

ATHE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR THEATRE PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The purpose of this document is to identify Outcomes and Assessment Sources and Instruments for the field of theatre in higher education. When it is necessary or desirable for a theatre program to augment its means of departmental and institutional assessment, the Sources and Instruments of Outcomes Assessment described in this paper may be useful.

The discipline of theatre in higher education encompasses theatre as an artistic form and as a social and cultural institution. Its artistic form, which is defined through production, involves the collaboration of theatre artists, scholars, and technicians. Needed for this collaboration are theatrical knowledge and skills acquired through study and practice in classroom, studio, and public performance. Historical, theoretical, critical, and cultural study provide perspective on both theatrical performance and the theatre as a social and cultural institution, both past and present.

Defining Outcomes Assessment

In this document, the processes used to study the growth of students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and the ability of the program to nurture that growth are called Outcomes Assessment.

Outcomes Assessment:

1. Is most effective when it identifies elements of the educational process that nurture students' growth;
2. Is most effective when it recognizes the variety, complexity and interrelationship of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that exist in each individual;
3. Is most effective when it employs multiple methods that are not limited to standardized, quantifiable and/or value-added* testing;
4. Is most effective when it focuses on program improvement and empowers students and faculty to reach their highest potential;
5. Is the process which describes the growth of an individual in a program and implies initial and ongoing evaluation; and,
6. Is unique to the mission of each institution and department.

*The term, value-added , is used to describe an assessment process that relies on evaluations of students at entrance and at graduation to assess improvement.

Identifying Outcomes

Outcomes can be categorized in three ways: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes.

Knowledge

1. Awareness of the complex nature of the human condition acquired through aesthetic and intellectual perceptions as evidenced in various modes of theatrical production;
2. Knowledge of the various means (acting, directing, designing, constructing, playwriting, etc.) through which a theatrical concept is realized;
3. Knowledge of plays that are representative of the development of theatre and drama;

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4. Knowledge of theatre history, including its cultural context and its modes of production; and,
5. Knowledge of various critical theories, research sources and methodologies.

Skills

1. The ability to analyze and interpret plays and other theatrical events with special attention to the skills involved in acting and performance, directing, designing, and playwriting;
2. The ability to reach an audience effectively through at least one of the components of theatrical art (acting, directing, designing, play writing, etc.);
3. The ability to function safely and effectively using contemporary theatre technology;
4. The ability to use the skills and techniques needed in research;
5. The ability to express in performance, in writing, in speaking, and through other modes of communication the results of research, critical judgement, and other findings and discoveries;
6. The ability to relate theory to theatrical literature and performance; and,
7. The ability to respond as a critically informed member of the theatre audience.

Attitudes

1. Development of a creative imagination;
2. Development of an inquiring mind;
3. Development of a sense of social responsibility;
4. Development of professional discipline;
5. Development of a collaborative attitude;
6. Development of artistic standards and judgement; and,
7. Development of respect for the art form.

Identifying Assessment Sources and Instruments

Information for assessments can come from such sources and instruments as:

1. Course examinations, papers, and grades;
2. Special projects, essays, and theses;
3. Journals and production books;
4. Internships and mentoring;
5. Periodic juried auditions;
6. Value-added and standardized exams;
8. Comparative audio and/or video taping;
9. Post-production critiques;
10. Internal Surveys (student, faculty, etc.);
11. Exit interviews; and,
12. External surveys (alumni, graduate schools, employers, etc.)

Conclusion

For Outcomes Assessment to have greatest value, its design and implementation must lie with the faculty. For purposes of institutional planning, the responsibility for assessment of general education outcomes lies with the institution's collective faculty and administration.

(This document was initially drafted in the spring of 1990 at Austin, Texas, by a Task Force consisting of Donald L. Rosenberg, Chair, Donna Aronson, Willard F. Bellman, Oscar G. Brocket, Beverley Byers-Pevitts, Sherwood Collins, Kathleen Conlin, Mark A. Heckler, Vera Mowry Roberts, James M. Symons, and Jon Whitmore, host. It was subsequently endorsed on April 23, 1990, by the Board of Governors of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.)