

Appendix: Considering Equity in Student Learning Assessment Practices

Equitable assessment should work to ensure that learning outcomes, and how we assess those outcomes, are done in ways which do not privilege certain students over others; that data-informed changes are not benefiting one student group over others; and that assessment efforts are not conducted with only one dominant perspective or voice leading the process.

Montenegro and Jankowski, 2020, p. 14

Student learning assessment reflects how we, as an institution and as faculty, value student learning and our commitment to reflecting on our practices to ensure that we continue to develop our programs and pedagogies so that students excel in our programs. As part of our commitment to student learning, and the role that assessment plays, we recognize that considerations of equity must be an important priority in student learning assessment. Although not part of the original charge of the Taskforce, we provide this Appendix as an additional recommendation that equity should be considered and prioritized in student learning assessment.

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) has excellent resources on equity in assessment (see learningoutcomesassessment.org/equity) and the recommendations here are informed by those resources. In particular, the report authored by [Montenegro and Jankowski \(2020\)](#) includes these specific recommendations for equity-minded assessment.

1. Check biases and ask reflective questions throughout the assessment process to address assumptions and positions of privilege.
2. Use multiple sources of evidence appropriate for the students being assessed and assessment effort.
3. Include student perspectives and take action based on perspectives.
4. Increase transparency in assessment results and actions.
5. Ensure collected data can be meaningfully disaggregated and interrogated.
6. Make evidence-based changes that address issues of equity that are context-specific.

As a beginning point of how programs at SUNY Oswego could begin to consider equity in student assessment, here are several questions that programs could ask themselves.

1. How might our *student learning outcomes* be valuing some student perspectives or experiences over others?

For example, are our student learning outcomes intended to capture important questions in our field and important student competencies in such a way that we value the wide range of strengths and assets our successful graduates exhibit? Or are they instead intended to capture only a narrow range of easily assessed aspects of specific knowledge?

2. How might our *assessment instruments* be valuing some student perspectives or experiences over others?

For example, might our assessment instruments in a freshman class be picking up on strong high school experiences that are only available to some of our students rather than the achievements of students in the SUNY Oswego classes in question?

3. How might our *analysis of our assessment results* be valuing some student perspectives or experiences over others?

For example, if we are looking at central tendency statistics (like mean or median), how might that type of statistical aggregation be overvaluing the perspective of students in a majority group versus students in a minority group? How can we look at patterns of results in smaller groups and consider those perspectives as well?

4. How might our review of assessment results and *determinations of next steps* be valuing some student and faculty perspectives or experiences over others?

For example, if assessment results in one area are a concern, who has a voice in determining the strategy for addressing that concern? Are student voices included, who would be the most directly impacted by any change in plan? Are underrepresented minority faculty voices included, who may be able to provide a richer perspective on the assessment results? Are part-time faculty voices included, who may play an important role in delivery of critical curriculum?

We also encourage the institution to include a focus on equity in assessment in all assessment activities. For example, when faculty/staff development is provided on assessment, equity in assessment should be an included topic. Similarly, when assessment reports are reviewed, considerations of equity should be part of that review.

References:

Montenegro, E., & Jankowski, N. A. (2020, January). *A new decade for assessment: Embedding equity into assessment praxis* (Occasional Paper No. 42). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). Available at <https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/A-New-Decade-for-Assessment.pdf>