

University of Northern Colorado Guiding Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning

The Guiding Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning were created by the UNC Assessment Council and vetted by various groups on campus. The Statement communicates to faculty, staff, administrators, and students the values, purposes, and application of assessment of student learning at UNC. The principles can be applied to the assessment of student learning at the course, program, department, college, and institutional levels in institutional, academic, co-curricular, and student support units.

Purpose of Assessment at UNC

UNC faculty, staff, and administrators collect assessment data to understand what and how students learn. They use assessment results to improve teaching and learning by modifying course instruction, program curriculum, and program activities. UNC faculty, staff, and administrators also conduct assessment to respond to institutional accreditation recommendations and to align with program accreditation requirements. However, the primary purpose for continuous, deliberate, and meaningful assessment efforts at UNC is to improve teaching and learning.

Guiding Principles

1. **Guided by mission.** Assessment of student learning is guided by UNC's mission (including UNC's vision, values, purposes, and goals) and the missions of individual programs.
2. **Institutionally supported.** Assessment is most effective when the university provides resources for assessment activities, such as professional development, financial support, technology, and mechanisms for sharing assessment data.
3. **Improve teaching and learning.** The primary goal of assessment of student learning is for faculty and staff to improve teaching and learning at the course and program levels.
4. **Use of results.** Assessment of student learning results are valuable for highlighting excellence; improving teaching and learning; making evidence-based decisions; and informing planning, policy, and resource decisions.
5. **Faculty/staff driven.** Assessment of student learning is most effective when it is owned and driven by the faculty and staff in a program/unit.
6. **Student involvement.** Students serve as a primary stakeholder in assessment of student learning. As a student-centered institution, UNC strives to find opportunities to involve students in assessment of student learning efforts.
7. **Collaborative effort.** Assessment is most effective as a community effort involving faculty, staff, students, administrators, and the community. Assessment fosters more systemic improvement of teaching and learning when representatives from across the educational community are involved in assessment activities.
8. **Useful and meaningful.** Assessment of student learning is most effective when it focuses on issues that faculty, staff, and students find meaningful and when it produces evidence that faculty, staff, and students find useful.
9. **Manageable and sustainable.** Effective assessment is manageable and sustainable when it is designed to align with available human and financial resources.
10. **Assessment is ongoing.** Assessment is most effective when it is an ongoing activity that is part of the regular operations of a program/unit, rather than a sporadic endeavor.
11. **Use of best practices.** Assessment is most effective when best practices for assessing student learning guide the work.
12. **Transparent.** The UNC community is committed to being transparent to internal and external stakeholders about how assessment of student learning is conducted and how the results are used.