Assessment and Research in Student Affairs

A Guide to Best Practices at UC Riverside

STUDENT AFFAIRS ASSESSMENT & RESEARCH

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A Guide to Best Practices at UC Riverside

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Acknowledgement

This assessment handbook was made possible by the 2021 Student Affairs Strategic Planning Assessment Committee in an effort to support best practices and continuous quality improvement of assessment in Student Affairs (Student Affairs 2025 Strategic Plan Objective 3.8).

The following committee members worked together to ensure this handbook included all necessary information to create a culture of assessment and conduct assessments in Student Affairs:

Kati Cadenhead-Wong

Arlene Cano Matute

Elizabeth Croft

Maria Keller, Ph.D.

Connie Marmolejo, DrPH

Nicholas Olivarria

Angela L Peak

Hayden Harris, Ph.D. (Chair)

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Student Affairs Assessment & Research

The Student Affairs Assessment & Research (SAAR) office was established in 2019 to create a culture of assessment in Student Affairs. By fostering an assessment culture, all Student Affairs staff are empowered with the knowledge and skills they need to make data-informed decisions to improve student programs and services that will ultimately enhance the student experience at UCR.

Mission

The mission of Student Affairs Assessment & Research (SAAR) is to create a culture of equity-minded assessment and promote data-driven decision making in Student Affairs to enhance the student experiences of UCR's diverse student population. SAAR provides consultations, services, and support to Student Affairs departments related to assessment, research, survey administration, statistical data analysis, and program evaluation.

SAAR conducts socially just assessments and research projects to fulfill Student Affairs' mission of cultivating a meaningful student experience. SAAR assesses the four strategic themes from the Division of Student Affairs 2025 Strategic Plan:

- **Transform the Student Experience**

  The Division of Student Affairs will create a transformational experience that promotes students' overall success, well-being, and resiliency at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

- **Creating Collaborative Partnerships**

  The Division of Student Affairs will develop campus and community-based collaborative partnerships that foster a student-centered culture of engagement and success.

- **Establishing Organizational Excellence**

  Establish a strong organizational foundation for the division to recruit, hire, and retain a diverse and inclusive team of Student Affairs professionals who will actively contribute to student success.

- **Fostering and Advancing Social Justice**

  To effectively serve an increasingly diverse student body, the Division of Student Affairs will infuse diversity, inclusion, and social justice into every aspect of its work.

Goals

The goals of Student Affairs Assessment & Research (SAAR) are:

Tell the Story - SAAR will communicate who Student Affairs' serves, how they serve, and why they serve through assessment & research (VCSA Strategic Plan 3.6).

Data-Driven Decisions - SAAR will use informed assessment and research processes to collect evidence and make data-driven decisions (VCSA Strategic Plan 1.6).

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Common Practice and Language - SAAR will follow common protocols, use shared language terminology to support the creation and completion of accessible division-wide and individual office assessment and research projects (VCSA Strategic Plan 3.8).

Creating Collaborative Resources - SAAR will direct the division to the Student Affairs Assessment & Research Collaboration (SAARC), a central collection of Student Affairs' assessment & research resources, including but not limited to the SAAR Handbook, annual reports, research executive summaries, assessment tools, validated survey questions, SAAR website, and other educational materials (VCSA Strategic Plan 2.3).

Professional Development - SAAR will develop assessment and research competencies for the division (VCSA Strategic Plan 3.2, 3.5).

Purpose

The purpose of assessment and research in Student Affairs is to provide evidence of a meaningful student experience. This handbook aims to provide Division of Student Affairs colleagues with a framework for collecting evidence through assessment and research. This guide will outline the cycle of assessment, review assessment and research processes for Student Affairs, share available resources, and provide a common language of assessment and research. Through a common understanding of assessment and research, Student Affairs colleagues may share our narrative with the UCR community and make data-driven decisions to enhance the experiences of our diverse student population.

Equity-Minded Assessment

Student Affairs Assessment & Research strives to conduct socially just, equity-minded assessments and build a culture of assessment in Student Affairs that values diversity, equity, and inclusion to uplift the voices of historically marginalized groups. Assessment and research can often have unintentional biases when not being aware of participants' backgrounds, identities, hardships, and points of view, as well as the personal privileges and backgrounds of the researcher or assessment professional. The following **guidelines** from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) can promote best practices in equity-minded assessment:

Equity-Minded Assessment Checklist:

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 taken.
5. Ensure collected data can be meaningfully disaggregated and interrogated.
6. Make evidence-based changes that address issues of equity that are context-specific.

Source: National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. *Equity in Assessment.*
https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/equity/

Assessment, Research, & Evaluation

While these terms are often used inter-changeably, they actually do have distinct differences. In a student affairs context:

- ***Assessment*** includes "any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness" (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18).
- ***Evaluation*** refers to "the process of determining the merit, worth, or value of something, or the product of that process" (Scriven, 1991, p. 139).
    - There are two main types of evaluation:
        - ***Formative Evaluation*** explores if and how a program or initiative is making progress toward its goals.
        - ***Summative Evaluation*** determines the long-term effects (positive or negative, intended or unintended) of a program or initiative.

Assessment is a *process* with the goal of continuous improvement, whereas evaluation is a *judgment*.

Assessment does not determine whether something is good or bad – that is an evaluation.

- ***Research*** is "a truth-seeking activity which contributes to [generalizable] knowledge, aimed at describing or explaining the world" (Coryn, 2006, p.1).
    - Specifically, research is "a form of inquiry in which:
        - (1) key concepts and procedures are carefully defined in such a way that the inquiry can be replicated and possibly refuted,
        - (2) controls are in place to minimize error and bias,
        - (3) the generalizability limits of the study are made explicit, and
        - (4) the results of the study are interpreted in terms of what they contribute to the cumulative body of knowledge about the object of inquiry"
            - (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 34).
    - "Research guides theory development while assessment guides practice; research most often has implications for the field of student affairs and higher education, while assessment most commonly has implications for a single unit or institution" – (Upcraft & Schuh, 2001).

Research is *generalizable* to a larger population,

whereas assessment only applies to the unit where data were collected.

Assessment Cycle

Assessment is a cyclical process. The following graphic illustrates the six steps of the assessment cycle. Results from one step of the process help guide the next step. While all steps are important, the process of "closing the loop" by implementing changes and then assessing the impact of those changes is imperative in the assessment cycle.

1. **Plan & Identify Outcomes** – Identify clear, measurable, specific outcomes that relate to the goals and objectives of the assessed program/service. In an effort to be intentional about carrying out an assessment or research project, develop assessment questions that focus on what you hope to learn from this assessment. By thinking this through in the beginning, this will ensure your assessment gathers actionable data necessary for continuous improvement and aligns with your student learning outcomes.
2. **Collect Data** – Collect data from the participants of the program/service that directly correlates to the goals and objectives.
3. **Analyze Data** – Analyze data to identify where the program/service needs to change to meet goals and objectives.
4. **Share Results** – Share the results with the necessary campus and community stakeholders.
5. **Identify & Implement Changes** – Identify changes that are necessary to help the program/service meet its desired outcomes that were identified in step one of the assessment cycle.
6. **Assess Impact of Change** – The goal for assessment is continuous improvement. Changes should be made based on the assessment process. After changes have been implemented, the assessment cycle should begin again to assess the impact of those changes.

Student Learning Outcomes & the ABCD Method

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Student Development Outcomes (SDOs) are necessary components of assessing the effectiveness of student programs and services. These forms of outcomes focus on how the student is benefitting from the program.

- **Student Learning Outcomes (SLO state what students are expected to know or be able to do upon completion of a course or program.** SLOs often refer to traditional forms of academic learning (i.e., intellectual or cognitive learning), but the definition is often expanded to include emotional or affective measurements usually described as Student Development Outcomes.
- **Student Development Outcomes (SDO)** focus on affective dimensions or attitudes and values, rather than cognitive abilities. These types of outcomes may consider growth in ethical, spiritual, emotional, and social responsibility dimensions. SDOs may sometimes be referred to as student learning outcomes as well, based on the view that these measure various types of learning. Given that co-curricular experiences enrich students' lives in a multitude of ways, this handbook will include student development outcomes when using the term "student learning outcome" or "SLO."

Writing effective student learning or development outcomes is essential when developing an assessment to measure student success in a program. SLOs and SDOs clarify what will be measured, how it will be measured, and how to determine whether the program was successful.

ABCD Method

Although there are many ways to write student learning outcomes, the ABCD Method of writing student learning outcomes is a straightforward and popular approach to ensure all critical pieces of information are included.

To use the ABCD Method, include these four key components:

1. **A**udience – who performs the behavior & when
2. **B**ehavior – observable / measurable action
3. **C**ondition – situation under which the behavior is performed
4. **D**egree of measurement – evaluates mastery of behavior

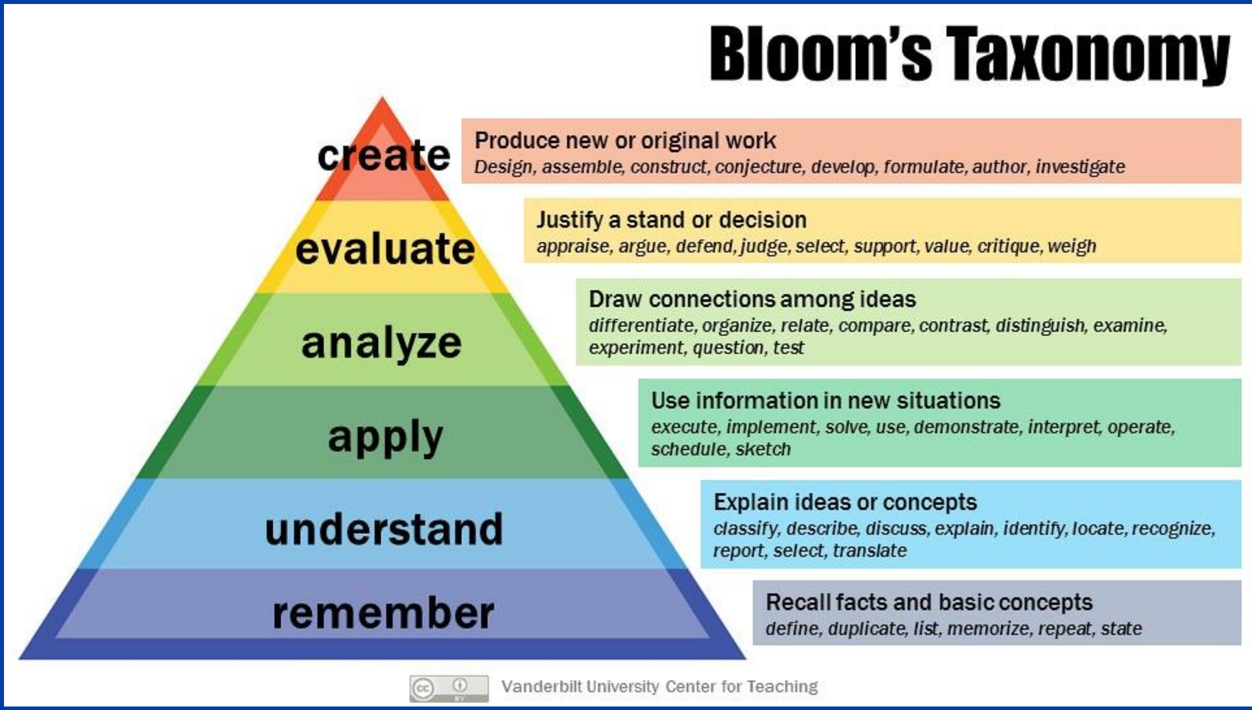
Example format: "As a result of (**C**ondition), (**A**udience) will (Bloom's taxonomy verb & **B**ehavior) as measured by (**D**egree of measurement)."

Example SLO: "As a result of the Student Affairs Assessment Workshop (**C**), staff (**A**) will be able to create a mock evaluation for a student program (B), as measured by a written summary that includes the six stages of the assessment cycle (**D**)."

See these handouts by SAAR, UCSD, and Anthology (formerly Campus Labs) for more practice.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy is a model originally created in 1956 that is used to classify educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity. The graphic below illustrates the revised model that includes a six-level hierarchy of learning, from remembering to creating.



Use Bloom's Taxonomy to Write SLOs

Bloom's Taxonomy is often used when writing student learning outcomes. Writing precise student learning outcomes with specific verbs can clarify what is being measured, the depth of student learning, as well as ensure the program is designed to measure what the programmer intended. This handout outlines an extensive list of synonyms for each level of learning, which can be referenced when writing student learning outcomes.

Check out this handout by Anthology (formerly Campus Labs) for more information and practice in writing student learning outcomes.

Assessment Processes in VCSA

Student Affairs Annual Assessment Report

In the 2019-2020 academic year, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (VCSA) initiated an annual assessment report process for all Student Affairs departments, offices, and units. Each year, Student Affairs Directors assess one program or service in an effort to begin a collective and instructional assessment ethos within the Division. Student Affairs Directors or designated staff complete a report template developed by SAAR and are graded using a rubric with three criteria: Student Learning Outcomes, Analysis of Evidence, and Use of Evidence. The aim of these assessments is to aid in fostering a culture of assessment where all staff within the Division are well-versed with assessment methods and utilizing data for decision-making and continuous programmatic improvement to enhance the student experience.

The Student Affairs Annual Assessment Report contains the overall results for the Division and is published in aggregate on the Student Affairs Assessment & Research website at https://saar.ucr.edu/assessment. This process continued in 2020-2021 and is scheduled to carry on for the foreseeable future.

Survey Research

Student Affairs uses surveys to evaluate programs, gauge interest in programs/services, and to learn more about the student experience at UCR. The data collected from surveys is then statistically analyzed to make data-driven decisions.

Key Steps in Implementing Surveys:

Decide survey questions: Brainstorm and put together valid survey questions that are grammatically and logically appropriate. Understanding the objective and expected outcomes of the survey helps a lot. Ideally, the surveys should include a smart balance of open-ended and closed-ended questions and avoid asking personal or confidential information. Check out saar.ucr.edu for tips and basic guidelines on writing effective survey questions.

Finalize a target audience: Only send out surveys when necessary to avoid *survey fatigue* (when students receive too many surveys or surveys are too long and they stop participating). Decide which students to include in your survey sample and avoid asking any questions that are not actionable (Does the question collect “nice to know” or “need to know” information?).

- Review this guide for tips to avoid survey fatigue.

Send out surveys via decided mediums: Decide how you want to create and distribute your survey. Surveys can be sent out through a survey platform, such as Qualtrics, using email addresses or sent using an anonymous link. Surveys can be conducted via email, embedded in a website, shared via social media, etc. to gain maximum responses. Depending on your project, Student Affairs Assessment & Research may be able to administer your survey to all enrolled students or offer solutions on survey distribution. More information about sending your survey with Qualtrics is available here.

Analyze survey results: To analyze your survey or assessment data, using Excel or SPSS is recommended for most projects. Student Affairs professionals can use the results to make continuous improvements to “close the loop” of the assessment cycle.

Excel: Most assessment and research results can be analyzed in Excel. Techniques such as Pivot Tables, conditional formatting, and using formulas such as =sum, =average, =vlookup, and many more can often provide you with the tools necessary to answer your assessment and research questions. For more information about how to analyze data in Excel, contact saar@ucr.edu or browse LinkedIn Learning for numerous online courses.

SPSS: UC Riverside provides a free site license to SPSS, one of the leading software tools for statistics and research in the social sciences. This tool can be most helpful with quantitative data that requires advanced statistical analyses, but it also is powerful for descriptive statistics as well such as with the Custom Tables feature. Staff and faculty interested in obtaining an SPSS license should contact ITS BearHelp at (951) 827-IT4U (4848), BearHelp@ucr.edu; or submit a ticket here.

Survey Software

Qualtrics is one of the top survey research platforms and is licensed by UC Riverside for all students, staff, and faculty to access for free. Qualtrics allows users to create surveys and generate reports without having any previous programming knowledge and is FERPA and HIPAA compliant. With Qualtrics, you can create and distribute surveys, analyze results, and generate reports. You can also share your survey with other UC Riverside staff or students to collaborate on your project (Note: Staff will not be able to access surveys created by students once the student graduates. It is recommended that staff have ownership of the survey before sharing with students). Results can be downloaded in Excel, SPSS, and other formats. Qualtrics can generate summary reports that can be viewed online or downloaded as a PDF. To get started with Qualtrics:

- Activate your Qualtrics account at ucriverside.az1.quatrics.com and log via CAS with your NetID.
- Learn the ins-and-outs of Qualtrics at https://www.qualtrics.com/support/
- Review these Qualtrics Support pages to get started:
    - Survey Basic Overview
    - How to create an effective survey
    - Create a survey online: How to use our free survey maker tool
    - Learn the Experience Management (XM) Platform
- For Qualtrics support:
    1. Submit a support ticket to ITS at ithelp.ucr.edu
    2. Contact Qualtrics directly using the Support Portal and access the Qualtrics Phone Support and Authentication guide from ITS for instructions
    3. Contact Student Affairs Assessment & Research at saar@ucr.edu

Additional survey platforms popular for surveying students include Google Forms, Wufoo, SurveyMonkey, and Alchemer (formerly SurveyGizmo). These platforms are not licensed by UC Riverside, but some Student Affairs professionals may prefer them.

Guidelines for Creating Accessible Surveys for Students with Disabilities

Many online survey platforms include design options that can cause difficulty for students with disabilities to complete the survey. In addition to general accessibility print guidelines, there are specific practices to keep in mind to ensure all of your students are capable of completing your survey. If your survey is in Qualtrics, you can use the Check Survey Accessibility feature on your surveys to identify any accessibility issues and get recommendations for increased accessibility to help you work towards WCAG 2.0 AA (and Section 508) compliant surveys. See this brief list from UCOP for guidelines for accessible surveys and forms and contact the Student Disability Resource Center for specific guidance.

Principles for Writing Survey Questions

Survey data can often be biased or skewed due to the way the survey questions were designed. There are many guidelines for valid and reliable survey questions. These 19 Principles for Writing Survey Questions are classic in the field of survey research and based on years of empirical evidence. Keep these in mind when designing survey questions to ensure your surveys yield as accurate and unbiased data as possible.

1. Choose simple over specialized words.
2. Choose as few words as possible to pose the question.
3. Use complete sentences to ask questions.
4. Avoid vague qualifiers when more precise estimates can be obtained.
5. Avoid specificity that exceeds the respondent's potential for having an accurate, ready-made answer.
6. Use equal numbers of positive and negative categories for scalar questions.
7. Distinguish undecided from neutral by placement at the end of the scale.
8. Avoid bias from unequal comparisons.
9. State both sides of attitudinal scale in the question stems.
10. Eliminate check-all-that-apply question formats to reduce primacy effects.
11. Develop response categories that are mutually exclusive.
12. Use cognitive techniques to improve recall.
13. Provide appropriate time referents.
14. Be sure each question is technically accurate.
15. Choose question wordings that allow essential comparisons to be made with previously collected data.
16. Avoid asking respondents to say yes in order to mean no.
17. Avoid double-barreled questions.
18. Soften the impact of potentially objectionable questions.
19. Avoid asking respondents to make unnecessary calculations.

Source: Dillman, D.A. (2007) *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method,* 2nd edition

Data Security & Privacy Best Practices

Assessment and research data with participants, such as surveys, can often contain confidential and sensitive information. The best way to avoid a data breach of sensitive student information is to not collect it. That is, be intentional in your survey questions and only ask what you need to know. Due to the recent Accellion data breach at UCOP, student information including responses from a systemwide survey were leaked online, potentially putting students at risk.

Best practices for handling sensitive data include:

1. Keep respondents informed by letting them know what you will do with their data – where it will be kept, for how long, and how it will be used.
2. Conduct anonymous surveys to avoid collecting personally identifiable data that is not needed
3. Only use secure HTTPS survey links to ensure the data is encrypted safely.
4. Consider including a password or requiring questionnaire log ins such as CAS authentication to access your survey link.
5. Limit access to survey data to ensure only individuals who need to see the respondent-level survey data or sensitive information are able to.
6. Be mindful of how the data are stored, such as on a locked and password-protected computer
7. De-identify the data by removing any sensitive information after it is collected so respondents cannot be identified based on their responses (see this list of de-identification techniques, these guidelines on de-

identifying protected health information, Qualtrics' Data Protection & Privacy information, and this guide from SurveyMonkey's Data Collection & Privacy Best Practices)

8. Use secure file transfer software such as Microsoft OneDrive or Google Drive
9. Delete sensitive information when it is no longer needed including from the original survey host website, such as Qualtrics or SurveyMonkey.
10. Avoid emailing confidential and sensitive student information, including datasets with personal information.
11. Review these important rules for data protection and data security management recommended by UCOP's Institutional Research & Academic Planning.

There are many additional safeguard measures you can take to prevent a data breach from happening to your data. UC Riverside's Information Technology Solutions has a list of resources about cybersecurity here and related courses can be found on the UC Learning Center.

Program Evaluation

Program Evaluation is "a process that consists in collecting, analyzing, and using information to assess the relevance of a public program, its effectiveness and its efficiency" (Josselin & Le Maux, 2017, p. 1-2). The aim of program evaluation is to answer questions about a program's performance and value. Program evaluation should have three outcomes: Assess program implementation, assess program results, and highlight methods of program improvement (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2015).

Program evaluations are useful ways to gain information about student programs to assess learning outcomes and program success. There are many ways to conduct a program evaluation, but it typically involves creating a survey or tool to elicit feedback.

Program Evaluation Template

Student Affairs staff who are interested in creating program evaluations for any Student Affairs departments, programs, workshops, or events can use **this template** as well as the **Qualtrics version** to create evaluations for Student Affairs programs. The template can be modified to fit your needs and includes examples of ways to assess student learning outcomes, satisfaction, comments, and more. The **Qualtrics version** can be copied to your UCR Qualtrics account so you can modify it and re-use it for future program evaluations as well. For access to edit the template or questions about program evaluations, contact saar@ucr.edu.

Focus Groups

A focus group is a research technique used to collect qualitative data through group interaction. The group comprises a small number of carefully selected people who discuss a given topic. Focus groups are generally used to gather people's opinions, ideas, and beliefs on a certain topic or program/service. While surveys can be useful, sometimes they cannot capture enough nuance/context, qualitative information, or thoughts and feelings. This is where a focus group will come into play. Focus groups generally are time-consuming and involve sharing sensitive information, so it is recommended to provide an incentive of some kind to students who participate. Contact Student Affairs Assessment & Research at saar@ucr.edu for more information on focus group protocols.

Existing Data

There are several surveys that are sent out by UCOP or UCR that may capture some if not all of the data that might be needed by other programs/services. Student Affairs Assessment & Research can assist with accessing previous surveys or data to prevent survey fatigue. Accessing existing data can prevent sending students too many long or repetitive surveys, which could lead to them becoming overwhelmed and no longer willing to provide feedback.

Available existing data include:

- **ACHA-National College Health Assessment (ACHA-NCHA):** The ACHA-National College Health Assessment (ACHA-NCHA) is a national research survey organized by the American College Health Association (ACHA) to provide health educators and administrators data about their students' habits, behaviors, and perceptions related to health and wellbeing. Topics include:
  - Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use
  - Sexual health
  - Weight, nutrition, and exercise
  - Mental health
  - Personal safety and violence

  The ACHA-NCHA is administered systemwide biannually on odd-ending years during Winter quarter. At UCR, this survey is coordinated as a joint effort by The Well and Student Affairs Assessment & Research and includes a random sample of students. ACHA-NCHA reports are located at https://saar.ucr.edu/reports.
- **UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)**: The University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) gathers undergraduate students’ feedback on a broad range of academic and co-curricular experiences. This survey is offered biannually on even-ending years during Spring quarter. The survey, results, and reports are located at ucues.ucr.edu. Review the UCUES data tables provided by UCOP for full results from all campuses. UCUES topics include:
  - Academic Engagement
  - Time Allocation
  - Educational Experiences
  - Campus Climate for Diversity and Inclusiveness
  - Evaluation of the Major
  - Co-Curricular Experience
  - Academic and Personal Development
  - Satisfaction
  - Plans and Aspirations
  - Background and Personal Characteristics
  - Academic Experience & Globalization
  - Student Life and Development
  - Community and Civic Engagement
  - Basic Needs
  - COVID-19 (for 2020 survey administration only)
- **University of California Graduate Student Experience Survey (UCGSES)**: Beginning in 2021, UCOP began administering the UC Graduate Student Experience Survey (UCGSES) as a counterpart to the undergraduate-focused UCUES. Survey results can be found on the UC Information Center UCGSES dashboard.

  Topics include:
  - Background and Quality of Program, Faculty and Curriculum
  - Advising Experience
  - Professional Development and Progress to Degree

- Program Climate
- Financial Support
- Well-Being and Satisfaction with University Resources
- Basic Needs
- Post-Graduate Career Plans
- COVID-19 Remote Learning and Research (for 2021 survey administration only)
- Demographic Information

- **CIRP's The Freshman Survey**: The CIRP Freshman Survey (TFS) collects important information on what UCR's incoming students are like before they experience college. Topics include:
  - Established behaviors in high school
  - Academic preparedness
  - Admissions decisions
  - Expectations of college
  - Interactions with peers and faculty
  - Student values and goals
  - Student demographic characteristics
  - Concerns about financing college

  UCR ceased participating in this annual survey in 2020, but past results are located at https://saar.ucr.edu/reports.
- **UC Systemwide Surveys (Past and Ongoing):**
  - Undergraduate Education and Experience:
    - UC Undergraduate Experience Survey
    - Undergraduate Cost of Attendance Survey
    - Undergraduate Application Survey
    - Admitted Transfer Applicant Survey
    - Undergraduate Alumni Survey
  - Graduate Education and Experience:
    - UC Graduate Student Experience Survey
    - Graduate Student Well-Being Survey
    - Graduate Cost of Attendance Survey
    - Graduate Student Support Survey
    - PhD Career Pathways Survey
    - Graduate Alumni Survey
  - Other Systemwide Surveys:
    - Student Food Access and Security Survey
    - Campus Climate Survey
    - Medical Plan Satisfaction Survey
  - Review the Survey Calendar for UCOP Institutional Research and Academic Planning to ensure new surveys do not overlap with existing UC systemwide surveys.
- **Additional surveys:** Student Affairs Assessment & Research has access to several additional surveys that may be related to a topic you are interested in. Before creating a new survey, you can check with saar@ucr.edu to see if there are already data on the issues you are interested in.
- **Existing Systemwide Data:** The UC Information Center provides data dashboards on systemwide surveys and additional data sources.

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Incentives

Departments are encouraged to provide prizes or incentives for assessment or research projects involving student participants. Incentives can increase the chance of students participating in surveys, interviews, and focus groups. There are some limitations on which incentives should be selected – for example, when the chosen incentives could cause undue influence or coercion. It's best to avoid prizes that could sway participants due to their financial background. There are also some tax limitations for prizes with high monetary values.

One economic way to offer incentives to participants is through a raffle or drawing. According to UCR's Institutional Review Board (IRB):

> Raffles or drawings must be designed so that it complies with State Law. UCOP interprets California State Law prohibiting lotteries as also prohibiting compensation to research participants through a drawing. A lottery occurs when the individual included in the drawing provides something of value in return for their inclusion. In cases where research participants are entered into a drawing, the participants' participation is something of value. So, if inclusion in the drawing is dependent upon participation, California law may determine the drawing meets the definition of "lottery", an activity that is prohibited. One method of ensuring the drawing is not a lottery is to open the drawing to everyone, regardless of their participation. You can revise the application, study advertisements and consent form to include a mechanism for those who do not participate in the study to enter the drawing. For example, you could add the following language to the invitation:
>
>> *"Everyone can be entered in the drawing regardless of participation. If you do not want to participate but want to be included in the drawing, please email me at XXXX@ucr.edu."*
>
> Data show that few people will pursue inclusion in the drawing when they do not participate. For more information about incentives, contact: saar@ucr.edu or irb@ucr.edu

New Assessment Opportunities in Student Affairs

Student Affairs Assessment & Research Collaboration (SAARC)

Coming soon! The Student Affairs Assessment & Research Collaboration (SAARC) is a SharePoint site dedicated as the assessment repository for Student Affairs. SAARC was created to foster a sharing of evidence-based and high-impact practices and strategies within the Division of Student Affairs to enhance the student experiences of UCR's diverse student population. This SharePoint site provides Student Affairs staff with the opportunity to share assessments from their department and collaborate with others across the Division who have conducted similar assessments. Ultimately, the goal of SAARC is to establish and strengthen collaboration within Student Affairs to foster a student-centered culture of success. SAAR will announce the launch of this new program during the 2022-2023 academic year to department Directors. Each Director will be invited to join the site and asked to invite their staff. For access to SAARC, please contact saar@ucr.edu.

Student Affairs Assessment Liaison Program

Coming soon! The Assessment Liaison Program is a training program for staff who are new to administering assessments on behalf of their departments. Liaisons are appointed by their department Directors based on if they are currently conducting assessments or interested in learning about assessment in Student Affairs. Beginning in 2022-2023, the liaison program will train these staff members on the fundamentals of assessment, review department-specific assessments, and enable liaisons to be a resource to share information related to assessment within their departments. For more information, contact saar@ucr.edu.

Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Board

Coming soon! The Assessment Advisory Board includes Division staff who are skilled in conducting assessments and is chaired by the Director of Assessment & Research. Beginning in 2022-2023, the advisory board will meet regularly to provide feedback on creating and sustaining a culture of equity-minded assessment in Student Affairs. This ensures that SAAR is in touch with how assessment is being experienced across the Division and what could be done differently to improve assessment practices in the future. For more information or to request to join, contact saar@ucr.edu.

Questions to Consider Before Conducting Assessment or Research

To get the most out of an assessment or research project, it's important to be intentional about your goals and student learning outcomes. There are many other details to consider as well:

1. **What goal are you to trying to accomplish with this project?**
   - How will you use the information gained from this research project? Do you want to improve student learning outcomes, satisfaction, or student success in your programs? Develop an assessment or research question to identify the specific information you hope to learn from the results. This question narrows down the specific details of what you want your assessment or research project results to provide and can help ensure that your project is designed to get you the information you need.
2. **Has the information been collected before?**
   - Could your assessment or research question be answered with data from Banner, the Common Data Set, UCUES, or other existing survey data? There may be several different research methods available to get you the information you need.
   - Have you already collected data and need help with data analysis or interpreting the results? Have you already created survey questions? Student Affairs Assessment & Research can review your questions to ensure you are collecting the information you need.
3. **What is your time frame?**
   - Assessment and research projects are highly involved and can sometimes take longer than expected. Consider how much time to set aside for consultation with SAAR or other stakeholders, survey design and approval, developing focus group protocols (if applicable), data collection, statistical analysis, qualitative analysis (if applicable), reporting the results, and awarding any incentives – plus IRB approval depending on the type of project. Find out if there are any other surveys occurring at the same time to avoid survey fatigue.
4. **Once you collect the information, how will you analyze it?**
   - Make sure you only collect the information you need and that you will be able to analyze it to answer your assessment questions and assess your student learning outcomes.
5. **How do you plan to take action based on the results?**
   - What insights do you hope to gain and how will you implement changes? How will you "close the loop" of the assessment cycle? This step is critical to make the most of your assessment by utilizing the data to make continuous improvements of your programs and services.
6. **Does your assessment include the six elements of equity-minded assessment?**
   - Review the equity-minded assessment guidelines to ensure that your assessment is inclusive of UCR students, taking into account any potential biases, privileges, and systems of power.

UCR Assessment and Institutional Research Offices

There are three primary assessment and research offices at UC Riverside. Each office has a different focus and provides different resources to staff and faculty.

Student Affairs Assessment & Research – saar.ucr.edu

SAAR conducts socially just assessments and research projects to fulfill Student Affairs' mission of cultivating a meaningful student experience. The mission of Student Affairs Assessment & Research (SAAR) is to create a culture of equity-minded assessment and promote data-driven decision making in Student Affairs to enhance the student experiences of UCR's diverse student population. SAAR provides consultations, services, and support to Student Affairs departments related to assessment, research, survey administration, statistical data analysis, and program evaluation.

Institutional Research – ir.ucr.edu

Institutional Research (IR) supports UC Riverside with modeling, analysis, and reports to inform campus decision-making. IR are the source of many official UCR statistics related to students, faculty, and staff. Please visit the IR Campus Statistics page for interactive dashboards and data downloads, or contact IR at ir@ucr.edu if you have a request or question not covered by their web tools.

Office of Evaluation and Assessment – assess.ucr.edu

The mission of University of California Riverside's Office of Evaluation and Assessment is to facilitate a culture of data-driven decision making and continuous educational improvement with student success as its ultimate goal. Contact assess@ucr.edu for information about academic assessment.

Assessment Workshops by Office of Evaluation & Assessment

The following workshops are provided by the Office of Evaluation & Assessment and are open to staff and faculty on campus. Student Affairs professionals are encouraged to attend these workshops to enhance their understanding of assessment and improve their ability to conduct their own assessments. More information and recordings of past workshops can be found on the Evaluation & Assessment Workshop website.

Name	Description
Undergraduate Annual Assessment Report Workshop	This workshop will help **undergraduate programs** navigate completion of the Undergraduate Annual Assessment Report.
Graduate Annual Assessment Report Workshop	This workshop will help **graduate programs** navigate completion of the Graduate Annual Assessment Report.
Creating Student Outcomes that Guide Experiences	This workshop will focus on how to create effective student-centered outcomes that guide student learning and/or development in a program.
Mapping Student Experiences	This workshop will focus on mapping student outcomes to program experiences, such as courses, helping to create an aligned program that gets students to meet expectations.
Authentic Assessment: Tapping into What You Already Do	This workshop is focused on helping programs/units use existing authentic assessments (rather than creating assessments just for the annual assessment reporting) to determine how well students are meeting outcomes and expectations.
Closing the Loop with Findings and Recommendations	This workshop will focus on making meaning of assessment findings and using that information to make meaningful change.

Institutional Review Boards (IRB)

UCR's Institutional Review Boards are in place to be sure that federal regulations in protecting the welfare and rights of human research subjects are followed. UCR has two programs, IRB-SB (Social-Behavioral) and IRB-Clin (Clinical-Biomedical). Usually, Student Affairs staff do not need to submit IRB applications for assessments if the assessment results are used only for administrative purposes and not intended for publication. For information about UCR's IRB, contact irb@ucr.edu or find more information on their website: https://research.ucr.edu/ori/irb-sb

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)

CITI is a required training for any UCR staff, faculty, or student conducting human subjects research. The training reviews ethics and procedures to ensure the safety of the research participants including informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. This training is not required for most Student Affairs assessment or research projects, but can be helpful for anyone doing assessment, especially for staff conducting surveys. For more information, contact UCR's IRB at irb@ucr.edu or go to:

https://research.ucr.edu/ori/irb-sb/citi-instruction
https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage/

Resources

Assessment & Research across University of California

- UC Information Center: https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter
- UCOP Institutional Research & Academic Planning (IRAP): https://ucop.edu/institutional-research-academic-planning/
- UC Berkeley: https://opa.berkeley.edu/
- UC Davis: https://research.ucdavis.edu/proposals-grants-contracts/project-dev/campus-resources/evaluation-services/
- UCLA: https://sairo.ucla.edu/
- UC Merced: https://rds.ucmerced.edu/
- UC San Diego: https://commons.ucsd.edu/educators/research-and-assessment/index.html
- UC San Francisco: https://oir.ucsf.edu/
- UC Santa Barbara: https://www.sa.ucsb.edu/assessment-initiative/home

Additional Learning Opportunities: Conferences and Courses

- **ACPA Student Affairs Assessment Institute**: https://www.myacpa.org/events/student-affairs-assessment-institute
- **Assessment Institute hosted by Indiana University and Purdue University:** https://assessmentinstitute.iupui.edu/index.html
- **NASPA Assessment, Persistence, and Data Analytics Conference**: https://www.naspa.org/events/naspa-virtual-assessment-persistence-and-data-analytics-conference
- **Student Affairs Assessment Leaders (SAAL)**: http://studentaffairsassessment.org/
- **SAAL's Open Course: Applying and Leading Assessment in Student Affairs**: http://studentaffairsassessment.org/online-open-course

Glossary

Assessment: Any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18).

Assessment Cycle: The assessment cycle relies on an intentional and reflective process of design, implementation, evaluation, and revision.

Assessment (or Research) Question: A precise and specifically-worded question that narrows down the specific details of what you want your assessment or research project results to provide and is developed during the project planning phase to ensure that your project is designed to get you the information you need.

Assessment Repository: A space in which various parties share their assessment tools.

Benchmark Assessment: Benchmark assessments are used to measure the [academic] progress of large groups of students.

Completion Rate: A percentage calculated based on the total number of respondents (e.g., students) who fully completed a survey out of the total number of people eligible to complete the survey. This differs from a response rate, which includes partially-complete or unfinished survey responses.

Culture of Assessment: A culture of assessment exists in an organization/institution where faculty staff, and administrators care to know what assessment results they produce and how these results relate to desired institutional outcomes and learning outcomes for students, their parents, and other stakeholders.

Data Collection: Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on targeted variables in an established system, which then enables one to answer relevant questions and evaluate outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics: Statistics used to describe the characteristics of a distribution of scores.

> *Frequency*: the number of times a given score occurs in a set of data.
>
> *Mean*: the arithmetic average of a distribution of scores.
>
> *Median*: the score in the distribution that marks the 50th percentile. It is the score at which 50% of the distribution falls below and 50% falls above.
>
> *Mode*: the score in the distribution that occurs most frequently.
>
> *Range*: the difference between the largest score and the smallest score of a distribution.
>
> *Standard Deviation*: the average deviation between the individual scores in the distribution and the mean for the distribution.

Direct Measures: Measures student learning outcomes directly. Direct evidence of student learning is tangible, visible, self-explanatory, and compelling evidence of exactly what students have and have not learned.

Evaluation: A form of inquiry that seeks to address critical questions concerning how well a program, process, product, system, or organization is working. It is typically under-taken for decision-making purposes, and should lead to a use of findings by a variety of stakeholders (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009, p. 6). In Student Affairs, evaluation refers to "any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, departmental, divisional or institutional effectiveness" (Upcraft & Schuh, 1994, p. 19).

Existing Data: Information from any source that currently exists that describes the current functioning of the individual and may be available to the division for an eligibility determination.

Focus Groups: A demographically diverse group of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion about a particular product before it is launched, or to provide ongoing feedback on a political campaign, television series, etc.

Formative Assessment: Explores if and how a program or initiative is making progress toward its goals. A wide variety of methods that educators use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, course, or program. The general goal of formative assessment is to collect detailed information that can be used to improve instruction and student learning while it's happening. What makes an assessment "formative" is not the design of a test, technique, or self-evaluation, per se, but the way it is used—i.e., to inform in-process teaching and learning modifications.

Goals: Statements articulating what the program realistically intend to accomplish, written in broad terms. Describes a university's/division's/program's expectations of itself.

Indirect Measures: Measures opinions or thoughts about students' own knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, perceptions of services received, etc. Indirect methods "consist of proxy signs that students are probably learning. Indirect evidence is less clear and less convincing than direct evidence."

Inferential Statistics: Statistics, derived from sample data that are used to make inferences about the population from which the sample was drawn.

Population: the collection of cases that comprise the entire set of cases with the specified characteristics (e.g., all living adult males in the United States).

Sample: a collection of cases selected from a larger population.

Statistical significance: the claim that a result from data generated by testing or experimentation is not likely to occur randomly or by chance but is instead likely to be attributable to a specific cause.

Institutional Review Board (IRB): An independent ethics committee, a type of committee that applies research ethics by reviewing the methods proposed for research to ensure that they are ethical.

Learning Outcomes: Statements of the knowledge, skills and abilities individual students should possess and can demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience or sequence of learning experiences. Often written from the perspective of the student, e.g., "if the program is successful, the student will be able to…"

Mission: A short statement illustrating the basic purpose of the program/organization/entity of interest. Mission statements are clear, Concise, and broad, as well as aligned with the mission of the University.

Needs Assessment: The process of identifying and determining how to bridge the gap between an organization's current and desired state. More specifically, the process outlines which processes a team should prioritize, improve or provide resources to meet its goals.

Objectives: Statements articulating what the program realistically intends to accomplish, put in specific measurable terms. Describe the task needed to achieve the goals. Objectives:

- Are written from the perspective of the program/person providing the services
- Inform strategic plans and action plans
- Should be paired with achievement timelines

Outcomes/Results: Statement specifically describing the end result/desired effect of the program. These outcomes must be measurable: they describe what you will be able to observe and measure if the program has been successful.

Program Evaluation: A process that consists of collecting, analyzing, and using information to assess the relevance of a public program, its effectiveness and its efficiency (Josselin & Le Maux, 2017, p. 1-2).

Program/Process Outcome: Describes the success metrics a program should display on completion, from the perspective of the program.

Qualitative Analysis: Detailed description of the situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors, the use of direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and the analysis of excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories.

Quantitative Analysis: Use structured, predetermined response options that can be summarized into meaningful numbers and analyzed statistically. Test scores, rubric scores, survey ratings, and performance indicators are all examples of quantitative evidence.

Research: A form of inquiry in which (1) key concepts and procedures are carefully defined in such a way that the inquiry can be replicated and possibly refuted, (2) controls are in place to minimize error and bias, (3) the generalizability limits of the study are made explicit, and (4) the results of the study are interpreted in terms of what they contribute to the cumulative body of knowledge about the object of inquiry (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 34).

Response Rate: A percentage calculated based on the total number of respondents who participated in a survey (including partially-complete responses) out of the total number of people eligible to complete the survey. This differs from a completion rate, which only includes the total number of respondents who *fully completed* a survey.

Student Development Outcome (SDO): Affective dimensions or attitudes and values (not cognitive abilities); and consider growth in ethical, spiritual, emotional, and social responsibility dimensions; sometimes also referred to as learning outcomes.

Student Learning Outcome (SLO): Intellectual or cognitive learning (not emotional or affective measurements).

Summative Assessment: Determines the long-term effects (positive or negative, intended or unintended) of a program or initiative. Used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Summative assessments are given at the conclusion of a specific instructional period, and therefore they are generally evaluative, rather than diagnostic. What makes an assessment "summative" is not the design of the test, assignment, or self-evaluation, per se, but the way it is used—i.e., to determine whether and to what degree students have learned the material they have been taught.

Survey Data: The resultant data that is collected from a sample of respondents that took a survey. This data is comprehensive information gathered from a target audience about a specific topic to conduct research. There are many methods used for survey data collection and statistical analysis.

Survey Fatigue: When potential survey respondents (usually students) become bored or uninterested in completing surveys. This normally happens in two ways:

1. Before taking the survey — overwhelmed by the sheer volume of requests for feedback, students decide not to even begin your survey. The result is a drop in response rates as fewer students decide to give feedback.
2. During the survey — this happens after someone has started the survey and is usually caused by poor survey design such as including too many questions, a high proportion of open text fields or asking the same question repeatedly. As a result, respondents can drop out midway or lose interest and speed through, giving you inaccurate data.

For questions or feedback on this handbook, contact:

HAYDEN HARRIS, PH.D. (they/them/theirs)
Director of Assessment & Research
Student Affairs Assessment & Research
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Administration
University of California, Riverside
(951) 827-5968 | hayden.harris@ucr.edu
saar.ucr.edu | saar@ucr.edu

"Thank you for your hard work and dedication to assess the student experience at UCR and support a culture of equity-minded assessment and continuous improvement in Student Affairs."

– Hayden