

Ryerson Student Affairs Assessment Workbook



Student
Affairs

Assessment Plan Template

When you're creating an assessment plan, consider your institution's goals as outlined in an Academic Plan or from the Learning and Teaching Office - this way, you'll be able to explain how the work you're doing is contributing to the University's goals and desired outcomes at large. The following includes the goals from Ryerson's Academic Plan 2014-2019 and the goals outlined by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students, which you can use to develop your assessment plan. Consider also your specific department/unit's mission and objectives.

Ryerson University Mission

The special mission of Ryerson University is the advancement of applied knowledge and research to address societal need, and the provision of programs of study that provide a balance between theory and application and that prepare students for careers in professional and quasi-professional fields.

As a leading centre for applied education, Ryerson is recognized for the excellence of its teaching, the relevance of its curriculum, the success of its students in achieving their academic and career objectives, the quality of its scholarship, research and creative activity and its commitment to accessibility, lifelong learning, and involvement in the broader community.

Academic Plan Priorities	OVPS Goals
1. Enable Greater Student Engagement and Success Through Exceptional Experiences	1. Build a culture of empathy, support, and responsiveness
2. Increase SRC Excellence, Integrity and Impact	2. Build a sense of campus community and pride
3. Foster an Innovative Ecosystem	3. Innovate in the development of systems, operations and administrative processes
4. Expand Community Engagement and City Building	4. Embrace fully the values articulated in the Academic Plan, particularly EDI and Access
	5. Provide opportunities for staff in the OVPS to realize their full potential
	6. Build a culture of community engagement and philanthropy within our student and staff communities

Unit Mission/Vision:

Unit Objectives

Project Name & Type of Measure

EXAMPLE: Transition Program Participant Survey – Outcomes

Objective or Goal

EXAMPLE: Provide high quality programming. Establish that the program provided had the intended impact, or not.

Learning Outcome(s)	EXAMPLE: Students will be able to identify one person at Ryerson whom they consider a friend.
Method	EXAMPLE: Campus Labs survey sent to the Ryerson email account of every student who registered and attended (70 people). \$20 Starbucks gift card draw.
Responsibility	EXAMPLE: Survey mentioned at program conclusion. Survey emailed on Jan. 15 immediately following program. Survey closed on Jan. 22. LEAD: Lesley D'Souza
Results	EXAMPLE: Response rate of 50% (35 respondents). Results indicated that 80% of participants were satisfied with program content...

Use	EXAMPLE: Constructive feedback from respondents will help shape future programs, etc.
Academic Plan Priorities	EXAMPLE: 1, 4
Student Affairs Goal/ Priority	EXAMPLE: OVPS Goals: 1, 3, 6

Surveys

What is a survey?

Surveys are a method of gathering information from a sample of people, usually with the intention of generalizing the results to a larger population. They're one of the lowest cost, fastest ways to get information about how people think, feel, and act with reference to a variable we are curious about. You can gather quantitative and qualitative data in a survey. Typically, the data is indirect (we're asking people to self-report on their thoughts/feelings/behaviours, and not testing them so we can observe those things).

Use it when:

- You want to find out how students perceive something, or to understand attitudes & norms.
- You want to gather a broad understanding.
- You've gathered qualitative information that you want to be able to apply more broadly.
- You need information about a large population.

Don't use it when:

- You need a lone source of data for you to judge performance (evaluation).
- You need to know why something is happening.
- You've already sent out five surveys this week.
- You can find the data somewhere else.

Tips for building a good one:

1. Think carefully about your sample (who completes the survey). Who needs to be represented? How can you be sure they will respond?
2. Use simple, concise language.
3. Connect your questions directly to your goals and learning outcomes.
4. Structure your survey logically and keep it short. For every question, ask what actions you will take with the data you get. If you can't identify a specific action, reconsider asking it.
5. Don't ask too many open-ended (unstructured) questions, and put them at the end. Completion rates will drop immediately after.
6. Ask one question at a time.
7. Make sure your 'select one' answer sets are mutually exclusive (ie: there's no situation where 2 might apply).
8. Use incentives, but not really big ones.
9. Test out your survey with a student before you deliver it!

Designing a survey

- Question Types

Question Type	Description	Example	Pros	Cons
Radio button (1 selection)	Multiple choice question that asks the respondent to choose between two or more answer options.	Where would you prefer to go on vacation? A. Camping B. City Hotel C. Resort D. Hostels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to answer • Allows you to easily compile and analyze results • Can provide data with more clarity because people are forced to choose only one response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not give the respondent the answer they want, unless “other” text option is provided. • Does not address the issue of “why”. • Will not provide nuanced responses since only one choice is possible.
Check box (multiple selection)	Multiple choice question that asks the respondent to choose any option that applies to them from a list.	What places would you be willing to go on vacation? Camping City Hotel Resort Hostels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even easier to answer than single selection. • Allows you to easily compile and analyze results • Provides insight into relationships between responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not give the respondent the answer they want, unless “other” text option is provided. • Does not address the issue of “why”. • Less clear data about priorities since there’s no way to analyze how choices are ranked/valued.
Likert	Respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with a statement. Each option is given a score, which can be used to analyze results.	Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means strongly agree and 5 means strongly disagree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very flexible — you can measure broad areas or look at specific facets of your business • More precise than “yes/no” or “true/false” questions • Easy to compile and understand results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address the issue of “why”. • Requires development work before the survey to identify the most important facets to measure.

Question Type	Description	Example	Pros	Cons
Ranking	Respondents choose among several alternatives that require sequential ranking from high to low until all factors are ranked.	Look at the list of items and rank them from most useful to least useful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables identification of “best” and “worst” • Guarantees unique values for each response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of alternatives • Limited analyses possible. • Skew – tends to position earlier response options more positively. • Can be fatiguing for respondent, especially as response options increase. • Does not address the issue of “why”
Rating	Asks respondents to compare different items using a common scale.	Please rate each of the following items on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is ‘not at all important’ and 10 is ‘very important’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonly used and easily understood by respondents • Allow respondents to assign items the same • Provides information about how wide the gaps are in rankings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will often result in a narrow distribution of ratings, making the data less useful. • Very subjective. • Tedious to complete. • Does not address the issue of “why”.
Semantic Differential	In a semantic differential scale, each end of the scale marked is with different or opposing statements.	On a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 is short and 7 is long, how would you describe the amount of time you had to wait for service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can assess an intuitive or conceptual response to a product or service • Easy to compile results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the number of options on the scale, it can be difficult for respondents to choose accurately. • Can be hard to gauge the meaning of responses (very subjective) • Does not address the issue of “why”.
Unstructured (Open-ended)	Open-ended questions ask respondents to supply their own answer. No pre-defined answers are given, so respondents are free to write what they want.	“What could we do to make your experience more enjoyable?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows respondents to define central issues • Addresses the issue of “why” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be time consuming for respondents. • Can be difficult to compile and analyze results. • Asking more than one question at once can confuse results. • Asking leading questions can makes results less reliable.

Try it out! Write some questions that could provide information to support your learning outcomes.

Learning Outcome:	Survey Question
E.g. Students will be able to identify a person at Ryerson that they consider a friend.	Do you have someone you met at Ryerson that you see socially outside of class time? a) Yes b) No c) Prefer not to answer

Focus Groups

What is a focus group?

A diverse group of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion, with the goal of providing deep information on a certain topic, or in response to a particular question. Focus groups ideally consist of 8 to 12 people lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. Focus groups are structured around a list of predetermined questions but discussions within them are free flowing.

Focus groups are a useful way to gather information about a question of practice, or to provide contextual information about quantitative data that you've already collected. This type of assessment can help us to get at the "why" of some of the patterns in our existing data.

Use it when:

- To explore needs thoughts and feelings
 - Focus groups are useful when you want to explore people's ideas because it gives participants the ability to expand upon their answers.
- You need the reaction of a group of people
 - For certain topics you may require information on the reactions of a group of people (such as a new song).

Don't use it when:

- You need to generalize results to a large population
 - The participants of a focus group aren't statistically significant to represent the views of the entire population.
- When you're worried about people's influence on one another
 - Often focus groups can result in the opinions of one person shaping the views of others.

Tips for doing a good one:

1. Develop clear questions that speak directly to the research questions you've identified.
2. Recruit participants from a diverse background. Be intentional.
3. Make sure the participants reflect your target population.
4. Create a relaxed atmosphere, and reduce or eliminate barriers to accessibility.
5. As a moderator, be clear and concise, using simple language as much as possible to avoid confusion.
6. Never ask leading questions. A leading facilitator can do a lot to skew an entire focus group.
7. Always ask open-ended questions.
8. Never assume what a participant's answer means, ask them for more information. Frequently repeat what you hear back to participants for confirmation.
9. Report focus group results. Don't let this data get dusty!

Try it out! Write down some questions that you might frame for a focus group of students.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Introduction to Open Coding

- Data Analysis: Creating codes to categorize information.
- Code: A word or short phrase that ascribes meaning to each datum.
- Open Coding: Breaking down raw data into segments to interpret them.

The researcher develops ideas and concepts without concern for how they will ultimately be used. Turning data into concepts is the process of attaching labels to words or concepts that represent them. The topic of study and issues of concern to the researcher play a key role in the ideas and concepts identified; however, the researcher is advised to be vigilant in keeping an open mind when analyzing the data.

Any phenomenon (e.g. event, incident, action) can be multiply classified. For instance, a statement by the spouse of an incarcerated offender, "I'm worried that my daughter keeps getting into fist fights," may be coded as fighting, as parental concern for his or her child, and as actions signifying the need for assistance or therapy. This also allows researchers to group data as examples of the same concept. For instance, "fighting" and "stealing" can be grouped under being "deviant". The frequency and intensity of categories should also be analyzed. According to Strauss and Corbin, open coding precedes axial coding (refinement of specific categories). Open coding may be recorder through a variety of ways including word processing, marginal notes or specialized software.

Open Coding Example

An assessor wants to discover what traditional-aged college students learn by living in a residence hall during their first year in college. The following is an excerpt from a fictitious interview with a student. The codes are noted with superscripts and then defined:

"I learned a lot living in the residence. With a roommate, we figured out how to give and take. ¹ We took turns choosing what to watch on TV and set ground rules. I also learned to take care of myself. ² One of the most important things I learned was to stand up for myself. ³ This year I learned to speak up or else I wouldn't get what I wanted or needed."

1 Compromise, 2 Independence, 3 Assertiveness

In this example, each unit of data received its own code (Open Coding). Each code is then compared with other codes to determine similarities and differences (Comparative Analysis). Codes are sorted into patterns or categories. The coding process moves from description to interpretation during this stage. This process is termed Axial Coding or Analytical Coding.

What to look for when coding

When coding, Charmaz (writing in the grounded theory tradition) suggests you ask the following:

1. What is going on?
2. What are people doing?
3. What is the person saying?
4. What do these actions and statements take for granted?
5. How do structure, settings and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements?

How to name Categories

Categories should meet the following criteria:

- Answer the assessment question
- Exhaustive
- Mutually exclusive
- Conceptually congruent

Open Coding Steps

1. Organize data to make it easier to discern common categories or themes
2. Look for common terms/concepts
 - a. Similar concepts should be highlighted in one color
3. After going through all of the responses, cut and paste the codes into a separate document
4. Once the highlighted text is extracted and sorted the assessor must describe each category
5. Assessor reviews codes to see if they're relevant
 - a. Some codes may be removed or grouped together
6. Assessor reviews the text to find missed codes and themes
 - a. Codes that fall into an existing category are grouped into it
 - b. Codes that don't fall into an existing category are given a new code
7. Assessor should review the codes again to make sure they're in the appropriate category
 - a. Subcategories may also be identified at this time
8. Assessor counts the number of statements related to each category
 - a. This helps to provide a level of magnitude to each theme
9. Each theme and corresponding themes should be included in the appendix of the report

Sample of Qualitative Data

Question 1

Did you notice sponsors at orientation?

- >> Yeah.
- >> Yes. Spotify.
- >> Kijiji
- >> Tangerine.
- >> Red Bull.
- >> I think Salad King was there, too.
- >> Yeah.
- >> Jack Links.

Question 2

How long is your typical travel time to get to campus?

- >> One hour, twenty minutes. I come in for one hour twenty minutes.
- >> Hour and twenty minutes?
- >> Like forty-five to fifty minutes.
- >> An hour and a half.
- >> An hour and a half.
- >> An hour.
- >> An hour to an hour and a half.
- >> Twenty-five minutes to an hour.
- >> Ten to fifteen minutes.

Question 3

Where do you get information about student services or student affairs at Ryerson?

>> I think for me, it was easy to find or those booths and stuff, and then I go online and I look more into it. But there was sometimes I can't find it or like I don't know where I would look.

>> I like directly going to the office because usually there's three - two or three people inside. So, you know, just directly walk into the office and ask them and they would probably direct me. If I'm not at the right office, they would direct me to the library building or somewhere else and then usually works out for me.

>> Google because it's easier than going through the actual [inaudible].

Question 4

What kinds of programming did you like that did meet your specific needs for your identity, or would you have liked to have seen, if you couldn't think of any that did do that for you?

>> Well, I identify with the LGBT community, but I don't know that I was really seeking anything to that end in my orientation, so I didn't feel like orientation was lacking for me because of that. However, I do know a first year who has expressed there isn't enough Aboriginal events.

>> Yeah, maybe like, I don't know, having Rye pride as part of the orientation, even some event or some kind of, like, booth or something. And that might be a cool thing. And also, like for the Aboriginal thing, there could be integrations for the institutions that are in the city that are about that, or just some history or something to let Aboriginal students know that they're welcome and supported and there's a network here for them.

>> Being from TRSM, the Dean's always expressed that our cultural diversities is a strength, not a weakness, so I think it just doesn't have to be inclusive groups that are inclusive nationalities from Ryerson, but I think that the student groups that already exist should be just welcoming to everyone as part of the community interaction.

>> Okay, well, my identity I guess was I had taken two years off after high school, so I was really out of the school thing for a while, I didn't like, my habits were down basically so when I was going there I wanted to talk to like upper years and ask them like, what their tricks were, like, learn things from them sort of thing. So, I asked like, I don't know, I was just asking silly, silly questions in the beginning, like, "Okay, like, how do you take notes? Like, laptop or hand book?" Like, bare bones stuff like that was really good for me, but that wouldn't really be coming out of high school and like really in the zone with education.

Rubrics

What is a rubric?

A rubric is a coherent set of criteria for students' work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria. Rubrics can be used as descriptive and/or evaluative tools, meaning they can be used to judge performance, but this is done through inherently descriptive ways (matching behavior, versus judging in isolation). The challenge is that rubrics are only as good (or as bad) as the criteria and descriptions of mastery at each level. Effective rubrics have appropriate criteria and well-written descriptions of performance.

Rubrics have an incredible range of uses from scoring written and verbal responses by an objective observer, to providing a guide for self-assessment. Teachers have been using them for decades for consistency in grading, but they were seldom shared with students. We've since learned that by sharing our scoring tools, we make it more likely that students will be able to attain our outcomes.

Two types of rubric are typically discussed: holistic & analytical. A holistic rubric provides overall scores for a learning experience and does not include much actionable information for students, but is much faster to score and better when large groups must be evaluated by one person. An analytical rubric breaks up the learning experience into components, each of which has its own set of criteria & descriptions. This more often what we think of when we talk about a rubric.

Use it when:

- You want to prime students for a learning experience.
- You are trying to infuse learning outcomes into your program design.
- You want to get closer to direct data using self-reporting (self assessment rubric).
- You want to guide and gather consistent data across multiple 'raters'.
- You have direct contact with students at some point during the experience.

Don't use it when:

- You don't have a lot of time to invest. They require more thought than some other assessment tools.
- There is an ethical question about rating students' performance.
- You haven't set learning objectives or it is difficult to identify different levels of mastery.

Tips for building a good one:

- Use simple, easy to understand language. Be specific and avoid descriptors like excellent, good, or poor since they can be very subjective.
- Use a reasonable number of performance levels. At least 3, but no more than 5 or it will be too difficult to make them discrete.
- Use an ideal student performance to create your highest level description first, then think about what the lowest level outcome looks like to create your basic level of performance. Then do the ones in between.
- Use parallel language in each level.

Try it out! Use the domain your learning outcomes fall into to guide how you can measure mastery.

Domain & Outcome	Level 1 Mastery (Emerging)	Level 2 Mastery (Competent)	Level 3 Mastery (Expert)
Example: LEARNING SKILLS Students will be able to implement new learning skills at the post-secondary level.	I don't feel able to implement any new note-taking, time management, or self-advocacy skills at the post-secondary level.	I feel capable of implementing 1 or 2 new note-taking, time management, or self-advocacy skills at the post-secondary level.	I feel capable of implementing 3 or more new note-taking, time management, or self-advocacy skills at the post-secondary level.

Glossary

| Anecdotal Data |

Any evidence that is based on anecdotes rather than systematic assessment. It might be information you got from a focus group that wasn't totally representative, a few conversations you've had that make you think there's a trend going on, or just plain observations. This type of data shouldn't be used to make change or generalizations, but it can show the need for more assessment.

| Assessment |

Any effort to compile, analyze, and interpret data in order to improve your work.

| Best Practice |

A method, technique, or design that consistently proves to be the most effective option. That means something that has been tried several times in different places that we now recognize as the best way to do it.

| Bias |

An inclination or preconceived opinion about something or someone. For example, you might want to find out that a workshop you ran was a success and might be biased toward seeing it as a good program.

| Closed Data |

Data that has restricted access. It might be available for a charge, only to members of a certain organization, or confidential due to privacy concerns.

| Completion Rate |

The percentage of respondents who go on to complete the entire survey.

| Correlative Data |

A measurable relationship between two things, but without evidence for causation (one thing is not known to be responsible for the other). For example, we might have correlative data showing that student involvement is related to higher academic achievement, but we can't say that involvement causes a student to get higher grades.

| Cycle of Assessment |

The act of moving through the stages of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence and then implementing change based on your findings.

| Data |

Things that are known or assumed as facts, that are collected together to provide the basis for reasoning and calculation.

| Data Visualization |

Any graphic representation of data. This includes graphs, charts, infographics, word clouds, diagrams, and many more. Their purpose is to compile insights from data into a simple representation that provides context.

| Demographics |

Social statistics that relate to a population. Things like age, gender, ethnicity, etc. would be considered demographic information.

| Direct Assessment |

Tools that test the actual knowledge and/or skills of students. Used pre- and post- experience can give us compelling evidence that learning achieved happened as a result of the designed experience.

| Documenting |

The act of recording evidence, opinions, experiences, feedback, and results. It may be as formal as a professional report or as informal as draft notes.

| External Benchmarking |

Making a comparison between one or more similar programs at various institutions to establish how each data set is ranked in terms of performance.

| Evaluation |

Evaluative assessment activities are used to judge how well the learning experience achieved the set outcomes.

| Focus Group |

A qualitative method of assessment that uses a small sample of people brought together in an interactive group setting to gather their perspectives about issues, programs, or ideas. A facilitator poses prepared questions and records their responses.

| Formative Assessment |

These are assessment activities that are used during the learning process to assess how it is proceeding and then used to modify activities to improve the chances of reaching the set outcomes.

| Indirect Assessment |

Tools that ask the students to report on their knowledge and skills. This gives a picture of student perceptions, satisfaction, and frame of mind, but not necessarily what they actually know.

| Infographic |

An image designed to present information so that it can be read at a glance. For example, check out this infographic from Student Learning Support.

| Internal Benchmarking |

Making a comparison between teams, groups, or programs within the same institution to better understand how the subject is performing.

| Learning Objective |

A statement outlining the intended result of an experience that speaks to the content of the program in question. These are usually more broad than learning outcomes.

| Learning Outcome |

A statement outlining the measured, or actual result of an experience. Learning outcomes should be specific examples of what students can do as a result of their learning.

| Likert Scale |

An ordinal response scale that helps to assign a quantitative value to a respondent's opinion. There can be varying number of points on the scale, but 4 or 5 are most common. Including a mid-point in the scale has been debated as to how it affects the validity of data.

| Minimum Standard of Practice |

The basic standard of performance that is ethically required by a profession for something to be considered part of the field's work. It just means that this is the absolute minimum you should be doing.

| Narrative |

A system of stories. Narrative and story are often used interchangeably, but the difference is that a narrative organizes the elements of multiple stories into a sequence similar to how a novel consists of multiple chapters.

| Objective standard |

The legal definition of objective means how something would be perceived by a reasonable neutral observer. For our purposes, it refers to the standard created by grouping together valid samples of similar data, thus negating any subjective opinions, so that we can compare ourselves to it.

| Open Data |

Data that is shared freely to anyone. The idea is that by gathering data and publicly sharing it, that it will enable more people to use this data to inform and fuel innovation.

| Ordinal |

Data that is ordered. Ranking from oldest to newest, the order of winners in a race, or, for our purposes, on a scale of 1 to 5. Ordinal data cannot tell us if the difference between scores is equal. For example, if someone rates a program as a 4 and another as a 2, it doesn't necessarily mean that they liked one program twice as much.

| Preamble |

An introduction to your survey. It is best practice to include who you are, the purpose of the survey, and how you plan to use the data provided. This would also be the place where you would describe any incentives and how the respondent might receive them.

| Private Institutions |

Universities or colleges that operate on a for-profit basis and do not receive any funding from government sources.

| Professional association |

A (usually) non-profit organization that exists to further a profession through advocacy, development of its members, dialogue, and community support.

| Professional Standard |

Specifications that are designed by a professional body to make the work of the professionals more effective. The CAS Standards of Professional Practice are a great example of standards for Student Affairs.

| Public Institutions |

Universities or colleges that receive partial funding from government sources, and do not work to generate profit.

| Quantitative Assessment |

The kind of assessment that gives you numbers. Anything from attendance numbers, money spent, or statistics. This kind of data is pretty easy to sort and interpret since it's there in black and white, but it can be hard to inspire with it.

| Qualitative Assessment |

The kind of assessment that gives you stories. Whether using focus groups, reflection papers, exit interviews, etc. This kind of assessment takes longer, and is more difficult to interpret than quantitative, but it often gives us very human and transformational results that can provide inspiration. It's important to note that we shouldn't use qualitative assessment as a basis to generalize trends since the data is usually coming from a small group of individuals.

| Raw Data |

Data that has not been handled in any way for analysis.

| Research |

Systematic investigation for the purpose of establishing facts and generating new knowledge in a specific discipline.

| Response Rate |

The percentage of your sample (the group of people you sent the survey to) that starts the survey.

| Rubric |

A document that assigns a numeric score to learning. It does this by describing levels that list associated criteria, behaviours, and demonstrated knowledge or skills.

| Satisfaction Assessment |

Assessment that studies the level to which respondents are happy with what they have received. Feedback surveys are a typical example of a satisfaction assessment tool.

| Scope Assessment |

Assessment that studies the extent or range of impact. For example, attendance or usage numbers can tell us about how many people we interact with within the community.

| SMART |

A mnemonic that defines the elements of a good goal. For our purposes, it stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely.

| Summative Assessment |

These are assessment activities that are carried out to summarize and report on development at a particular time, typically at the end of a program/course.

| Validated Survey |

Validation is based on the opinion of the researcher or other experts that the survey designed is accurately measuring what it was designed to measure. If you are validating a survey you have designed on your own, you would need to test it out until you are confident that it is getting you the data you want. Otherwise, you could participate in an ethics review or seek the opinion of a research expert to weigh in.

Created by the Ryerson SA Assessment and Evaluation Committee, 2017
Lesley D'Souza and Estefania Toledo, Co-Chairs



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ryerson.ca/studentaffairs