

### Step 3: Determining your Purpose using Central Questions

**Central questions** establish boundaries for the assessment by stating what specific aspects of the instructional activity, innovation, course, or program will be examined. They should be based on stakeholder needs identified in Step 2.

Articulating a clear **purpose** for your study will prevent premature decision-making about how to conduct your assessment. The three general purposes for instructional assessment are to:

- a. ***Gain insight*** into instructional activities, innovations, courses, or programs to determine strengths and weaknesses. Examples include answering questions about the ***how*** and ***why*** of student behavior or to understand ***what*** students are learning.
- b. ***Change practices*** related to an instructional activity, innovation, or program such as lecture techniques, exam format, or class assignments. Examples include answering questions about whether students prefer lectures to in-class activities or documenting students' reaction to a new assignment.
- c. ***Measure the effects*** of an instructional activity, innovation, course, or program or some change in instructional practices. Examples include answering questions about the impact on learning of an in-class exercise or new instructional technology.

**Use the Worksheet C below to help determine your assessment purpose:**

- Write each of your central questions in the first column of Worksheet C.
  - Adjust phrasing as necessary.
- In column two of Worksheet C, circle the assessment purpose of each central question you listed.
  - Each of your questions should fit in one of the three categories listed above.

## Worksheet C: Identifying Purpose and Uses

Central Question	Purpose	How Results Will Be Used
1.	Gain Insight Change Practices Measure Effects	
2.	Gain Insight Change Practices Measure Effects	
3.	Gain Insight Change Practices Measure Effects	