

Step 2: Identify Stakeholder Needs

Stakeholders are the individuals and organizations that will be affected by the results of the assessment and may include those involved in the instructional context, those served or affected by the instructional course, and the intended users of the assessment. The person, group, or organization requesting and/or paying for the study, the sponsor, is always a stakeholder. When assessing teaching, the instructor and the students are always stakeholders.

Stakeholder needs generally reflect the central questions the stakeholders have about the instructional activity, innovation, course, or program. Determining stakeholder needs helps to focus the assessment process so that the results are of the greatest utility.

Stakeholder needs affect eight features of the study:

- Purpose
- Central questions
- Uses
- Scope
- Timeline
- Methods for gathering information
- Data analysis
- Reporting of results

Use the worksheet below to identify stakeholders and their needs, and to make it easier to articulate the central questions of your study. **Central questions** establish the boundaries of your study by stating what specific aspects of the instructional activity, innovation, course, or program will be examined. They are also important in identifying the purpose and uses of your study.

Follow these steps when using the worksheet:

1. Identify any questions that more than one stakeholder is likely to have. Use the fourth column to mark these with an "X" because they are probably more important.
2. Rank the questions by their importance. Assign the same rank to similar questions.
3. Choose the top 1-3 questions to be the focus of your assessment or evaluation; these are the central questions.

