martin, assistant)</td>
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<td>(Clay Goodman, Assoc. Dean)</td>
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<td>Gail Snyder</td>
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<td>Georgia Gudykunst DO</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Director of IE and OA</td>
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<td>Jeanne Canham</td>
<td>CGCC</td>
<td>Faculty, Chair</td>
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<td>Jeffrey Andelora</td>
<td>MCC</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
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<td>Jerome Garrison</td>
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<td>John Frasure</td>
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<td>Laura Helmsinski</td>
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<td>Maria Harper Marinick</td>
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<td>Mark Gooding</td>
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<td>Rick Vaughn</td>
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<td>Sue Kater</td>
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<td>Tom Tollen</td>
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Glendale's representative will be elected Sept. 7th to replace David Raffaelle.
Membership and Goals of DSAAAC
District Student Academic Achievement Assessment Committee

Membership of the Committee:
- chairs of each college's outcomes assessment committee, or co-chairs or
designee (could be a research person, but primarily faculty)
-District Director of Institutional Effectiveness
-representative from the Deans of Instruction
-representative from MCLI
-no limit to the number of people per campus who want to participate on the
committee

Decision-making structure:
-decisions by consensus (if ever need a vote, one vote per campus)
(the Director of IE, the Dean's rep and the MCLI rep are non-voting members)

Goals of the Committee:
-to support the individual assessment efforts at each college
-to provide the Governing Board with a picture of the individual assessment efforts of each college
-to create and maintain an awareness and understanding of assessment across the district

Means to attain the Goals
- hold a district wide annual Faculty Forum on assessment
- publish articles on assessment in "The Forum"
- coordinate with MCLI
- share "best practices" with each other across the district
Subject: February Report  
Date: Wed, 22 Aug 2001 15:31:04 -0700  
From: Teresa Toney <teresa.toney@domail.maricopa.edu>  
Organization: Maricopa Community Colleges  
To: Jeanne Canham <jeanne.canham@cgcmail.maricopa.edu>  
CC: Georgia Gudykunst <georgia.gudykunst@domail.maricopa.edu>

Jeanne -- at the meeting today of the strategic planning team, we discussed keeping the student competencies report for February 2002, and November 2003 would be the time that the next report would be due.

We are seeking to have all goals reported at the same time.

Let me know if you should have any further questions.

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Statement of the Governing Board Goal for General Education and Transfer

Students will demonstrate post-secondary competencies in communication (writing, speaking, listening), reading, the humanities, science, critical thinking, problem solving, computer and information literacy and mathematics.

Measures:*  
Multiple measures of student achievement of general education outcomes are developed and administered by college faculty and compiled and inventoried by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness in cooperation with the District Student Academic Achievement Assessment Committee (DSAAAC) and the Deans of Instruction.  
(A report will be made at the February 2002 Governing Board meeting.)

*Each college has individual evaluation parameters set by its own environment and faculty members. Therefore, the means and conditions used to document this goal will be applied relative to the Student Outcomes and Evaluation plans established by each college.
Five Theme Tracks

The Assessment Conference will feature interactive sessions, presentation-based sessions, panel discussions and debates, roundtables, posters, and workshops focused on any one of five tracks that relate to the 2001 conference theme:

1. The processes institutions engage in to identify expectations for student learning and development both within the classroom and within the cocurriculum at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
2. Qualitative and quantitative methods used to assess student learning and development, interpretations of students' achievement, and improvements made or proposed as a result of these interpretations.
3. Models of collaboration that institutions have developed to assess student outcomes, such as collaborations among faculty, between faculty and student services staff or library staff, between institutions, or between faculty from similar kinds of institutions.
4. Advancements in technology that assess student learning and development or that facilitate the collection and interpretation of assessment data.
5. Expectations and contributions of accrediting bodies to assessment.

Sessions will consider some of the following questions:

1. Articulation of Expectations
   - What outcomes and levels of achievement does your institution expect of its students as a result of its general-education or core curriculum and related educational experiences inside and outside of the classroom?
   - How and by whom are those expectations articulated -- through on-campus interdisciplinary bodies? by outside agencies such as professional organizations? by national organizations?
   - What outcomes and levels of achievement does your institution expect of its students through a major program of study? through a graduate program? How are these expectations articulated?
   - How have outside agencies such as accreditors, boards of higher education, and professional organizations shaped institutional efforts to assess student learning and development?

2. Quantitative/Qualitative Methods
   - What method or methods are you using inside and outside of the classroom to assess student learning and development?
   - How have you experimented with and assessed different pedagogies or methods of delivery to better understand how well students learn or develop your desired outcomes?
   - Who is responsible for overseeing assessment and interpreting the results? How are results reported, and what channels ensure that desired changes are implemented and further assessed?
   - What is the fit between expectations and actual student achievement? What do the results validate? What do they point up as concerns?
   - When actual student performance has not matched your institution's expectations, what changes have you made or will you make to improve teaching/learning or to stimulate other kinds of changes at the institution?

3. Models of Collaboration
   - What forms of collaboration are you using to assess student outcomes? For example, collaboration between faculty and student affairs staff or library staff; collaboration among or between institutions.
   - How was this collaboration designed, and for what purpose? What barriers exist that limit collaborative approaches to assessment?
   - What expectations did you articulate for student performance under this collaborative model, and how did results of this collaborative approach match your expectations?
   - How does collaboration contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of student learning and development?

4. Technological Advancements
   - What technologies are you currently using or experimenting with either to assess student learning and development or to collect information about student achievement?
   - How have those technologies facilitated collection of information from different sources?
   - How have they contributed to a richer interpretation of student learning and development?
   - How have developments in technology contributed to your institution's commitment to assessment?
   - How have they enabled you to demonstrate your institution's accountability to regional and specialized accrediting agencies, your board of trustees, state boards, or other constituencies both within and outside of your institution?

5. Accreditors' Expectations for and Contributions to Assessment
   - What are regional and specialized accreditors' expectations for student outcomes assessment?
   - What assessment models or options are accreditors developing to assist or guide institutions?
   - Is accreditation the sole driver of assessment, or are institutions seeing value in the commitment?

http://www.aaehe.org/assessment/2001/5theme.htm
Written Surveys/Questionnaires

Definition: Asking individuals to share their perceptions about the study target—e.g., their own or others skills/attitudes/behavior, or program/course qualities and attributes.

Advantages:
- Typically yield the perspective that students, alumni, the public, etc., have of the institution that may lead to changes especially beneficial to relationships with these groups.
- Can cover a broad range of attributes within a brief period of time.
- Results ten to be more easily understood by lay persons.
- Can cover areas of development, which might be difficult or costly to assess more directly.
- Can provide accessibility to individuals who otherwise would be difficult to include in assessment efforts (e.g., alumni, parents, employers).

When ‘third-parties’ are completing the survey/questionnaire there are additional advantages, as follows:
- Can provide unique stakeholder input, valuable in its own right (especially employers and parents). How is the course/program/college serving their purposes?
- Offer different perspectives, presumably less biased than either student or assessor.
- Enable recognition and contact with important, often under-valued constituents. Relations may improve by just asking for their input.
- Can increase both internal validity (through "convergent validity"/"triangulation" with other data) and external validity.
- Convey a sense of importance regarding the opinions of stakeholder groups

Disadvantages
- Results tend to be highly dependent on wording of items, salience of survey or questionnaire, and organization of instrument. Thus, good surveys and questionnaires are more difficult to construct than they appear.
- Frequently rely on volunteer samples, which can be biased.
- Mail surveys tend to yield low response rates.
- Require careful organization in order to facilitate data analysis via computer for large samples.
- Commercially prepared surveys tend not to be entirely relevant to an individual institution and its students.
- Forced response choices may not provide opportunities for respondents to express their true opinions.
- Results reflect perceptions, which individuals are willing to report and thus tend to consist of indirect data.
- Locally developed instrument may not provide for externality of results.

Third party disadvantages also include:
- As with any indirect data, inference and reports can contain a high degree of error.
- Third-parties can be biased too, in directions more difficult to anticipate than self-reports.
- Less investment by third-parties assessment processes often means lower response rates, even lower than student/alumni rates.
- Usually requires logistical details (e.g., identifying sample, making contact, getting useful responses, etc.), therefore more costly than it looks.
- If information about specific individuals is requested, confidentiality becomes an important and sometimes problematic issue that must be addressed carefully.

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages:
- Use only carefully constructed instruments that have been reviewed by survey experts
- Include open-ended, respondent worded items along with forced-choice.
- If random sampling or surveying of the entire target population is not possible, obtain the maximum sample size possible and follow-up with non-respondents (preferably in person or by phone).
Exit and Other Interviews

Definition: Asking individuals to share their perceptions of their own attitudes and/or behaviors or those of others. Evaluating student reports of their attitudes and/or behaviors in a face-to-face dialogue.

Advantages
Student interviews tend to have most of the attributes of surveys and questionnaires with the exception of requiring direct contact, which may limit accessibility to certain populations. Exit interviews provide the following advantages:
- Allow for more individualized questions and follow-up probes based on the responses of interviewees.
- Provide immediate feedback to interviewer.
- Include same observational and formative advantages as oral examinations.
- Frequently yield benefits beyond data collection that comes from opportunities to interact with students and other groups.
- Can include a greater variety of items than is possible on surveys and questionnaires, including those that provide more direct measures of learning and development.

When 'third-parties' are making the reports there are additional advantages, as follows:
- Can provide unique stakeholder input, valuable in its own right (especially employers and parents). How is the college/program/project/course serving the purposes of the stakeholder group?
- Offer different perspectives, presumably less biased than either student or the assessor.
- Enable recognition and contact with important, often under-valued constituents. Relations may improve by just asking for their input.
- Can increase both internal validity (through "convergent validity"/"triangulation" with other data) and external validity (by adding more "natural" perspective).

Disadvantages
- Requires direct contact, which may be difficult to arrange.
- May be intimidating to interviewees, thus biasing results in the positive direction.
- Results tend to be highly dependent on wording of items and the manner in which interviews are conducted.
- Time consuming, especially if large numbers of persons are to be interviewed.

Third party report disadvantages:
- As with any indirect data, inference and reports risk high degree of error.
- Third parties can be biased too, in directions more difficult to anticipate than self-reports.
- Usually requires logistical details (e.g., identifying sample, making contact, getting useful responses, etc.), therefore more costly than it looks.
- If information about specific individuals is requested, confidentiality becomes an important and sometimes problematic issue that must be addressed carefully.

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages
- Plan the interviews carefully with assistance from experts.
- Provide training sessions for interviewers that include guidance in putting interviewees at ease and related interview skills.
- Interview purposeful samples of students when it is not feasible to interview all.
- Conduct telephone interviews when face-to-face contact is not feasible.
- Develop an interview format and questions with a set time limit in mind.
- Conduct pilot testing of interview and request feedback from interviewee to improve the interview process.
- Utilize focus groups when individual interviewing is not possible or is too costly.

Ways to Reduce Third Party Disadvantages
- Conduct face-to-face or phone interviews wherever possible, increasing validity through probing during dialogue.
- Very careful, explicit directions for types and perspectives of responses requested can reduce \textit{variability}.
- Attain informed consent in cases where information about individuals is being requested.
- Coordinate contacts with other campus organizations contacting the same groups, to reduce "harassment" syndrome and increase response rates.

\textbf{Bottom Lines:}

Interviews provide opportunities to cover a broad range of content and to interact with respondents. Opportunities to follow-up responses can be very valuable. Direct contact may be difficult to arrange, costly, and potentially threatening to respondents unless carefully planned.

\textbf{Bibliographic References:}

Dobson, Ann (1996), \textit{Conducting Effective Interviews: How to Find out What You Need to Know and Achieve the Right Results}, Trans-Atlantic Publications, Inc.

Bradburn, Norman and Seymour Sudman (?), \textit{Improving Interview Method and Questionnaire Design}, Books on Demand (ISBN: 0835749703)
National
State or
Occupational
Exams

SAT
CAPS
Academic Profile
FAA
Nursing
Cisco
etc.
Locally Developed Exams

Definition: Objective and/or subjective tests designed by faculty of the program or course sequence being evaluated.

Advantages:
- Content and style can be geared to specific goals, objectives, and student characteristics of the program, curriculum, etc.
- Specific criteria for performance can be established in relationship to curriculum.
- Process of development can lead to clarification/crystallization of what is important in the process/content of student learning.
- Local grading by faculty can provide relatively rapid feedback.
- Greater faculty/institutional control over interpretation and use of results.
- More direct implication of results for program improvements.

Disadvantages:
- Require considerable leadership/coordination, especially during the various phases of development.
- Cannot be used for benchmarking, or cross-institutional comparisons.
- Costly in terms of time and effort (more "frontloaded" effort for objective exams; more "backloaded" effort for subjective exams).
- Demands expertise in measurement to assure validity/reliability/utility.
- May not provide for externality.

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages:
- Enter into consortium with other programs, departments, or institutions with similar goals and objectives as a means of reducing costs associated with developing instruments. An element of externality is also added through this approach.
- Utilize on-campus measurement experts whenever possible for test construction and validation.
- Contract with faculty "consultants" to provide development and grading.
- Incorporate outside experts, community leaders, etc. into development and grading process.
- Embed in program requirements for maximum relevance with minimum disruption (e.g., a "capstone" course).
- Validate results through use of multi-method approach (triangulation).

Bottom Lines:
Most useful for individual coursework or program evaluation, with careful adherence to measurement principles. Must be supplemented for external validity.

Bibliographic Reference:
Archival Records

Definition: Biographical, academic, or other file data available from the college or other agencies and institutions.

Advantages:
- Tend to be accessible, thus requiring minimal effort.
- Build upon data collection efforts that have already occurred.
- Can be cost efficient if required data is readily retrievable in desired format.
- Constitute nonintrusive measurement, not requiring additional time or effort from students or other groups.
- Very useful for longitudinal studies.
- Good way to establish a baseline for before and after comparisons.

Disadvantages:
- Especially in large institutions, may require considerable effort and coordination to determine exactly what data are available campus-wide and to then get that information in desired format.
- To be most helpful, datasets need to be combined. This requires an ability to download and combine specific information for multiple sources. It may require designing a separate database for this downloaded information.
- Typically the archived data are not exactly what is required, so that the evaluator must make compromises. In some cases, it may be a stretch to use such data as surrogates for the desired measures.
- If individual records are included, protection of rights and confidentiality must be assured; where applicable, Institutional Review Board approval should be obtained if there is doubt.
- Availability of data may discourage the development of other, more appropriate measures or data sources.
- May encourage attempts to “find ways to use data” rather than assessment related to specific goals and objectives.

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages:
- Early-on in the development of an assessment program, conduct a comprehensive review of existing assessment and evaluation efforts and data typically being collected throughout the institution and its units (i.e., “campus data map”). An Office of Institutional Research is found on many campuses and can be helpful in this process.
- Be familiar with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (Buckley Amendment) and avoid personally identifiable data collection without permission. Assure security/protection of records.
- Only use archival records that are relevant to specific goals and objectives of learning and development.

Bottom Lines:
- Can be quick, easy, and cost-effective method, if data are available and accessible. Usually limited data quality but integral to valuable longitudinal comparisons. Should be a standard component of all assessment programs.

References:
Astin, Alexander W; et. al., Degree Attainment Rates at American Colleges and Universities: Effects of Race, Gender, and Institutional Type. Higher Education Research Inst., Inc., Los Angeles, CA, 1996
**Focus Groups**

**Definition:** Typically conducted with 7-12 individuals who share certain characteristics that are related to a particular topic related to a research or evaluation question. Group discussions are conducted by a trained moderator with participants (several times, if possible) to identify trends/patterns in perceptions. Moderator's purpose is to provide direction and set the tone for the group discussion, encourage active participation from all group members, and manage time. Moderator must not allow own biases to enter, verbally or nonverbally. Careful and systematic analysis of the discussions provides information that can be used to evaluate and/or improve the desired outcome.

**Advantages**
- Useful to gather ideas, details, new insights and to improve question design.
- Helpful in the design of surveys.
- Can be used to get more in-depth information on issues identified by a survey.
- Can inform the interpretation of results from mail or telephone surveys.
- Can be used in conjunction with quantitative studies to confirm/broaden one's understanding of an issue.
- Allows the moderator to probe and explore unanticipated issues.

**Disadvantages**
- Not suited for *generalizations* about population being studied.
- Not a substitute for systematic evaluation procedures.
- Interaction among focus group participants often leads to new insights.
- Moderators require training.
- Differences in the responses between/among groups can be troublesome.
- Groups can be difficult to assemble.
- Moderator has less control than in individual interviews.
- Data are complex to analyze.

**Ways to Reduce Disadvantages**
- Offer an incentive for participants if possible.
- Over-recruit participants.
- Train moderators to use *open-ended* questions, pauses and probes, and learn when and how to move into new topic areas.

**Example of Applications:**
- Focus groups can be held to provide in-depth information of interest generated from a survey.
  Focus groups can be used as a follow-up to survey data. In cases where the results of a survey do not meet the expected standard on a particular outcome, a focus group of participants who are representative of the population surveyed (e.g., students, alumni, females) could be held to further investigate the results. For example, if the analysis of the questionnaires of senior students indicates that they, generally, did not feel they had adequate communication skills, a focus group of senior students could be established to examine why they believe students responded that way and what they would suggest to improve the development of communication skills.
- Focus groups can be used to get input from alumni or business partners on the strengths and weaknesses in the knowledge and/or skills of graduates. Focus groups are a particularly helpful tool to use to "*triangulate*" or validate the results from other assessment methods.

**Examples Instruments/Methodologies:**
- Detailed procedures for developing focus groups can be found in Steward, D. and Shamdasani, P. (1990) cited below.
Bottom Lines:
Focus groups are a quick and, if locally done, inexpensive method of gathering information. They should be conducted by someone who has training and experience in conducting Focus Groups and analysis of Focus Group data. They are very useful for triangulation to support other assessment methods but they are not a substitute for systematic evaluation procedures. Focus Groups should meet the same rigor as other assessment methods and should be developed and analyzed according to sound qualitative practices.

Bibliographic References:
Portfolios

Definition: Collections of multiple student work samples usually compiled over time and rated using rubrics. The design of a portfolio is dependent upon how the scoring results are going to be used.

Advantages:
- Can be used to view learning and development longitudinally (e.g., samples of student writing over time can be collected), which is a useful perspective.
- Multiple components of a curriculum can be measured (e.g., writing, critical thinking, research skills) at the same time.
- Samples in a portfolio are more likely than test results to reflect student ability when pre-planning, input from others, and similar opportunities common to most work settings are available (which increases generalizability/external validity of results).
- The process of reviewing and scoring portfolios provides an excellent opportunity for faculty exchange and development, discussion of curriculum goals and objectives, review of scoring criteria, and program feedback.
- Economical in terms of student time and effort, since no separate "assessment administration" time is required.
- Greater faculty control over interpretation and use of results.
- Results are more likely to be meaningful at all levels (i.e., the individual student, program, or institution) and can be used for diagnostic/prescriptive purposes as well.
- Avoids or minimizes "test anxiety" and other "one shot" measurement problems.
- Increases "power" of maximum performance measures over more artificial or restrictive "speed" measures on test or in-class sample.
- Increases student participation (e.g., selection, revision, evaluation) in the assessment process.

Disadvantages
- Can be costly in terms of evaluator time and effort.
- Management of the collection and scoring process, including the establishment of reliable and valid scoring rubrics, is likely to be challenging.
- May not provide for externality.
- If samples to be included have been previously submitted for course grades, faculty may be concerned that a hidden agenda of the process is to validate their grading.
- Security concerns may arise as to whether submitted samples are the students' own work, or adhere to other measurement criteria.

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages
- Consider having portfolios submitted as part of a course requirement, especially a "capstone course" at the end of a program.
- Investigate the use of electronic portfolios as a means to increase process efficiency.
- Utilize portfolios from representative samples of students rather than having all students participate (this approach may save considerable time, effort, and expense but be problematic in other ways).
- Have more than one rater for each portfolio; establish inter-rater reliability through piloting designed to fine-tune rating criteria.
- Provide training for raters.
- Recognize that portfolios in which samples are selected by the students are likely represent their best work.
- Cross-validate portfolio products with more controlled student work samples (e.g., in-class tests and reports) for increased validity and security.
Focus Groups**

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Advantages
- Useful to gather ideas, details, new insights and to improve question design.
- Helpful in the design of surveys.
- Can be used to get more in-depth information on issues identified by a survey.
- Can inform the interpretation of results from mail or telephone surveys.
- Can be used in conjunction with quantitative studies to confirm/broaden one's understanding of an issue.
- Allows the moderator to probe and explore unanticipated issues.

Disadvantages
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- Not a substitute for systematic evaluation procedures.
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- Moderators require training.
- Differences in the responses between/among groups can be troublesome.
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- Moderator has less control than in individual interviews.
- Data are complex to analyze.

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages
- Offer an incentive for participants if possible.
- Over-recruit participants.
- Train moderators to use open-ended questions, pauses and probes, and learn when and how to move into new topic areas.

Example of Applications:
- Focus groups can be held to provide in-depth information of interest generated from a survey. Focus groups can be used as a follow-up to survey data. In cases where the results of a survey do not meet the expected standard on a particular outcome, a focus group of participants who are representative of the population surveyed (e.g., students, alumni, females) could be held to further investigate the results. For example, if the analysis of the questionnaires of senior students indicates that they, generally, did not feel they had adequate communication skills, a focus group of senior students could be established to examine why they believe students responded that way and what they would suggest to improve the development of communication skills.
- Focus groups can be used to get input from alumni or business partners on the strengths and weaknesses in the knowledge and/or skills of graduates. Focus groups are a particularly helpful tool to use to "triangulate" or validate the results from other assessment methods.

Examples Instruments/Methodologies:
- Detailed procedures for developing focus groups can be found in Steward, D. and Shamdasani, P. (1990) cited below.
Simulations

Definition: A competency based measure where a person's abilities are measured in a situation that approximates a "real world" setting. Simulation is primarily used when it is impractical to observe a person performing a task in a real world situation (e.g., on the job).

Advantages
- Better means of evaluating depth and breadth of student skill development than tests or other performance-based measures (internal validity).
- More flexible; some degree of simulation can be arranged for virtually any student target skill.
- For many skills, can be group administered, thus providing an excellent combination of quality and economy.

Disadvantages
- For difficult skills, the higher the quality of simulation the greater the likelihood that it will suffer from same problems as "Performance Appraisals" listed below:
- Ratings of student performance is typically more subjective than standardized tests.
- Sample of behavior observed or performance appraised may not be typical, especially because of the presence of others.
- Usually requires considerable "frontloading" effort; i.e., planning and preparation.
- More expensive than traditional testing options in the short run.

Ways of Reducing Disadvantages
- Reducing problems is relatively easy, since degree of simulation can be matched for maximum validity practicable for each situation.
- Can often be "standardized" through use of computer programs (and enhance external validity).

Bottom Lines:
An excellent means of increasing the external and internal validity of skills assessment at minimal long-term costs.

Bibliographic References:

Performance Appraisals

Definition: A competency-based method whereby abilities are measured in most direct, real-world approach. Systematic measurement of overt demonstration of acquired skills.

Advantages:
- Provide a more direct measure of what has been learned (presumably in the program).
- Go beyond paper-and-pencil tests and most other assessment methods in measuring skills.
- Preferable to most other methods in measuring the application and generalization of learning to specific settings, situations, etc.
- Particularly relevant to the goals and objectives of professional training programs and disciplines with well defined skill development.

Disadvantages:
- Ratings of student performance is typically more subjective than standardized tests.
- Requires considerable time and effort (especially front-loading), thus being costly.
- Sample of behavior observed or performance appraised may not be typical, especially because of the presence of observers.

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages
- Develop specific, operational (measurable) criteria for observing and appraising performance.
- Provide training for observers/appraisers.
- Conduct pilot-testing in which rate of agreement (inter-rater reliability) between observers/appraisers is determined. Continue training and/or alter criteria for more specificity until acceptable consistency of measurement is obtained.
- Conduct observations/appraisals in the least intrusive manner possible (e.g., use of one-way observational mirrors, videotaping, etc.).
- Observe/appraise behavior in multiple situations and settings.
- Consider training and utilizing graduate students, upper level students, community volunteers, etc. as a means of reducing the cost and time demands on faculty.
- Cross-validate results with other measures, multiple methods should be used to validate the results of appraisals.

Bottom Lines: Generally the most highly valued but costly form of student outcomes assessment. However, it is usually the most valid way to measure skill development.

Bibliographic References:
**External Examiner**

**Definition:** Using an expert in the field from outside your program, usually from a similar program at another institution to conduct, evaluate, or supplement assessment of your students. Information can be obtained from external evaluators using many methods including surveys, interviews, etc.

**Advantages:**
- Increases impartiality, third party objectivity (*external validity*)
- Feedback useful for both student and program evaluation. With a knowledgeable examiner it provides an opportunity for a valuable program consultation.
- May serve to stimulate other collaborative efforts between departments/institutions.
- Incorporate external *stakeholders* and communities.
- Students may disclose to an outsider what they might not otherwise share.
- Outsiders can "see" attributes to which insiders have grown accustomed.
- Evaluators may have skills, knowledge, or resources not otherwise available.
- Useful in conducting *goal-free evaluation* (without prior expectations).

**Disadvantages:**
- Always some risk of a misfit between examiner's expertise and/or expectations and program outcomes.
- For individualized evaluations and/or large programs, can be very costly and time consuming.
- Volunteers may become "donor weary."

**Way to Reduce Disadvantages:**
- Share program philosophy and objectives and agree on assessment criteria before the assessment.
- Form reciprocal external examiner "consortia" among similar programs to minimize costs, swapping external evaluations back and forth.
- Limit external examiner process to program areas where *externality* may be most helpful.

**Bottom Lines:**
Best used as a supplement to your own assessment methods to enhance external validity, but not as the primary assessment option. Other benefits can be accrued from the cross-fertilization that often results from using external examiners.

**Bibliographic References:**
Oral Examination

(This method may be inconsistent with campus policies that prohibits the use of oral examinations.)

Definition: An assessment of student knowledge levels through a face-to-face dialogue between the student and examiner—usually faculty.

Advantages
- Content and style can be geared to specific goals, objectives, and student characteristics of the institution, program, curriculum, etc.
- Specific criteria for performance can be established in relationship to course/curriculum
- Process of development can lead to clarification/crystallization of what is important in the process/content of student learning.
- Local grading by faculty can provide immediate feedback related to material considered meaningful.
- Greater faculty/institutional control over interpretation and use of results.
- More direct implication of results for program improvements.
- Allows measurement of student achievement in considerably greater depth and breadth through follow-up questions, probes, encouragement of detailed clarifications, etc. (increased internal validity and formative evaluation of student abilities)
- Non-verbal (paralinguistic and visual) cues aid interpretation of student responses.
- Dialogue format decreases miscommunications and misunderstandings, in both questions and answers.
- Rapport-gaining techniques can reduce "test anxiety," helps focus and maintain maximum student attention and effort.
- Dramatically increases "formative evaluation" of student learning; i.e., clues as to how and why they reached their answers.
- Identifies and decreases error variance due to guessing.
- Provides process evaluation of student thinking and speaking skills, along with knowledge content.

Disadvantages
- Requires considerable leadership/coordination, especially during the various phases of development
- Can be difficult to document by note-taking and providing student feedback with a grade.
- Costly in terms of time and effort (more "frontload" effort for objective; more "backload" effort for subjective)
- Demands expertise in measurement to assure validity/reliability/utility
- May not provide for externality (degree of objectivity associated with review, comparisons, etc. external to the program or institution).
- Requires considerably more faculty time, since oral exams must be conducted one-to-one, or with very small groups of students at most.
- Can be inhibiting on student responsiveness due to intimidation, face-to-face pressures, oral (versus written) mode, etc. (May have similar effects on some faculty!)
- Inconsistencies of administration and probing across students reduces standardization and generalizability of results (potentially lower external validity).

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages
- Prearrange "standard" questions, most common follow-up probes, and how to deal with typical students’ problem responses; "pilot" training simulations.
- Take time to establish open, non-threatening atmosphere for testing.
- Electronically record oral exams for more detailed evaluation later.

Bottom Lines:
Oral exams can provide excellent results, but usually only with significant—perhaps prohibitive—additional cost. Definitely worth utilizing in programs with small numbers of students, and for the highest priority objectives in any program and local testing policies do not prohibit the testing method.
Bibliographic References:


Behavioral Observations

Definition: Measuring the frequency, duration, topology, etc. of student actions, usually in a natural setting with non-interactive methods. For example, formal or informal observations of a classroom. Observations are most often made be an individual and can be augmented by audio or videotape.

Advantages
- Best way to evaluate degree to which attitudes, values, etc. are really put into action
- Catching students being themselves is the most "natural" form of assessment
- Least intrusive assessment option, since purpose is to avoid any interference with typical student activities.

Disadvantages
- Always some risk of confounded results due to "observer effect," (i.e., subjects may behave atypically if they know they're being observed.)
- Depending on the purpose of the data gathering, there may be socially or professionally sensitive issues to be dealt with (e.g., invasion of privacy on student political activities or living arrangements) or even legal considerations (e.g., substance abuse or campus crime).
- May encourage "Big Brother" perception of assessment and/or institution.
- Inexperienced or inefficient observers can produce unreliable, invalid results.

Ways to Reduce Disadvantages
- Avoid using this method when studying socially or ethically sensitive issues.
- Include representative student input in process of determining "sensitivity" of issue.
- Utilize electronic "observers" (i.e., audio and video recorders) wherever possible, for highly accurate, reliable, permanent observation record (although this may increase assessment cost in the short run if equipment is not already available.)
- Strictly adhere to ethical guidelines for the protection of human research subjects.

Bottom Lines:
This is the best way to know what students actually do, how they manifest their motives, attitudes and values. Special care and planning are required when studying sensitive issues, but in situations where the information derived from the observations is critical, it's usually worth it for highly valid, useful results.

Bibliographic References:
CONSENT AGENDA
ACTION ITEM

Governing Board Agenda: Meeting Date: May 22, 2001

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<td>C-2</td>
<td>Curriculum-MCCCD General Education Statement</td>
<td>Dr. Anna Solley</td>
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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the MCCCD General Education Statement be approved as submitted effective Fall 2002. The General Education Statement replaces the General Education Definition within the catalog common pages.

The proposed Maricopa General Education Statement has been processed through all procedures established by the Maricopa District Curriculum Committee.

JUSTIFICATION

The Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) established statewide requirements for general education, including a 33-credit hour limit and new requirements in the areas of cultural diversity and historical or global awareness. As a result of AGEC, some major rethinking of Maricopa’s General Education Program occurred. In addition, consultant-evaluators for the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools indicated that Maricopa’s current General Education definition was lacking in specificity. During the past two years, the General Education and Degree Subcommittee of the District Curriculum Committee conducted focus group discussions and surveys at each college to solicit faculty and staff input concerning the General Education Statement. Faculty members at all colleges have actively participated in reviewing the general education curriculum and shaping the statement. The new General Education Statement also reflects the alignment of Maricopa’s General Education Program to the Governing Board Goal on Post-Secondary Student Competencies [students will demonstrate post-secondary competencies in communication (writing, speaking, listening), reading, the humanities, science, critical thinking, problem solving, computer and information literacy and mathematics].

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Acting, Ident. Planning

Initials Only
Maricopa Community Colleges  
MCCCD General Education Statement  
MCCCD Governing Board Date: May 22, 2001

The general education core of the program of study for an associate degree or a certificate helps students develop a greater understanding of themselves, of their relationship with others, and of the richly diverse world in which they live. The general education experience provides students with opportunities to explore broad areas of commonly held knowledge and prepares them to contribute to society through personal, social, and professional interactions with others. General education fosters students' personal development by opening them to new directions, perspectives, and processes.

Through its general education requirements, the Maricopa County Community College District is committed to helping students develop qualities and skills that will serve them throughout their lives. General education opportunities encourage students to:

- Build self-awareness, self-respect, and self-confidence
- Recognize and respect the beliefs, traditions, abilities, and customs of all people and all cultures
- Consider the local, global, and environmental impacts of personal, professional, and social decisions and actions
- Access, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and use information wisely
- Communicate effectively personally, socially, and professionally
- Think critically, make informed decisions, solve problems, and implement decisions
- Consider the ethical implications of their choices
- Value the learning process throughout their lives
- Integrate and connect ideas and events in a historical perspective, and see relationships among the past, the present, and the future
- Develop a personal sense of aesthetics
- Use technological resources appropriately and productively
- Work cooperatively and respectfully with others to serve their communities

The general education experience at MCCCD is composed of specific elements across the curriculum designed to provide the learner with essential knowledge and skills:

- Communication
- Arts and Humanities
- Numeracy
- Scientific Inquiry in the Natural and Social Sciences
- Information Literacy
- Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking
- Cultural Diversity