Department of Institutional Effectiveness and Research
Introduction to assessments
Part of the effectiveness process at Texas A&M University-Commerce is to not only develop student learning outcomes and goals, but to measure each to provide results in the form of actionable data that can then be used to drive decisions.

Assessing student learning outcomes and goals produce results...

**To improve**
- provide feedback to determine how the academic program, support or administrative unit can be improved

**To inform**
- inform faculty members, staff and other decision-makers of the contributions and impact of the academic program, support or administrative unit and the development and growth of students, faculty members, staff and community

**To prove**
- encapsulate and demonstrate to students, faculty, staff, and the community what the academic program, support unit and administrative unit is accomplishing

**To support**
- support for campus decision-making activities such as academic program, support unit and administrative review and strategic planning towards continuous improvement of student learning and an environment that promotes student learning

**How to get started:** Begin by reviewing the below questions and answers.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>When are assessments conducted?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Every academic year</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Where are assessments conducted?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main campus</td>
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<td>Off-site campuses</td>
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<td>Online</td>
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<th>What types of assessment methods are available?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
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<td>In-direct</td>
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When choosing an assessment method, consider the characteristics that encompass an effective assessment measure.

**Effective program assessment should answer these questions:**
1. What are you trying to do?
2. How well are you doing it?
3. Using the answers to the first two questions, how can you improve what you are doing?
4. What and how does a program contribute to the development and growth of its students?
5. How can student learning be improved?

Use the M.A.T.U.R.E. graphic below to select an assessment method

**Match**

Match the student learning outcome and goal with the appropriate assessment method. Successful and useful assessment cannot be achieved if you do not align the assessment method with the student learning outcome and goal that you are trying to assess.

**Appropriate**

Choose methods that are appropriate. They can be direct or indirect. Direct measures include assessments that evaluate a quality indicator, or student ability or achievement. Indirect measures can be survey responses to targeted questions or ancillary parts of a direct measure. There are times when one measurement instrument can measure more than one student learning outcome and goal. (For example, a survey may target several outcomes and/or goals.) Consider measures that provide you with information that is easily interpreted, unambiguous, and valuable.

**Target**

Each measure should be directed. It should specify, when possible, the desired level of performance (level of satisfaction, productivity, efficiency, performance).
Useful

Choose assessment methods that will provide you with useful and useable information. The measure that you are trying to assess should be one that would allow you to make inferences about the progress toward the student learning outcome and goal.

Reliable

The measure is based on tested, known methods. The method selected should be one that provides dependable, consistent results time after time. The instrument and should be clearly worded and not ambiguous. The time available to complete the instrument should be consistent with its length.

Effective & Efficient

Each approach accurately and concisely measures the student learning outcome and goal. The benefits of using more than one method include: (i) different components can be assessed, and (ii) a high level of accuracy and authority can be achieved. When possible, utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment methods to effectively assess outcomes. The selection of assessment methods should reflect the culture of the unit and should be methods that provide those making changes to the operation or programs of the unit with useful information.
Examples of indirect and direct assessments: It is up to each academic program, support or administrative unit which type and how many assessments are utilized. Best practices, however, indicate that a combination of both direct and indirect assessment measures provide a comprehensive evaluation of student learning outcomes and goals.