



## ***Developing Learning-Assessment Surveys*** **By Monica Stitt-Bergh**

While satisfaction surveys and end-of-course evaluations (e.g., eCAFE) are important and provide useful information, they do not help faculty and programs understand what students learned and why. This workshop introduces attendees to survey questions that reveal respondents' perceptions of learning, and it provides information on using survey results to guide program development.

Workshop outcomes: Attendees will be able to

- State the purpose of satisfaction surveys and learning-assessment surveys;
- Differentiate between questions that investigate student learning and satisfaction;
- Describe how survey results can be used to guide program development; and
- List strategies to increase survey response rates.

**Level:** Beginner

**Format:** Lecture + hands-on practice

**Date/time/location:**

Friday, March 7, 2014, 1:30 - 2:45pm, KUY 106 OR Tuesday, March 11, 2014, 9:00 - 10:15am, KUY 106

Slide 1

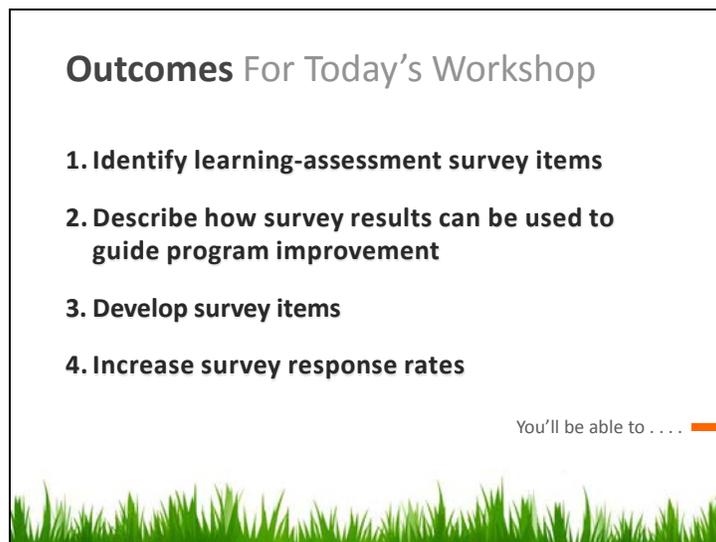


Slide 2



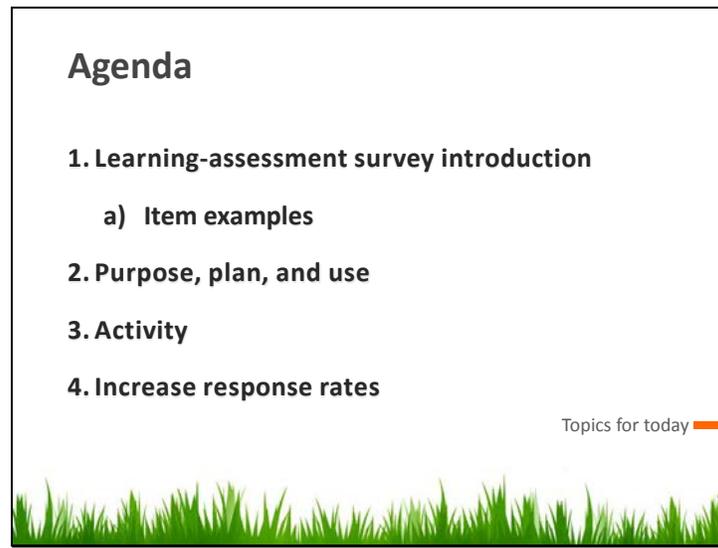
The Assessment Office started in 2008 and its mission is to improve student learning through program assessment. We do that through workshops such as these, our website, one-on-one consultations, survey critiques, and we also can help facilitate faculty discussions.

Slide 3



These are the outcomes for today's workshop.

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**Agenda**

- 1. Learning-assessment survey introduction**
  - a) Item examples
- 2. Purpose, plan, and use**
- 3. Activity**
- 4. Increase response rates**

Topics for today 

Here's what I have planned to talk about. The emphasis is on the concept of a “learning-assessment survey” (versus a satisfaction survey), the purpose and plan, and increasing response rates.

Today's workshop is not about the technical aspects of survey item development. Our office has offered such workshops in the past and they are on our website:

- [Analyzing Open-Ended Survey Responses--Where to start?](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/analyzing_openended_survey_responses_2012-09.pdf)  
<[http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/analyzing\\_openended\\_survey\\_responses\\_2012-09.pdf](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/analyzing_openended_survey_responses_2012-09.pdf)>
- [Designing Effective Surveys \[examples from academic programs\]](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/survey_design_academic_2012-04.pdf)  
<[http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/survey\\_design\\_academic\\_2012-04.pdf](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/survey_design_academic_2012-04.pdf)>
- [Designing Effective Surveys \[examples from co-curricular programs\]](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/survey_design_cocurricular_2012-04.pdf)  
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- [Focus Group, Interview, or Survey: Which is Right for Your Co-Curricular Program?](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/focus_survey_interview_cocurric_2011-05.pdf)  
<[http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/focus\\_survey\\_interview\\_cocurric\\_2011-05.pdf](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/focus_survey_interview_cocurric_2011-05.pdf)>
- [Focus Group, Interview, or Survey: Which is Right for Your Academic Program?](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/focus_survey_interview_2011-04.pdf)  
<[http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/focus\\_survey\\_interview\\_2011-04.pdf](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/focus_survey_interview_2011-04.pdf)>
- [Student Surveys: Perceptions of Achievement](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/surveys_2010-12.pdf)  
<[http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/surveys\\_2010-12.pdf](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/workshops/pdf/surveys_2010-12.pdf)>

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Slide 5



Surveys tap into perception and self-assessments. Surveys tell you what students think they learned, their beliefs about learning, their self-assessment of achievement. However, they do not tell you what students actually learned.

I mention this distinction because of the conclusions you can draw from surveys. You make conclusions about perception but you cannot conclude that students did or did not learn. To determine if learning actually occurred, you need to give students a test or ask them to write, speak, design, perform, etc.

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1 **Surveys**  
Learning-assessment vs.  
other survey types

Purpose and design

This slide features a large orange circle with the number '1' on the left. To its right, the title 'Surveys' is in bold, followed by the subtitle 'Learning-assessment vs. other survey types'. At the bottom right, the text 'Purpose and design' is accompanied by a small orange horizontal line. The slide is decorated with a grey header bar at the top and a green grass border at the bottom.

Slide 7

Learning-assessment Survey Items

Prime-the-Pump Activity

This slide has a dark grey header with the text 'Learning-assessment Survey Items' on the left and an orange decorative square on the right. Below the header, the text 'Prime-the-Pump Activity' is positioned on the left side of a white rectangular area. To the right of this text is a photograph of a lush tropical landscape with palm trees and a waterfall.

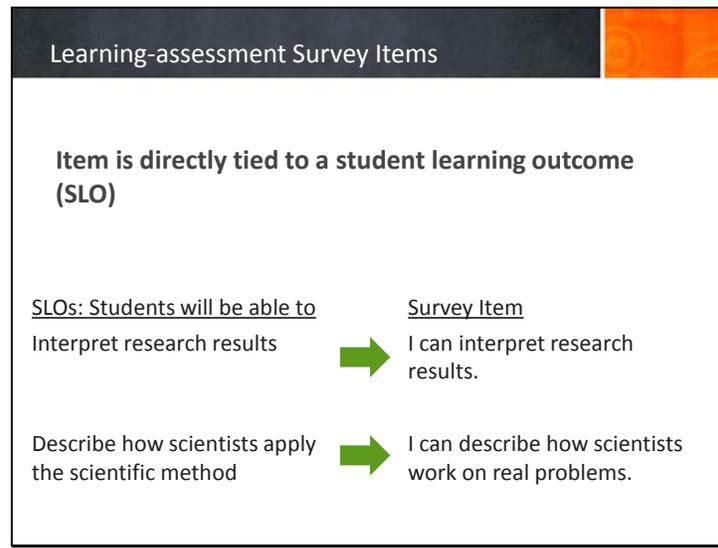
Please complete the prime-the-pump activity.

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Learning-assessment Survey Items		
Prime-the-Pump Activity	Survey Item	Include?
	1 The quality . . .	No
	2 Would you . . .	No
	<b>3 I can interpret research results. . .</b>	<b>YES</b>
	4 The lab . . .	No
	5 The instructor . . .	No
	<b>6 I can describe how scientists. . .</b>	<b>YES</b>
	7 I believe . . .	No
	<b>8 I make sure . . .</b>	<b>YES</b>

These three items, #3, 6, and 8, tap into students' perceptions of learning and thus they fit into what I'm calling a "learning-assessment survey." The other items can provide a program with valuable information, but they are not directly related to student learning. They provide information about program quality, program elements, and the instructor.

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At a minimum, a learning-assessment survey item is directly tied to a student learning outcome. For example, on the prime-the-pump activity, items 3 and 6 are directly related to these two program SLOs.

One way to create items for a learning-assessment survey is to turn the SLOs into statements or questions on a survey. Another option is to look at the rubrics used to evaluate the program SLOs and turn the dimensions and descriptions on the rubric into items for a survey.

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**Survey Example**

College of Languages, Linguistics, and Literature's **exit survey**

***"To what extent can you do the following?"***

[See examples online: JPN BA, SPAN MA, SLS PHD](#)

**AY 2012-13 Japanese BA Exit Survey**

**1. The following statements are student learning outcomes for your degree program.**

**To what extent can you do the following?**

	Not at all		Adequately		Very well
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Engage in oral communication in Japanese in various social contexts, in linguistically and culturally appropriate ways.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. Read and comprehend texts written in Japanese from a variety of genres and contexts (e.g., newspapers, essay collections, novels).	<input type="radio"/>				
3. Apply critical thinking and rhetorical skills to produce coherent written works and presentations in both English and Japanese.	<input type="radio"/>				

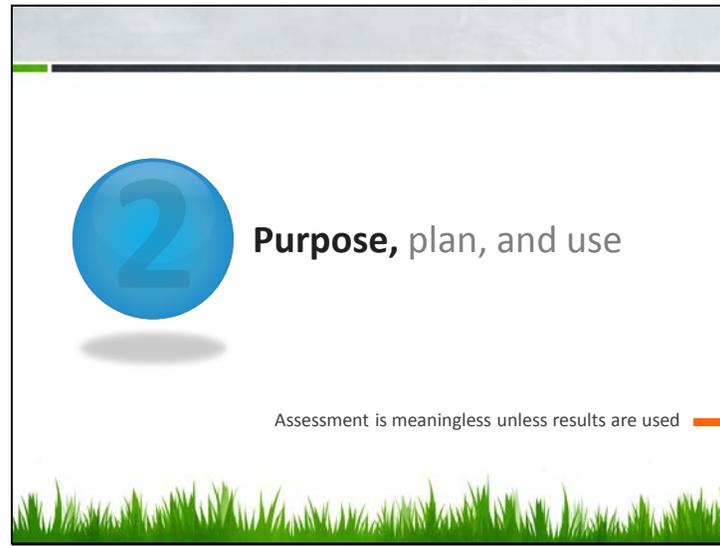
An example of a learning-assessment survey on campus comes from the College of Languages, Linguistics, and Literature. They ask students to self-assess how well they can do each SLO for the degree program.

Examples of their program surveys are available online:

[http://www.lll.hawaii.edu/?page\\_id=250](http://www.lll.hawaii.edu/?page_id=250).

eCAFE, our end-of-course evaluation survey, as it is currently set up is NOT a learning-assessment survey. Few if any of the items are tied to learning outcomes.

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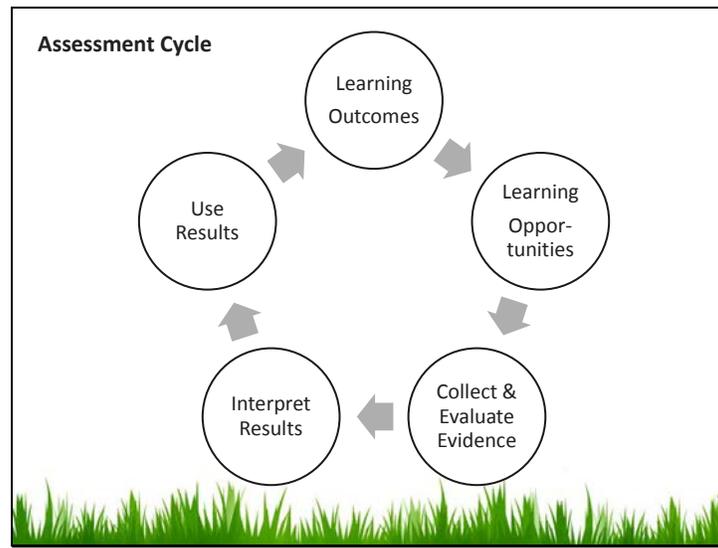


Now that you have a rough idea of what a learning-assessment survey is, I'm going to talk about WHY you might want to do to one.

It's extremely important to have a clear purpose in mind before creating the survey. A clear purpose increases the likelihood that the results will be used.

Assessment is meaningless unless results are used so taking the time to clarify the purpose is a needed step.

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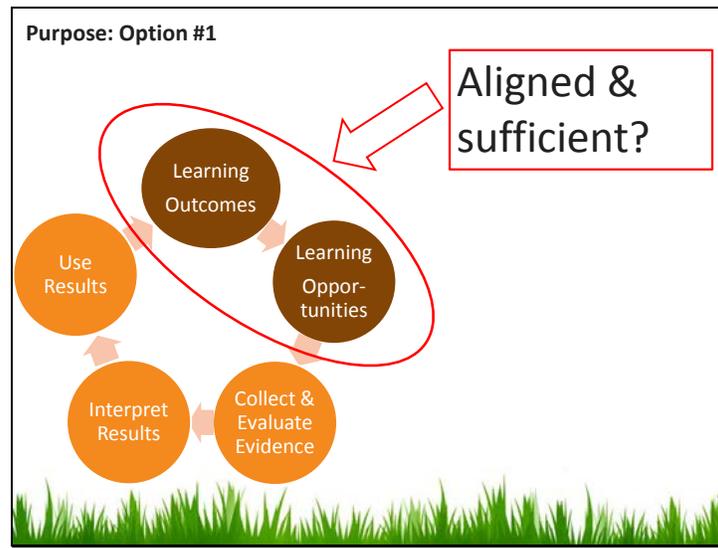
This is the standard assessment cycle that faculty undertake when working on student learning outcomes assessment.

They establish a set of intended student learning outcomes, provide students with opportunities to learn and practice.

Then they collect and evaluate evidence of student learning, interpret those results, and most importantly, use the results for program improvement or program evolution.

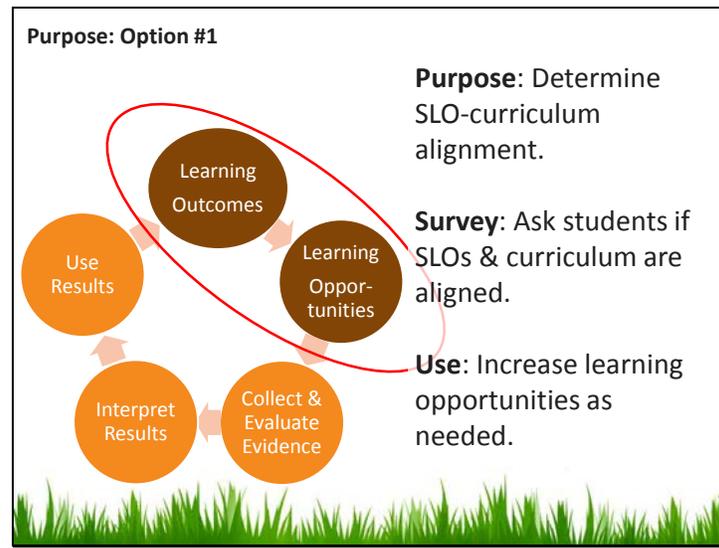
Given the assessment cycle and purpose of assessment, where and how might a survey about perceptions of learning occur? What might be the purpose of the survey? I am going to show you three options.

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First, a survey can be designed to inform the program on whether students perceive the learning opportunities aligned with the learning outcomes. Do students believe they've been given enough practice and exposure to the outcomes?

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If your program is interested in this question, here's what it could look like.

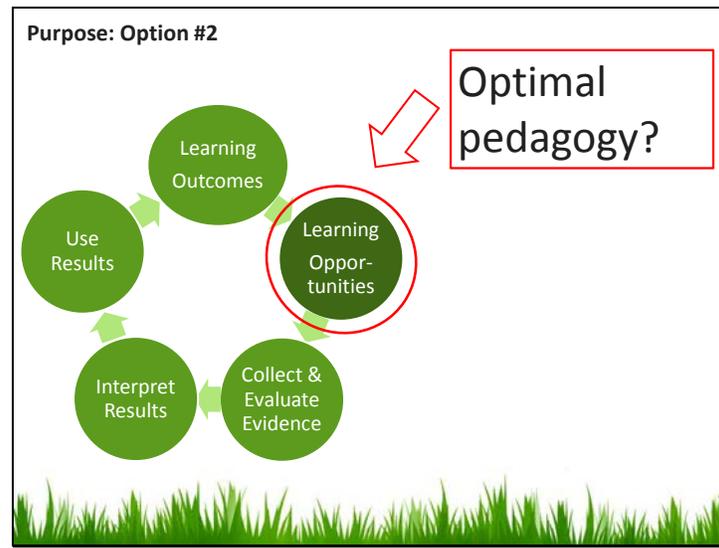
The program decides that the purpose is to determine SLO-curriculum alignment from the students' perspective.

The assessment committee takes the SLOs and rubrics and creates a survey that asks students if there is alignment.

When the assessment committee gets the results, they locate areas that students felt too few opportunities were given and collaborate with other faculty to increase the opportunities. They can also discuss if something is actually covered too much.

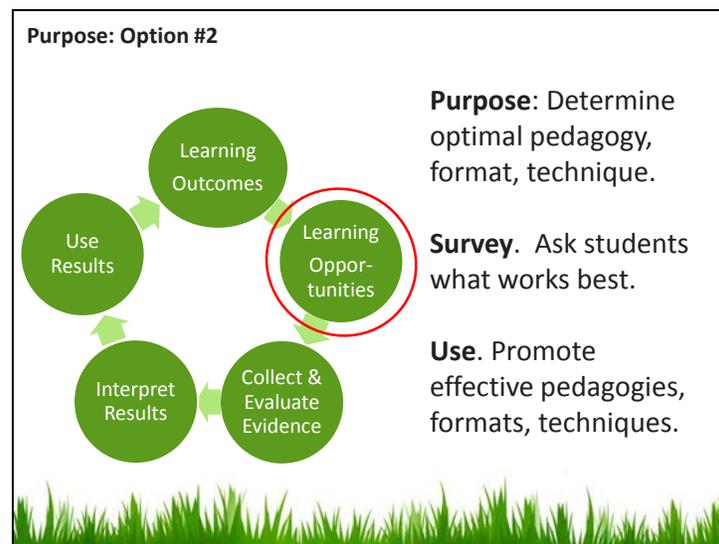
On the *Steps & Examples* handout, I provide possible items for a survey given this purpose.

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A second purpose could be to investigate the optimal pedagogy or course format.

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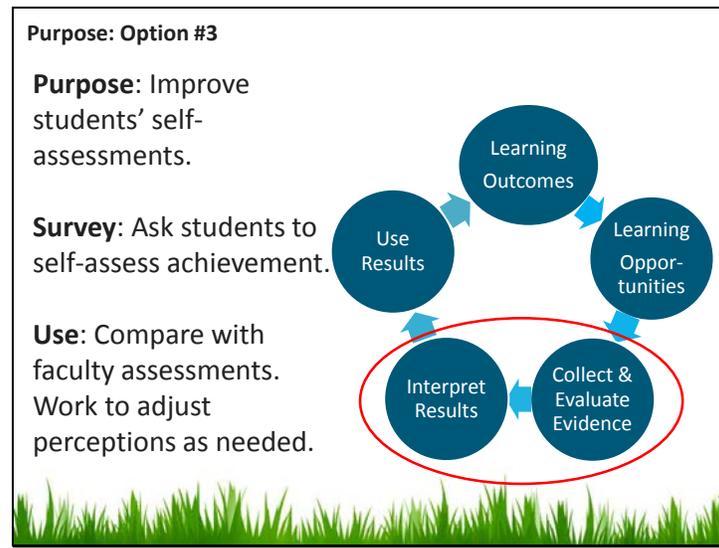
The purpose of this survey is to find out what helps students learn or what type of course format is perceived most beneficial.

The assessment committee can design a survey to ask students what works best.

The faculty can use the results to promote effective pedagogies, formats, and techniques.

On the *Steps & Examples* handout, you'll see item examples on page 2.

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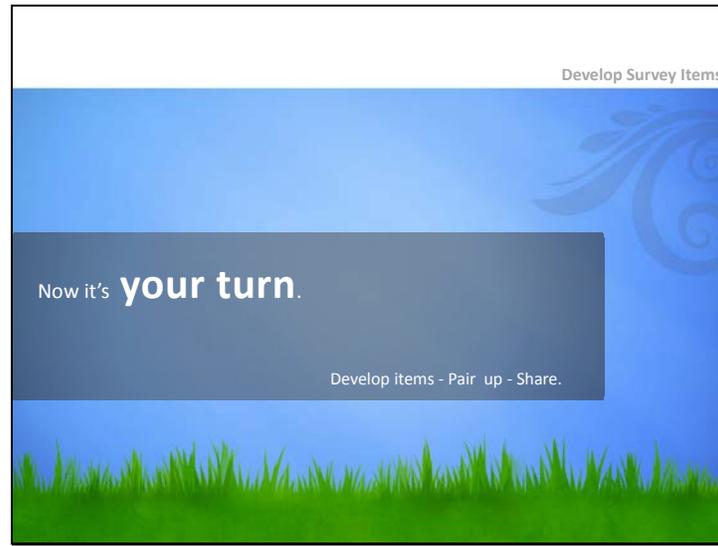
Finally, a third option. The program might decide to check and then improve students' ability to accurately self-assess their level of achievement on the SLOs.

There is a body of literature on the benefits of self-assessment and the benefits of metacognitive skills. When students have accurate perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses, they can improve their strategies for learning. When students leave the university, they know how to present their strengths to employers and graduate schools.

If faculty compare their overall assessment of student strengths to the aggregate results from such a survey and find a mismatch, the faculty can work to improve students' perceptions.

On the *Steps & Examples* handout page 2 you'll see examples of items that ask students to self-assess in regards to the SLOs.

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Before you get started on planning a survey, please take a look at page 3 of the *Steps & Examples* handout. There is a list of possible response items for closed-ended questions—closed-ended means that the student selects from a set of options. An open-ended item is one in which the student writes his/her response in a text box.

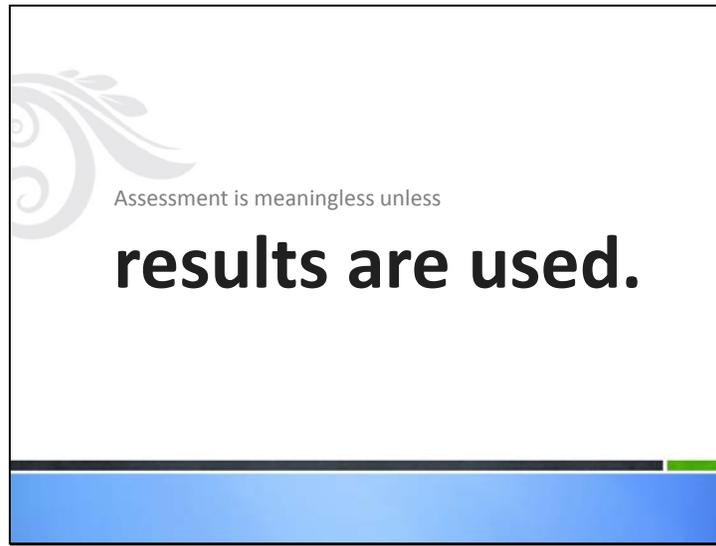
Two tips:

First, choose a set of response options that match the question. If the question asks students about their level of confidence, the response options should include something like “Not at All Confident” to “Very Confident.”

Second, consider including a response option such as “Not Sure,” “Do Not Know,” “Not Applicable,” “Other:\_\_\_\_\_.” If a question is required, always include this type of option. Having an option like this, when appropriate, can increase survey response rates and decrease the number of skipped questions.

We’ll spend the next 20 minutes on the “Guiding Questions” handout. Complete questions 1-3 and then pair up and share with your partner. Question 4 on the handout gives you some critical questions to ask about your partner’s planned survey. Yao and I will also be listening and giving suggestions.

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Thank you for working on your own plan—take a moment to thank your partner. Please never forget that assessment is meaningless unless results are used. Surveys take faculty time and student time. Make that time worthwhile by having a clear purpose, designing a good survey, and using the results.

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**4** Increase response rates

Make it personal and worthwhile

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**Tip #1**

» **Personalize** the email message

Aloha e **Jason**,  
We are conducting a survey  
and value your opinion as a  
student in the ANTH  
department.

If you are sending students a link to an online survey, personalize the email message. Use a mail merge program to insert their name and personalize the message.

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**Tip #2**

»Share how results will be used or have been used

In last year's survey, students said they had too few opportunities to practice oral presentation skills. Thus, faculty agreed to **add oral presentation training and practice** in 350, 375, and 402 this year.

In the email message, after introducing the survey, include a couple sentences about how a result was used or how you will use the results. When people know action will be taken and the results are not going into a black hole, they are more likely to respond.

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**Tip #3**

»Send 3 **reminder** emails:

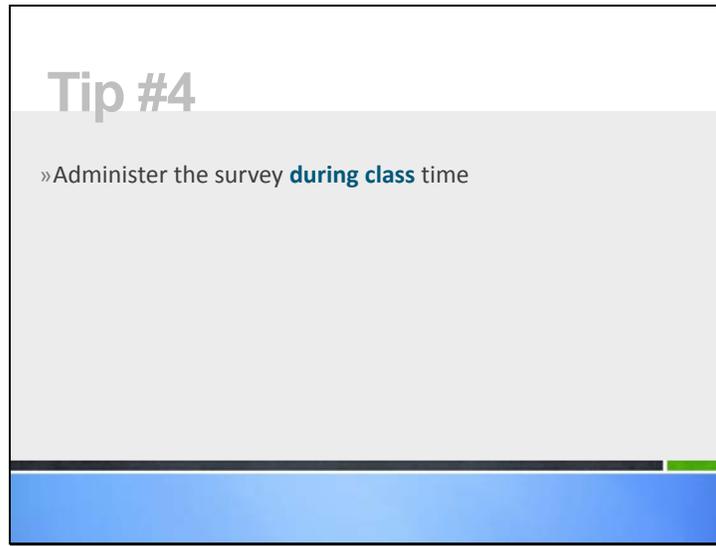
- »Day 4
- »Day 9
- »Day 13 final reminder

(four- to five-day intervals)

Expect to send reminders. Even if the survey is anonymous, the online survey program you use will be able to tell you who submitted the survey. Send the reminder only to people who have not completed the survey.

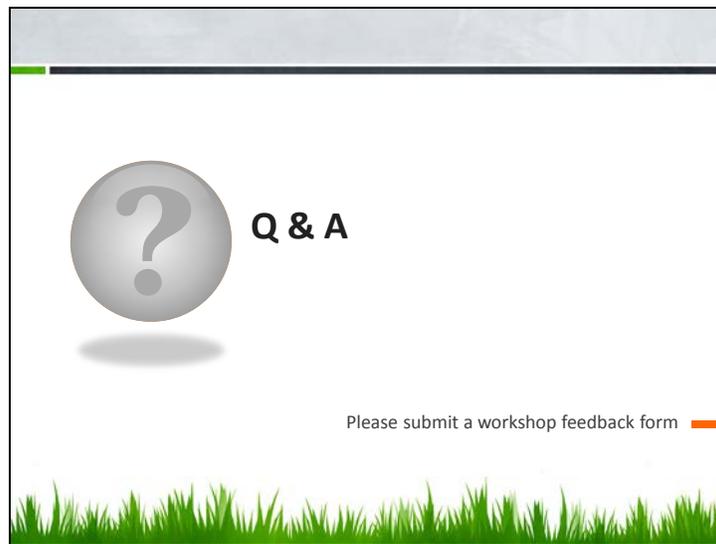
When I send the final reminder, I let them know it's the final one and, for example, that they have two days before the survey closes and we really value their feedback.

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If you can administer the survey to a captive audience, do so. Many students have phones and laptops in class that they can use to complete online surveys during class time. You can step out of the room to ensure anonymity.

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Thank You



## *Developing Learning-assessment Surveys* Steps & Examples

### **Steps**

1. Identify what you want to investigate regarding the program student learning outcomes (SLOs).  
Set a clear purpose.  
Examples:
  - a. Do students perceive that the curriculum is aligned with the SLOs? Do they believe they have sufficient learning opportunities?
  - b. What pedagogies do students believe help them meet the SLOs?
  - c. Do students near graduation believe they have achieved the SLOs? Do faculty agree?
2. Select the program SLOs that will be targeted.
3. Create the survey items.  
*Tip #1: Design survey items to maximize usefulness.*
  - Vague is typically less useful: "I can write in the genres required by the field/profession."
  - Specific is typically more useful: "I can write a research proposal."*Tip #2: Consult the scoring rubric(s).* You can develop a set of items based on the rubric dimensions.
4. Pilot test the survey.
5. Distribute.
6. Analyze data and use results.

### **Item Examples**

#### *Curriculum – SLO alignment*

- A. The core courses provided sufficient practice of oral presentation skills.
- B. In DEPT courses, there were opportunities to practice the field methods used by anthropologists.
- C. Courses in DEPT improved my economic literacy.
- D. To what extent did professors in DEPT provide instruction on . . .
  - a. Analyzing data sets
  - b. Evaluating a source for reliability
  - c. Applying sociological theories to societal issues
  - d. "Thinking like a sociologist"
- E. Indicate the number of courses in DEPT for which you did the following:
  - a. Applied a cross-cultural perspective in a paper or assignment
  - b. Demonstrated the ability to think critically about cultural assumptions in a paper or assignment
  - c. Described how biological evolution and cultural histories interact
- F. In DEPT courses, how much has your coursework/exams emphasized the following:
  - a. Analyzing data
  - b. Evaluating a source for reliability
  - c. Evaluating a source for credibility
  - d. Solving complex real-world problems

*Techniques/pedagogies/formats that best help student learning*

- A. Which of the following course formats would best help you learn the scientific method?
- 200-300 students in a lecture course
  - 200-300 students in a lecture plus a 20-student lab section
  - 30 students in a discussion section plus a lab component
  - Fewer than 30 students in a section
  - Completely online course
- B. Rank the following with "1st" being most helpful and "7th" being least helpful to your learning how to . . .

**Interpret research results:**

- Demonstrations in class
  - Group work in class
  - Listening to/taking notes during a lecture
  - Reading assignment about the topic (completed out of class)
  - Solving real-world scientific problems
  - Study sessions with peers out of class
  - Watching a video
- C. The following activities help me learn [insert SLO here]:
- [list activities]

*SLO achievement*

- A. I can [insert SLO or item from rubric].  
Response options: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and Not Sure  
Examples:
- I can adjust my presentation style to meet audience needs.
  - I can effectively organize ideas for an oral presentation.
  - I can select credible supporting materials for an oral presentation.
  - I am able to design a system that meets client specifications.
- B. To what extent can you do the following . . .
- Work effectively on a team
  - Offer new suggestions to move the team forward
  - Constructively build upon or synthesize other team members' ideas
- [Monica's note: the above items appear as part of a set of items related to teamwork]
- C. To what extent has the DEPT prepared you to do the following . . .
- Apply interpersonal skills when communicating with others
  - Analyze/interpret data
  - Conduct an experiment
  - Generate multiple concept alternatives
  - Manage conflicts that arise when working on teams
  - Solve problems using quantitative reasoning

### Closed-ended Response Option Examples

Tip #1: Choose response options that match the item. E.g., if asking about confidence levels, an appropriate set of response options could be *Very Confident, Confident, Somewhat Confident, Not at All Confident*

Tip #2: Most questions should include one of the following: Not Sure, Do Not Know, Did Not Do, Not Applicable, Other, No Basis to Judge

\*\*\*Always include this type of response option for required questions.\*\*\*

A Great Deal	Quite a Bit	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at All
A lot	A Moderate Amount	A Little	Zero	
Always	Most of the Time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Completely True	Somewhat True	Neither True nor False	Somewhat False	Completely False
Easily	With some difficulty	With great difficulty	Not at all	
Exactly Descriptive	Very Descriptive	Descriptive	Somewhat Descriptive	Not Descriptive
Extensively	Moderately	Minimally	Not At All	
Far Too Much	Too Much	About Right	Too Little	Far Too Little
Much experience or mastered this element	Some experience	No experience of feel inexperienced		
One of the Best	Better than Most	Better than Some	Not as Good as Most	
Outstanding Strength	Strength	Competent	Need Improvement	Need Significant Improvement
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
To a Large Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Small Extent	To a Very Small Extent	
Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	
Very Great Extent	Great Extent	Moderate Extent	Some Extent	No Extent
Very Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Very Helpful	
Very Much	Quite a Bit	Some	Very Little	

