Blackboard Outcomes Assessment 101

Background

Blackboard Outcomes Assessment (Bb OA) is a computer software application available for faculty and staff members at Ball State to use as a tool for the assessment of student learning process. Bb OA is based upon the idea of revisiting or recycling student artifacts (papers, presentations, web sites, photos, sound files, etc.) that are turned in as part of a class for a grade for the purpose of assessment; rather than assigning a grade again, faculty or staff members use a rubric to determine the level of the student’s performance shown in the artifact one the artifact has been determined to be a good representation of student learning goals (in the major, in the University Core Curriculum, in co-curricular programs, etc.). For example, a paper that is completed to fulfill a requirement in a 100-level course in the major might also serve as a measure of written communication at the freshman level; a paper in a 400-level course might also be used as a measure of senior-level written communication. Rather than collect artifacts from every student, samples are typically collected and rated with rubrics, allowing for statements to be made about typical levels of student performance.

Frequently-Asked Questions (with Answers!)

Is it a requirement that Bb OA be used in our major?

No. Several programs and the University Core Curriculum have found Bb OA to be an effective assessment tool, but its use is not mandatory.

What do individual faculty members have to do?

While a moderate amount of one-time work needs to be done to set up Bb OA for use with a major or other program, typically only one person does the set-up. Individual faculty members teaching courses that generate assignments that are used as assessment evidence only need to do two things: they need to collect the student assignments digitally within Blackboard (rather than on paper) and they need to align the assignment with the appropriate student learning goal(s). These two tasks typically take less than five minutes to accomplish. See the accompanying documentation on creating assignments in Blackboard and aligning assignments to learning goals.
Who needs access to the Outcomes Assessment module within Blackboard? How do we get access?

Individual faculty members aligning goals to assignments (see above) do not need access to Outcomes Assessment, this is done in Blackboard Learn. The person(s) doing the setup (entering goals and rubrics and managing assessment project) do need access to Bb OA; this access can be gained by contacting William Knight, Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, at 5-5974 or wknight@bsu.edu. Access can typically be provided within one hour of requesting it.

I need to entering goals and rubrics and managing assessment sessions for my department. How can I learn how to do this?

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Integrated Learning Institute (iLearn) have partnered to provide this training. Workshops on using Bb OA for assessment in the majors are offered several times each year. The handouts for those workshops are also available. A video recording of the workshop is currently in production. William Knight, Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, is also available to provide assistance and answer questions; he can be reached at 5-2191 or wknight@bsu.edu.

Can a non-Ball State employee, such as an alumnus or an employer serve as a reviewer in a Bb OA assessment project?

Yes. This is done by establishing an XT account for the non-employee. Contact the Technology HelpDesk, 5-1517 or helpdesk@bsu.edu for assistance.

How do people assigned to review student artifacts reach the assessment projects? Do they need access to Blackboard OA to be able to do their reviews?

When the person setting up the assessment project launches it, those assigned as reviewers will get an email message from the person doing the setup with a link to the project. The reviewers do not need to be granted access to Bb OA as an assessment manager for this purpose. Reviewers can also access assessment projects through the Updates screen in Blackboard.

How can the assessment results be made more useful and actionable?

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness can also append additional contextual data to the results such as SAT scores, GPA, courses taken, etc. Contact William Knight, Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, at 5-5974 or wknight@bsu.edu.