

ACERT: March 11, 2020 Assessment and Access

More questions than answers.

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What do I mean by “access”?

- Disability:
 - Disabled students
 - Deaf students
- More specifically: any group of students for whom “business as usual” is often excluding
 - Student parents
 - Low income students
 - Students who are not White

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What do I mean my “assess”?

- Assessment at any level of the institution
 - Individual learning assessment
 - Course level assessment
 - Program level assessment
 - Institution-wide assessment

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How these questions got started

- Personal experience
 - As a student, getting lecture materials in one language and exams in another, I needed more time to think through questions so that I could demonstrate my learning
- Psychology department PLO assessment process
 - Seeing that we do not have all of our PLOs systematically embedded in courses
 - Professional Development is mostly offered and measured in optional workshops

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Individual Level: Accommodations do not guarantee access

- A blind student taking an exam with a voice reader has a different task than a sighted student taking a printed exam.
 - The student needs to listen to, and memorize the question stem, and answers
 - They can ask for repetition of the question- but this assumes the reader is competent
 - They still have a more complicated cognitive task
- A voice-to-text word processing program for writing a paper may be too slow for a student to maintain their train of thought while dictating.

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Course Level: Access and assessment at the course level

- Structuring assignments and assessments using a Universal Design approach benefits all students not just students with disabilities

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Program Level: Structural equity

- Are our PLOs distributed across the major courses in an equitable way?
- Is the learning structure equitable?
 - Are required courses structured to provide students with all of the PLOs?
 - Are elective courses the only ones offering certain PLOs?
 - If we say students will get professional development, but this is concentrated in electives, then we are not structuring equitably
 - If we are only offering some PLOs as elective workshops we are not offering the learning opportunities equitably

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Institution Level: Cultural Loading Potential

- Institutional Learning Outcomes are designed to be very broad and readily adapted across different majors
- They still rely on individual course structure and instructor practices
- Assessments of critical thinking may carry cultural loading that can disadvantage students who are not White
 - E.g. In my previous assessment of CT, I wondered whether students may attempt to “play it safe” in demonstrating critical thinking
 - They may hold back on expressing critiques of research or alternative interpretations and ideas if they are concerned that the instructor will not understand

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