

In support of teaching and learning, Suffolk County Community College has an institutional assessment system that includes processes for assessment of all academic programs at the institutional, program-level, and course-level. Institutional assessment also includes the administrative support, educational support, and community outreach units that help shape the environment for student learning.

The following are institutional definitions and guidelines that are designed to assist faculty and staff in determining whether an activity falls under the description of regular and ongoing assessment practices, or if it constitutes research and thereby requires IRB authorization.

Definition of Assessment

Assessment is the gathering of information necessary to ensure that the college is able to effectively evaluate its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission. Assessment measures teaching and learning and institutional processes which contribute to the cultivation of sound education and instruction. This analysis includes data from a variety of assessment tools and measures, including the achievement of student learning outcomes (SLOs), support outcomes, program learning outcomes (PLOs) and administrative outcomes. Assessment results and analysis provide guidance for faculty and administrators as they adjust and make improvements to curriculum and teaching methods, as well as instructional support and administrative activities.

Formal assessment practices, including course assessments and program reviews, are undertaken by areas and departments across the college on a regular basis. Assessment may also be done by individual faculty members to inform their choices regarding aspects of their own courses, such as choice of textbook or types of learning activities they will utilize with students. These types of activities are encouraged as they continually inform faculty of when changes to their courses may be useful and constitute scholarship of teaching and learning.

Assessment data may resemble research, in that it may be obtained through the use of surveys or interviews, or through the review of existing records such as institutional data on student outcomes. The information collected during assessment may be the same information that is sought in a research endeavor, but the difference lies in how the information is being used.

Data collected through assessment, whether by the college or by an individual faculty member, is used for internal purposes only. It may be used for an instructor to change a course design, or a member of a service area to change a process that is in place to make it more efficient. Internal, administrative use of data is considered assessment and does not require IRB authorization prior to collecting the data.

If data is collected and used to contribute to generalizable knowledge, or is being shared with individuals, groups or organizations outside of the college, it is considered research and requires

IRB authorization before being collected, or if previously collected as part of an assessment practice, before being shared outside of the college.

As per HHS, an activity is considered research if it is a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. (45 CFR 46.102(l)) If the activity meets this standard, it is defined as research. Dissertation research is research, and does require IRB authorization, even when the research involves examining existing data that was collected as part of an assessment process. IRB authorization from the sponsoring institution will also be required.