

WWU Faculty Assessment Guide

Associate Dean of Academic Assessment Resources

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The Importance of Assessment

Assessment is an important element in the teaching and learning process. By assessing learning outcomes, we understand what and how much students are learning. Through assessment, learning is overtly stated allowing programs to recognize any curriculum changes that may need to be made. Without assessment faculty, would only be guessing at students' knowledge and program's effectiveness.

Of course, assessing student learning is required by accrediting agencies and demonstrates accountability to the University and other stakeholders. But the most important reason for assessing student learning is that it is the right thing to do for students' education. While the focus is on program assessment, much of the basic information about assessment can help develop good course assessment, too. If courses are developed with care and attention to assessment this will benefit the academic program.

Good assessment looks can evaluate more than one skill if there is a way to isolate the various skills being assessed. At times one skills is dependent on the deployment of secondary skill making it difficult to separate where the breakdown is happening. Design assignments that target specific skills. When assessment is thought out and planned, it can reveal how students are thinking and how they arrived at the response provided. Another quality of good assessment is when the assignment is designed in a way that it can be repeated within a course or a program. This allows for more consistency in assessment, but also a way to measure growth of student learning.

The Assessment Process

Simply put, assessment of student learning consists of three basic activities: 1) determining what we want students to learn, 2) measuring their performance against the criteria, and 3) analyzing the assessment results. The results of assessment inform us about the effectiveness of the learning experience.

Focusing on goals and outcomes keeps us focused on what students are learning in our classes and programs. As a result, we must measure what we say is important to our programs of study. Measurement can help us to know if the outcomes are reasonable or stated appropriately.

Good assessment transcends simple data collection; the goal of assessment is action and the data that is collected should lead to discussions, serious thought, and improvement. Meaningful assessment data gives feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the academic program.

Difference between Grading and Assessment

Assessment is any effort to gather, analyze and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness. Assessment includes graded and ungraded activities used within a course/program.

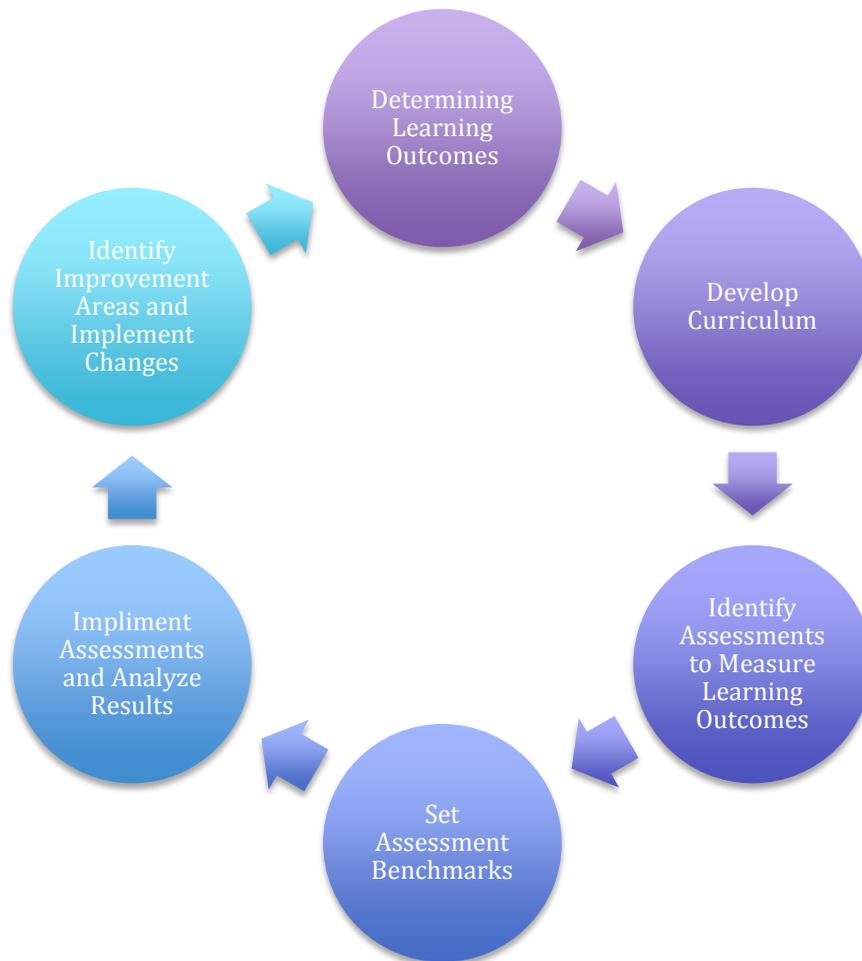
Grading speaks to how well a student performed on a particular assignment, or course. Many times grades include components like, timeliness, spelling, group cohesiveness, & attendance. While these are part of the submission process, they do not speak to how effectively students are mastering program objectives.

Assessment Rubrics are based on the academic program stated objectives. They generally include the program objectives as the designated criteria and then the level of student success is determined in the degree of skill displayed. Many programs have a baseline skill on their program objectives in an introductory course, with the same

skill approaching mastery in their capstone course. This rubric is not used to determine a score for a grade on an assignment, but to determine the level of competence the student displayed according to the overarching program objectives. Assessment rubrics can be placed in Via so that other program faculty can use the same program rubric for assessment. This allows for continuity of assessment, and the ease of pulling data within the system.

Grading Rubrics are designed to assist in determining the score earned on an assignment. The assignment criteria make up the components of the rubric. Each component is aligned to a point value. As faculty complete the rubric the score is determined based on the points earned on the criteria. Samples of criteria are but not limited to: punctuation, organization of ideas, citation of information, not to mention content specific skills. This is fine for determining a score on an assignment, but this is not program assessment.

Steps in the assessment process:



1) Determining student learning outcomes begins with a meeting of program faculty to discuss the skills and knowledge that their students must be able to demonstrate to complete the program. Your discussion should begin with this sentence, "What knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values do we want students to get from this program?"

Student learning outcomes should:

- ✓ be aligned to the mission and goals of the college and the program
- ✓ describe the expected abilities, skills, knowledge, attitude of graduates
- ✓ be simply stated and understandable
- ✓ be specific to the program and applicable to state, regional, or national standards
- ✓ be measurable and collectable
- ✓ focus on learning results
- ✓ identify areas of improvement.

2) Develop four to eight student learning outcomes for the program.

Student learning outcomes are stated as something students will know or be able to do. When writing student-learning outcomes, keep in mind how to define or measure if the expectation has or has not been met. **Program level student learning outcomes should be appropriate for student's graduating from the academic program.** Graduating students should be able to demonstrate more advanced knowledge and skills.

Consider using Bloom's taxonomy when determining the verbs to use for student learning outcomes dealing with cognitive skills. Bloom's taxonomy is a classification of the levels of learning that identifies various abilities at each level. The Bloom's Taxonomy table below describes the cognitive objective starting with the lowest level, remembering, and moving to the highest level, creating. This is provided only as a suggestion and a way to introduce different terminology into the learning objectives. Suggested verbs for each level are listed.

OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	SUGGESTED VERBS
Remembering (Knowledge)	recall of information, facts, terminology	define, duplicate, list memorize, recall, repeat, reproduce, state
Understanding (Comprehension)	understanding information or being able to explain ideas or concepts	classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, recognize, select
Applying (Application)	using information in a new way	demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch solve, use, write
Analyzing (Analysis)	distinguish facts from inferences or assumptions	appraise, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, distinguish, examine, question
Evaluating (Synthesis)	justify a stand or position	Appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, evaluate
Creating (Evaluation)	create a new product or point of view; solve problems by creative thinking	Assemble, construct, create, design, develop, formulate

3) Identify the methods (measures) you will use to determine if students have met the learning outcomes

Assessment methods should be selected or developed that are aligned with the student learning outcomes. Here are a few things to think about when selecting measurement tools:

- ✓ Choose tools that evaluate the intended outcomes. Don't just choose what is easy, handy, or something that other programs use
- ✓ Choose tools that give you manageable information. You don't need to be a slave to assessment. If time is limited, choose instruments that don't take too much time to administer and are easy to score and evaluate. Keeping data collection simple will make assessment a more useful activity.
- ✓ Use or modify existing course assignments. You don't have to develop a new assignment or project for assessment. Exams can be separated into learning outcome topics that will make it easier for the instructor to measure the results by learning outcome topic.
- ✓ If possible, use tools that assess more than one outcome at a time. If you use a specialized accreditation task list, standardized test, or licensure exam you will be able to use the individual items to assess student performance in more than one area.

- ✓ Use multiple measures (direct and indirect) and quantitative and qualitative tools. You will get richer assessment data if you use a mixture of measurements.

EXAMPLES OF DIRECT ASSESSMENT METHODS	EXAMPLES OF INDIRECT ASSESSMENT METHODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Comprehensive exams ➤ Certification or licensure exams ➤ Pre- and post-tests ➤ Performance-based tasks ➤ Capstone projects ➤ Portfolios ➤ Standardized exams ➤ Internship evaluations ➤ Presentations ➤ Case Study Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Comparison with peer institutions ➤ Job placement ➤ Employer surveys ➤ Exit interviews ➤ Focus group discussions ➤ Participation in course discussion ➤ Peer Review ➤ Conference Presentation ➤ Alumni surveys ➤ Student graduation/retention rates

4) Determine the benchmark that will indicate successful attainment of the student learning outcomes.

For each learning outcome, there should be a benchmark that tells you if the program is producing students with the desired level of skills and knowledge.

Setting the benchmark for success is a subjective activity. If you set a goal at 70% you may find, that after several years of assessment, students are performing higher than that and you may want to raise the goal to 80%. If students are performing lower than the identified benchmark, either your expectations are unrealistic or there is some change that must be made in the program.

5) Complete the assessment plan/report and submit to the Associate Dean of Academic Assessment

All academic programs assess outcomes annually or on an identified rotation with each outcome being assessed a minimum of every two years. It is preferable that critical skills are measured annually. Assessment data should be used to identify ways in which the program can be improved over time. It is important to observe the trends in the data so that you know the program is moving in the right direction. The assessment plan helps to keep faculty on track with key assessment information. Templates of the current assessment plan are on the share drive. The University provides faculty 3 assessment workshops to assist in the planning and reporting phases of assessment.

6) Assess

Now it is time to put your assessment plan into action. Complete the assessment activities planned for the year. Your assessment activities may be a series of specific assessments that you will do over time and compile to form the assessment results for your broader program outcomes. Or, you may devise one or more capstone assignments/projects that will reveal how well your students have met the outcomes. Utilize course based assessments, external exam results and data collected through Senior Achievement Day as well as Student Performance Review.

7) Report the results

At the end of each academic year faculty will provide a summary report of your assessment findings to the Associate Dean of Academic Assessment. Each report is evaluated based on the Annual Assessment Rubric with feedback returned to program faculty. A summative report of all annual assessments is provided to the Academic Dean and posted to the Assessment page of the website.

8) Take action (Close the loop)

Remember, the purpose of assessment is to help programs improve. As you review the assessment results you will note that students do very well in some areas. You will also find out if there are areas in which students are struggling. Remember, the result of assessment should be **ACTION**. You will have to decide what needs to be done to adjust your program so student learning is improved. Assessment informs you about what changes should be made or where the curriculum needs strengthening. You will want to take action and make adjustments before your next assessment cycle. Then you will be able to compare the results and see if the changes you made have been successful.

Assessment Methods

Selecting Assessment Methods

- Good assessment, according to Mary Allen (2002) is **meaningful, manageable and sustainable**. In other words, planning for assessment requires setting priorities; it is neither prudent nor productive to measure everything that moves.
- **Summative assessments** are tests, quizzes, and other graded course activities that are used to measure student performance. They are cumulative and often reveal what students have learned at the end of a course. Within a course, summative assessment includes the system for calculating individual student grades.
- **Formative assessment** is any means by which students receive input and guiding feedback on their relative performance to help them improve, absent their grade. Formative assessment can be provided face-to-face in office hours, in written comments on papers, projects and problem sets, and through e-mails.
- Select carefully those outcomes that your department is most interested in having students achieve.
- You may not be able to assess all of your important learning outcomes in a single year, but remember that outcomes assessment is an ongoing process.
- Select methods or instruments for gathering evidence to show whether students have achieved the expected learning outcomes related to educational objectives and goals.

Methods will vary depending on the learning outcome(s) to be measured.

- **Capstone Courses:** could be a senior seminar or designated assessment course. Program learning outcomes can be integrated into assignments.
- **Case Studies:** involve a systematic inquiry into a specific phenomenon, e.g. individual, event, program, or process. Data are collected via multiple methods often utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- **Classroom Assessment:** is often designed for individual faculty who wish to improve their teaching of a specific course. Data collected can be analyzed to assess student learning outcomes for a program.
- **Collective Portfolios:** Faculty assemble samples of student work from various classes and use the "collective" to assess specific program learning outcomes. Portfolios can be assessed by using scoring rubrics; expectations should be clarified before portfolios are examined.
- **Embedded Questions to Assignments:** Questions related to program learning outcomes are embedded within course exams. For example, all sections of "research methods" could include a question or set of questions relating to your program learning outcomes. Faculty score and grade the exams as usual and then copy exam questions that are linked to the program learning outcomes for analysis. The findings are reported in the aggregate.
- **Exit Interviews:** Students leaving the university, generally graduating students are interviewed or surveyed to obtain feedback. Data obtained can address strengths and weaknesses of an institution or program and or to assess relevant concepts, theories or skills.
- **Focus Groups:** are a series of carefully planned discussions among homogeneous groups of 6-10 respondents who are asked a carefully constructed series of open-ended questions about their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. The session is typically recorded and later the recording is transcribed for analysis. The data is studied for major issues and reoccurring themes along with representative comments.
- **Interviews:** are conversations or direct questioning with an individual or group of people. The interviews can be conducted in person or on the telephone. The length of an interview can vary from 20 minutes to over an hour. Interviewers should be trained to follow agreed-upon procedures (protocols).
- **Locally developed essay questions:** Faculty develop essay questions that align with program learning outcomes. Performance expectations should be made explicit prior to obtaining results.
- **Locally developed exams with objective questions:** Faculty create an objective exam that is aligned with program learning outcomes. Performance expectations should be made explicit prior to obtaining results.
- **Observations:** can be of any social phenomenon, such as student presentations, students working in the library, or interactions at student help desks. Observations can be recorded as a narrative or in a highly structured format, such as a checklist, and they should be focused on specific program objectives.
- **Reflective Essays:** generally, are brief (five to ten minute) essays on topics related to identified learning outcomes, although they may be longer when assigned as homework. Students are asked to reflect on a selected issue. Content analysis is used to analyze results.
- **Standardized Achievement and Self-Report Tests:** Select standardized tests that are aligned to your specific program learning outcomes. Score, compile, and analyze data. Develop local norms to track achievement across time and use national norms to see how your students compare to those on other campuses.
- **Surveys:** are commonly used with open-ended and closed-ended questions. Closed ended questions require respondents to answer the question from a provided list of responses. Typically, the list is a progressive scale ranging from low to high, or strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Resources:

Allen, Mary; Noel, Richard, C.; Rienzi, Beth, M.; and McMillin, Daniel, J. (2002). Outcomes Assessment Handbook. California State University, Institute for Teaching and Learning, Long Beach, CA

Assessment at William Woods:

Software:

Via by Watermark Insights

Via is a cloud based assessment software that manages the course based assessment needs of the university. Via allows for students and faculty set up in different types of groups to complete activities to be assessed by the desired criteria for the purposes of data production. Via is used for all General Education assessment and most course based Academic Program assessment.

Faculty can get support on Via by contacting Carrie McCray at carrie.mccray@williamwoods.edu, or the support email for via at: support@watermarkinsights.com.

Faculty can connect to Via through OwlNet on the Faculty tab, Via LiveText tab on the right side of the screen or by going directly to www.vialivetext.com

AIS by Watermark Insights

The Assessment Insight System (AIS) is an Assessment Reporting structure that is used by the university to create and distribute Annual and Program Assessment Templates. This program is administered by the Associate Dean of Academic Assessment. All assessment reporting is completed through this web based software. You can log in directly to the site at www.livetext.com and connect to AIS. If assistance is needed, faculty can contact Carrie McCray at carrie.mccray@williamwoods.edu, or the support email for AIS at: support@watermarkinsights.com.

Program Assessment Expectations:

It is the expectation of the university that each program on campus will participate in the assessment process. This is a component of accreditation, but more importantly it is about striving to provide the best education possible to our students. The act of assessment might seem like an unnecessary step, but it is something faculty participate in after each lecture, activity, test, and semester of our courses. The need to articulate that assessment and put it to words is in most instances the missing link. The university strongly believes the faculty are the subject area experts and are the ones most qualified to determine the most appropriate assessment activity. All program faculty are expected to contribute to the assessment of students. It is critical that faculty participate in the process to allow for continuity in learning for our students.

All majors and any stand-alone minor are expected to participate in program assessment. This includes course based, and program based assessment that contributes to the Annual Assessment Report and the 5-Year Program Review.

Program Learning Objectives are determined by the program faculty. It is the expectation that each program identify objectives that will lead students to complete a degree that will set them up for success in their specific profession. The number of objectives each program has is left to the discretion of the faculty, but it is common practice that most programs have between 4-8 program objectives. Many programs have sub-components of their objectives, which become course objectives. Also, programs that are externally accredited are obligated to implement the objectives required by their accreditation organization.

Each program objective needs to be assessed a minimum of **two** times during the course of the year. It is not necessary for each class to create an assignment for assessment. The goal is to make assessment manageable and useful, so creating assignments that meet no purpose but assessment is counterproductive to the objective. Many

programs use an entry level survey course and then their capstone course to provide for a baseline and then the expected level of master of students.

Other assessment opportunities specific to William Woods are **Student Performance Review** and **Senior Showcase**. Many programs use **Student Performance Review** (spring) as an opportunity to bring in external evaluators to review student projects (portfolios, business plans, presentations, monologues, art show). This is a 2 day (no classes) opportunity for programs to assess how students are doing in the program without the activity being tied to a course. Several programs schedule their students to take various Major Field Exams, or pre-Certification exams. Other programs use this time for entrance evaluations to programs as well. If programs are bringing in external evaluators, or use funds from Assessment, they are asked to submit a budget for costs to the Associate Dean of Academic Assessment in the Fall along with their schedule for their students for that 2-day period.

Senior Showcase is an activity for both fall and spring semesters. This is when graduating seniors are provided a stage to present their capstone experience. This is generally schedule during the last full week of classes before finals week. Many programs set up their seniors in "science fair" style and open it up to all students by making it a LEAD event so that their students have the opportunity to discuss their success to their peers.

Both events can be include in the program assessment plan matrix through the AIS assessment reporting system. Then assessment activities administered during that time can be recorded easily and included in the report.

Assessment Reports

Annual Assessment Report

All academic programs complete an Annual Assessment Report. The Annual Assessment is designed to document faculty collaboration on assessment of student learning objectives throughout the academic year through direct and indirect data. The Annual Assessment Report is due at the completion of the Spring semester and submitted to the Associate Dean of Academic Assessment and the respective Director. All reports are evaluated and feedback is provided to program faculty and the specified Director responsible for the content area. All identified Majors and stand-alone minors are required to submit the Annual Assessment Report.

Program Review

All undergraduate programs of study undergo a program review on a five-year cycle and Graduate programs on a 3-year cycle. The Associate Dean of Academic Assessment facilitates the Program Review process with the Director of the program and program faculty. The Academic Council members and the Academic Dean analyze all program reviews. All Program Reviews include a detailed review of the academics as well as the resources (financial, library, human) utilized by the program. Each program review includes an external review report as a neutral party to provide feedback and critique of the program. Program faculty respond to any comments made by the external reviewer before the report is submitted to Academic Council.

General Education Assessment

Any faculty teaching a course that is offered for General Education credit must produce an assignment that is used for General Education Assessment. The rubrics for General Education areas are found in the Share Drive in the Curriculum Committee Folder. All General Education courses are expected to use Via for the assessment of the designated assignment. Please discuss the assignment with other faculty who are teaching in the GE area to determine the appropriateness of the assignment. It is critical that faculty evaluate each assignment in Via so that we have the needed data for our General Education Program Assessment.

Each General Education area is assessed on a 4-year rotation. The assignments determined by content specialist faculty are saved and then produced in a Juried assessment process to be evaluated by a neutral faculty. The evaluations of content faculty and juried faculty are brought to content faculty for review and discussion on the rubrics, assignments, and process of the assessment. Feedback and recommendations are accumulated as part of the annual report that Curriculum Committee submits for review of all faculty.

GLOSSARY OF ASSESSMENT TERMS

Assessment: The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning.

Assessment Plan: A summary of assessments, including outcomes, measures, and criteria for success that will be implemented.

Benchmark: A description or example of performance that serves as a standard of comparison for evaluation or judging quality.

Capstone: A course, project, or experience that gives students the opportunity to organize and synthesize the knowledge and skills developed through the academic program. Students can demonstrate their ability to apply their learning in meaningful ways. Capstones occur toward the end of a program.

Classroom Assessment: The systematic and on-going study of what and how students are learning in a particular classroom; often designed for individual faculty who wish to improve their teaching of a specific course. Classroom assessment differs from tests and other forms of student assessment in that it is aimed at course improvement, rather than at assigning grades. (National Teaching & Learning Forum)

Closing the Loop: This is the process by which assessment results are used in program and campus decisions to impact student learning.

Criteria: Guidelines, rules, characteristics, or dimensions that are used to judge the quality of student performance.

Curriculum Mapping: An examination of a course sequence to determine where student learning outcomes are taught in the curriculum.

Direct Measure of Learning: A direct measure is based on a sample of actual student work, including reports, exams, demonstrations, performances, and completed works.

Formative Assessment: Assessment that provides feedback to the teacher for the purpose of improving instruction.

Indirect Measure of Learning: An indirect measure is based upon a report of perceived student learning, such as a student interview, exit survey, alumni survey.

Juried Assessment: Multiple reviewers evaluate student performance based on observation, coursework, portfolios, or other assignment submitted. This process is generally used for the General Education assessment to provide neutrality in the evaluation of students meeting the benchmarks identified by the general education faculty. The assessor is not a faculty member who actively teaches in the criteria area being assessed but has been approved by the content area faculty as an appropriate assessor.

Learning Outcomes: Observable behaviors or actions on the part of students that describe the learning mastered. A demonstration of what the student can do. Outcomes are achieved results or consequences of what was learned.

Measurement: Design of strategies, techniques, and instruments for collecting data that shows the extent to which students demonstrate the desired behaviors.

Objectives for Learning: Objectives express intended results or consequences of instruction, curricula, or activities.

Performance Assessment: The process of using student activities or products, as opposed to tests or surveys, to evaluate students' knowledge, skills, and development.

Portfolio Assessment: A portfolio is a collection of students' classroom work. The portfolio can be assessed when the assessment purpose is defined, criteria are clear for what is included in the portfolio, and criteria for assessing the portfolio or individual pieces of work are identified and used to make judgments.

Quantitative Assessment Methods: Methods that rely on numerical scores or ratings, such as surveys, inventories, exams.

Qualitative Assessment Methods: Methods that rely on descriptions rather than numbers, such as field studies, logs, journals, observation, interviews.

Reliability: Refers to how accurately a score will be re-produced if an individual is measured again. Reliable measures produce consistent results over time.

Rubric: A specific set of criteria that clearly define for both the student and teacher the range of acceptable and unacceptable performance.

Summative Assessment: A culminating assessment that gives information on students' mastery of content, knowledge, and skills.

Validity: The extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure.

Resources

Resources:

Assessment Commons: <http://assessmentcommons.org/#area>

Carnegie Mellon University: Eberly Center, Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation:
<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/index.html>

Harte Research Associates. (2016). *Trends in learning outcomes assessment: Key findings from a survey among administrators at AAC&U member institutions*. (Pdf download)

Upcraft, M.L. & Schuh, J.H. (1996). *Assessment in student affairs: A guide for practitioners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. P. 18.

Yorke, M. (2003). *Formative assessment in higher education; Moves toward theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice*. Higher Education, 45:4, pp.477-501.

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