

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research: A Reflective Self-Assessment

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Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

The ACPA&NASPA Professional Competency Rubrics describes Assessment, Evaluation, and Research competency as an individual's ability to design, conduct, collect, and use data to make informed decisions (2015). Particularly, this competency focuses on using a theoretical framework to "design programs and learning outcomes that align with institutional goals and priorities" (ACPA&NASPA, P.14). This competency is categorized into four components that include terms and concepts, values, ethics, and politics, AER design, method, data collection, and data analysis (ACPA&NASPA, 2015). The four components of this competency require individuals to be able to understand the key concepts of assessment, program evaluation, planning, and research. It also emphasizes individual's' ability to describe the differences between assessment, evaluation, and research terms and apply them in ways that improve a unit, division, or institution (ACPA& NASPA, 2015). I developed these skills through my graduate coursework and my assistantship experiences with the engagement team at the international support service office.

AER Terms & Concepts

I gained a deep knowledge of the key concepts and differences between Assessment, Evaluation, and Research competency throughout my graduate program coursework. The AER terms and concepts of this competency emphasize being familiar with the foundation of assessment, evaluation, planning, and research and using them as an important tool to improve programs and services within an institution. I believe that I developed a deep understanding of assessment evaluation and research by taking EPSY 715: Understanding Research in Education and ELPS 885: Assessment and Program Evaluation classes during my master's program. The Understanding Research in higher education coursework was beneficial in helping me learn

skills to construct and evaluate arguments, understand the ethical considerations of data collection, and principles of measurement and sampling in the research process. Throughout the course, I became more confident in developing a research proposal that addressed how student involvement in campus activities and students' organizations influence their academic success and growth. Throughout this process, I engaged in synthesizing literature reviews and critically evaluating each source to find the patterns that helped strengthen my research and understanding of the topic. This course also helped me gain a deep understanding of the key terms of measurement and sampling in the research process. Since empirical research relies on the possibility of measuring the concepts involved in the research questions or hypothesis, this learning experience enhanced my understanding of how careful selection of sampling influences the quality of research. As a result, I became more intentional about selecting the right samples and using proper methods to gather data. My final research proposal reflected the knowledge and skills I gained from this class.

Another coursework that reinforces my knowledge of AER is the ELPS 885: Assessment and Program Evaluation. This course's contents and assignments have equipped me with the knowledge and skills to design survey questions, analyze data, and use the outcomes to make informed decisions about program improvements. In addition, throughout this course, I explored the different types of evaluation and assessment, research methods, needs assessment, and outcomes. This course was a great opportunity for me to dive into the concepts of assessment, evaluation, and research. It enabled me to not only learn how to collect feedback, but to use it effectively in improving our programs and services for students. In this course, I was able to apply theories of assessment in given scenarios through group assignments every week.

This was a chance for me to learn how to design survey questions and identify the right research method in each scenario. Additionally, as part of the class's final project, I worked with a team of two other students to assess the effectiveness of the KU Career Center Services for international students. In this project, I used a qualitative research method by developing a survey questionnaire using Qualtrics to collect students' feedback on their use of Career Services and rate their satisfaction with these services provided at KU. This assignment has helped me to apply my knowledge of assessment in practice. I felt that I grew significantly in designing survey questions that are specific, purposeful, and aligned with the research goals. Further, it strengthened my ability to think critically on what kinds of information is needed to gather meaningful feedback.

The need assessment process has taught me to be more thoughtful in collecting feedback and be mindful of students' confidentiality, which is critical to the assessment process. According to ACPA & NASPA (2015), understanding the value of assessment and being able to follow institutional policies is essential in creating a positive culture of assessment. As part of the assessment class, I studied an equity-minded and equity-centered approach in assessment which basically cultivates the awareness of those who are involved in assessment, evaluation, and research to consider ethics in assessment. I used this framework when developing survey questionnaires and conducting interviews to ensure that students' voices are heard fairly and the assessment process was inclusive.

AER Design, Methodology and Data Analysis

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research competency rubrics explain this component as an individual's ability to know the key theoretical framework and use them to design program and learning outcomes (ACPA&NASPA, 2015). More specifically, it focuses on creating clear and

specific goals for programs, which are based on evidence and research. Beyond the classroom, I grew my ability to use an assessment framework to design programs based on students' needs. My assistantship experience allowed me to translate what I learned in this class into practice. As a major part of my job responsibility is creating programs and events to help international students engage in campus and connect with domestic students, I was able to apply my knowledge of assessment developing surveys to improve our programs for international students.

One of the main challenges our team faced was low students' attendance at our events. To find out the reasons for this, I designed survey questionnaires to learn about students' feedback and comments about the program. The data we gathered from students helped us to find better ways to advertise our events on campus. Students' feedback informed us to bring a change in the implementation of the Global Partners program. Considering current situation and the needs of international students, we were able to partner with CAPS department and create a new program called "*ISS Conversation Series*" to provide a safe space for international students to meet other students and talk about their shared experiences studying and living abroad.

Another unique example related to developing my ability to explain to students and colleagues the relationship of AER processes to learning outcomes goals is my work creating survey questions for the ISS Atlas Series and Betty Grimwood Thanksgiving programs. The ISS Atlas Series is one of the programs that is designed to give international students an opportunity to present their home country's culture and traditions. It is a great way for cross cultural engagement among KU students, staff, and community. In my role I was in charge of coordinating with students in making presentations, advertising flyers, and other logistical pieces. When I started working with the ISS, the department did not have a specific feedback mechanism to learn about the effectiveness of these programs for students. As someone who

values assessment, I created survey questionnaires for each of these events to better understand students' experiences and identify areas for improvement. Using the data and feedback gathered from students, we were able to recognize their needs and make changes accordingly. As a result, the adjustments we made in the program implementation have increased students' participation and engagement. Similarly, Betty Grimwood Thanksgiving is another program that is designed to provide international students with an opportunity to experience Thanksgiving holidays with an American family. ISS is coordinating with host families to match students with a host family based on common interests. At the end of this program, I distributed a survey for both host families and international students to understand their experiences and gather their feedback on the program timeline, implementation, coordination, and overall satisfaction.

Conclusion

The assessment, evaluation, and research competency emphasizes the individual's ability to know the concepts and differentiate between these terms. In addition, it requires student affairs professionals to be familiar with assessment and use the research data to make informed decisions. As a graduate student in the higher education program, my coursework and assistantship experiences have significantly shaped my growth in the area of assessment, evaluation, and research competency. I demonstrated a strong foundation in assessment, evaluation, and research competency throughout completion of my final research proposal project and my final paper for the assessment and program evaluation class. In addition, from creating survey questions, presenting research findings, and involving in research projects, I developed my skills to use assessment, evaluation, and research practices in my future work in student affairs.

Application and Assessment of AER Skills

Reflecting on the assignments I have completed in my assessment and program evaluation and understanding research in education classes as well as the projects I have built during my assistantship, I rank my assessment, evaluation, and research skills at a foundational level because I am still learning and developing these skills through projects and research designs to better support out students.

Assessment, Evaluation, Research Artifact #1: EPSY 715: Research Proposal

One artifact I submitted with this document is my final project submission of research proposal from the EPSY 715: Understanding Research in Education class. At the end of the semester, students were asked to submit a research proposal that includes abstracts, introductions, methods, and conclusions. The goal of this assignment was to give students an opportunity to apply theories and concepts we were taught in the class in practice. Within this assignment, I was able to integrate the concepts related to sampling, measurement, and research design, which has helped me to strengthen my understanding of how these elements contribute to a meaningful study. I feel like this research proposal shows my ability to select the appropriate sample, measurement methods, and conduct research independently in the future.

Assessment, Evaluation, Research Artifact #2: ELPS 885: Needs Assessment Project

As part of the class assignment, we were assigned to conduct a needs assessment and focus on a campus program, department or specific student population. This project had three stages. In stage one, I with a group of students submitted a proposal for our needs assessment. Stage one of this project helped me deepen my understanding of the KU Career Services for international students. It also enabled me to design relevant research questions to learn about the effectiveness of KU Career Services for international students. The second stage of this project

was data collection and analysis. This stage allowed me to use a qualitative method to gather feedback from students in order to know the specific career needs of these students. The final stage of this project gave me an opportunity to present the results to students and offer practical recommendations for future practice for KU Career Services. My overall experience completing this project strengthens my ability to use assessment as a practical tool for improving programs and services for students.

Assessment, Evaluation, Research Artifact #3: ISS Atlas Series and Thanksgiving Surveys

Beyond classroom, a practical and professional artifact I submitted with this document is the surveys I designed for the ISS Atlas Series and Betty Grimwood Thanksgiving programs using Qualtrics. Before taking this class, I never used Qualtrics to design surveys. I have limited knowledge of how to use this technology to create questionnaires and distribute it to others. After designing several survey questionnaires, I was able to figure out how to use this technology to download the survey QR codes and collect data in different ways. These surveys I submit with this document present my skills and knowledge of using assessment to make informed decisions. Additionally, developing these surveys enhanced my confidence in using Qualtrics to not only gather data, but to explain, interpret, and analysis results. Taking on these assessments' projects within my assistantship allowed me to showcase my skills and improve programs to better provide services for students.

References

ACPA—College Student Educators International, & NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. (2015, October). *ACPA/NASPA professional competencies rubrics*. Authors.