

## Summary of *Indirect* Assessment Techniques

<b>INDIRECT ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES</b> ( <u>Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education</u> by Allen 2004)		
<b>Technique</b>	<b>Potential Strength</b>	<b>Potential Limitations</b>
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are flexible in format and can include questions about many issues</li> <li>• Can be administered to large groups of respondents</li> <li>• Can easily assess the views of various stakeholders</li> <li>• Usually have face validity – the questions generally have a clear relationship to the objectives being assessed</li> <li>• Tend to be inexpensive to administer</li> <li>• Can be conducted relatively quickly</li> <li>• Responses to closed-ended questions are easy to tabulate and to report in tables or graphs</li> <li>• Open-ended questions allow faculty to uncover unanticipated results</li> <li>• Can be used to track opinions across time to explore trends</li> <li>• Are amenable to different formats, such as paper-and-pencil or online formats</li> <li>• Can be used to collect opinions from respondents at distant sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide indirect evidence about student learning</li> <li>• Their validity depends on the quality of the questions and response options</li> <li>• Conclusions can be inaccurate if biased samples are obtained</li> <li>• Results might not include the full array of opinions if the sample is small</li> <li>• What people say they do or know may be inconsistent with what they actually do or know</li> <li>• Open-ended responses can be difficult and time-consuming to analyze</li> </ul>
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are flexible in format and can include questions about many issues</li> <li>• Can assess the views of various stakeholders</li> <li>• Usually have face validity – the questions generally have a clear relationship to the objectives being assessed</li> <li>• Can provide insights into the reasons for the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences</li> <li>• Interviewers can prompt respondents to provide more detailed responses</li> <li>• Interviewers can respond to questions and clarify misunderstandings</li> <li>• Telephone interviews can be used to reach distant respondents</li> <li>• Can provide a sense of immediacy and personal attention for respondents</li> <li>• Open-ended questions allow faculty to uncover unanticipated results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally provide indirect evidence about student learning</li> <li>• Their validity depends on the quality of the questions</li> <li>• Poor interviewer skills can generate limited or useless information</li> <li>• Can be difficult to obtain a representative sample of respondents</li> <li>• What people say they do or know may be inconsistent with what they actually do or know</li> <li>• Can be relatively time-consuming and expensive to conduct, especially if interviewers and interviewees are paid or if the no-show rate for scheduled interviews is high</li> <li>• The process can intimidate some respondents, especially if asked about sensitive information and their identity is known to the interviewer</li> <li>• Results can be difficult and time-consuming to analyze</li> <li>• Transcriptions of interviews can be time-consuming and costly</li> </ul>
Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are flexible in format and can include questions about many issues</li> <li>• Can provide in-depth exploration of issues</li> <li>• Usually have face validity – the questions generally have a clear relationship to the objectives being assessed</li> <li>• Can be combined with other techniques, such as surveys</li> <li>• The process allows faculty to uncover unanticipated results</li> <li>• Can provide insights into the reasons for the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences</li> <li>• Can be conducted within courses</li> <li>• Participants have the opportunity to react to each other's ideas, providing an opportunity to uncover the degree of consensus on ideas that emerge during the discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally provide indirect evidence about student learning</li> <li>• Require a skilled, unbiased facilitator</li> <li>• Their validity depends on the quality of the questions</li> <li>• Results might not include the full array of opinions if only one focus group is conducted</li> <li>• What people say they do or know may be inconsistent with what they actually do or know</li> <li>• Recruiting and scheduling the groups can be difficult</li> <li>• Time-consuming to collect and analyze data</li> </ul>

## INDIRECT ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

(Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education by Allen 2004)

Technique	Potential Strength	Potential Limitations
Reflective essays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are flexible in format and can include questions about many issues</li><li>• Can be administered to large groups of respondents</li><li>• Usually have face validity – the writing assignment generally has a clear relationship to the objectives being assessed</li><li>• Can be conducted relatively quickly</li><li>• Allow faculty to uncover unanticipated results</li><li>• Can provide insights into the reasons for the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences</li><li>• Can provide direct assessment of some learning objectives</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Generally provide indirect evidence about student learning</li><li>• Their validity depends on the quality of the questions</li><li>• Conclusions can be inaccurate if biased samples are obtained</li><li>• Results might not include the full array of opinions if the sample is small</li><li>• What people say they do or know may be inconsistent with what they actually do or know</li><li>• Responses can be difficult and time-consuming to analyze</li></ul>