Six Dimensions: Evaluating and Planning Your Assessment Portfolio

Gregory A. Smith • Kory R. T. Quirion

*Liberty University*

## Learning Outcomes

Participants will learn to...

- Recognize the various facets of assessment encompassed in the Six Dimensions tool.
- Use Six Dimensions to assign classifications to specific assessments.
- Use Six Dimensions to identify potential strengths and weaknesses of an assessment portfolio.
### Session Structure

1. Overview of Six Dimensions  
   - Large group  
   - 25 minutes
2. Low-stakes exercises  
   - Small group  
   - 25 minutes
3. Debriefing of low-stakes exercises  
   - Large group  
   - 20 minutes
4. Using Six Dimensions to evaluate and plan assessment  
   - Large group  
   - 20 minutes

### Overview of Six Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solicitation/User Perception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National/Comparative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity/Longitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inputs/Outputs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System-Oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation/User Behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local/Unique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontinuity/Exploration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User-Centric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative

- Focus group interviews
- Survey consisting of multiple-choice questions
- Log of building occupancy counts
- Open-ended comments

Quantitative

- Large quantities of numerical or categorical data.
- Can meaningfully be reduced to frequency counts, percentages, averages, and various statistics.

Qualitative

- Words, images, and/or other artifacts that convey nuanced descriptions of reality

• Focus group interviews  QUALITATIVE
• Survey consisting of multiple-choice questions  QUANTITATIVE
• Log of building occupancy counts  QUANTITATIVE
• Open-ended comments  QUALITATIVE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solicitation/Perception</th>
<th>Observation/Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Book circulation records</td>
<td>• Book circulation records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Satisfaction survey</td>
<td>• Satisfaction survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Group study room reservation log</td>
<td>• Group study room reservation log</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information literacy knowledge test</td>
<td>• Information literacy knowledge test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solicitation/Perception

• Communicating with stakeholders about their knowledge, thoughts, or feelings.
• Overtness may lead to unnatural behavior or induce responses that are considered socially desirable.

Observation/Behavior

• Observing stakeholder behavior in real time or mining records of past behavior.
• Tends to generate naturalistic data, but without the context of reasoning or emotion.
National/Comparative

- Industry standard customer survey
- Website usability study
- Staffing comparison versus peer organizations
- Comment cards

Local/Unique

- Designed to allow for comparison with external organizations.
- Does not allow for comparison with external organizations.
- May emphasize attributes that are distinctive or context-sensitive.

• Industry standard customer survey NATIONAL/COMPARATIVE
• Website usability study LOCAL/UNIQUE
• Staffing comparison versus peer organizations NATIONAL/COMPARATIVE
• Comment cards LOCAL/UNIQUE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuity/Longitude</th>
<th>Discontinuity/Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Infinity Symbol]</td>
<td>![Compass]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Initial instance of organizational climate survey
- Recurring customer satisfaction survey
- Focus group regarding potential new service
- Analysis of service output trends

**Continuity/Longitude**
- Follows a consistent pattern across intervals of time.
- Well suited to observing established or well defined phenomena.

**Discontinuity/Exploration**
- Diverges from prior assessment in subject matter or mode of inquiry.
- Precludes trend analysis.
- Well suited to emergent or loosely defined phenomena.

- Initial instance of organizational climate survey **Discontinuity/Exploration**
- Recurring customer satisfaction survey **Continuity/Longitude**
- Focus group regarding potential new service **Discontinuity/Exploration**
- Analysis of service output trends **Continuity/Longitude**
### Inputs/Outputs

- Benchmarking spending against that of peers
- Downloads from document repository
- Pre- and post-test of knowledge or skills
- Employee satisfaction survey

### Outcomes

- The effects that a system produces (or is perceived to produce) in users or other stakeholders.

---

- An element of a system (resource, activity, or service transaction).
- Can generally be counted, but may also be capable of qualitative description.

---

- Benchmarking spending against that of peers **Inputs/Outputs**
- Downloads from document repository **Inputs/Outputs**
- Pre- and post-test of knowledge or skills **Outcomes**
- Employee satisfaction survey **Outcomes**
System-Oriented

- Focused on operations, resources, and/or services—what the organization is to external and/or internal stakeholders.
- If users are in view, it is in the context of “the life of the organization.”

User-Centric

- Focused on users—their attributes, goals, behaviors, needs and preferences, experiences, achievements.
- If the organization is in view, it is in the context of “the life of the user.”

- Survey of student research behavior
- Website usability study
- Needs assessment focus group
- Analysis of employee retention

System-Oriented

- Survey of student research behavior
- Website usability study
- Needs assessment focus group
- Analysis of employee retention

User-Centric

- Survey of student research behavior
- Website usability study
- Needs assessment focus group
- Analysis of employee retention

6
15-Minute Breakout Sessions

Follow the link provided in the chat window.

Division Climate Survey
Website Usability Study

Benchmarking vs. Three Libraries: Analysis of IPEDS and Website Data
Effectiveness of Professional Development Process

Discussion
Sample Visualization (3-Year Summation)

Sample Visualization (3-Year Trends)
Logs (Observation/Behavior)

Strengths
• Quantitative
• Continuity/Longitude
• Inputs/Outputs

Opportunities
• Modify what is logged temporarily to accommodate exploratory assessment

Surveys (Solicitation/Perception)

Strengths
• Quantitative
• Outcomes

Opportunities
• Add qualitative element to learn context and obtain suggestions
• Frame questions around user rather than system
**Interviews (Qualitative, Solicitation/Perception)**

**Strengths**
- Outcomes
- User-Centric

**Opportunities**
- Elicit latent perceptions by presenting artifacts, data, and/or prototypes
- Use focus groups to stimulate interaction between participants

---

**Benchmarking Studies (Comparative)**

**Strengths**
- National
- Inputs/Outputs

**Opportunities**
- Leverage networks to gain access to comparative data
Usability Studies (Local/Unique)

Strengths
• Discontinuity/Exploration

Opportunities
• Collect data via observation and solicitation
• Involve (prospective) users in design efforts

Multi-Type Studies

Strengths
• Discontinuity/Exploration

Opportunities
• Combine archival and newly collected data to shed light on a topic of interest
Big Ideas

• Assessments can be classified in a variety of useful ways.
• A library benefits from planning and executing a diverse assessment portfolio.
• Six Dimensions can help stimulate critical and creative thinking about assessment that fits a particular context.

Gregory A. Smith • greg@liberty.edu
Kory R. T. Quirion • krquirion@liberty.edu