FOCUS GROUPS: (Radcliffe, Chapter 8)

Overview:

Focus groups work well in assessing at the program level, especially for new and evolving programs, but can also provide insights into the general opinions and attitudes held at the institutional level. In working with the ACRL IL Standards, you may find focus groups useful in assessing outcomes that begin with these words: confers, explores, realizes, considers, investigates, assess, and reflects. Because of its ability to delve deeply into the personal and cultural influences that inform students’ critical faculties, focus groups may be particularly useful in assessing Standard Three: “The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system”.

Indicators:

- Requires a medium amount of time
- Requires some funds only if outside expertise is needed
- Level of Assessment: Programmatic, Institutional
- Domain: Affective
- Access to participants: Requires considerable effort; may need collaboration from faculty or other units on campus
- Faculty collaboration not required, but helpful and recommended
- Outside expertise may be helpful if-house skill and experience are not available

Key Characteristics:

- Takes advantage of many peoples’ natural inclination to discuss things in groups;
- Assesses how students and colleagues think and feel and also invites them to examine their responses in comparison to the views of others;
- Strong choice for exploring the differences between participants’ experiences and outcomes;
- Strong choice for evaluating new and changing programs;
- Works well to explore questions raised by prior assessments;
- Useful for conducting preliminary evaluation of programs (to be followed by more in-depth assessment via other methods).