

Assessment Basics

What is Assessment?

Assessment is the collection, analysis and interpretation of data used to improve the quality of academic programs, focusing specifically on student learning.

General Items

- Your assessment of student learning must be valuable to you and your program, do not do it just for the annual assessment report.
- Every outcome does not need to be assessed (and reported on) each year, however, should be assessed every 2-3 years.

Outcomes

Statements of the knowledge, skills, and abilities students should possess and can demonstrate upon completion of a sequence of learning experiences, leading to an academic credential (degree or certificate).

- Learning outcomes are what you want your students to achieve upon *graduation*.
- Certificates (if applicable) can be the same learning outcomes as the degree program, but at a lower level of taxonomy (Blooms, etc.).
- Outcomes should be of a single focus (single-barreled).
- Outcomes should start with an action verb.
- Outcomes should be measurable.
- *Learning outcomes* are expected for all academic programs; *success outcomes* are optional. Success outcomes are usually metrics such as graduation rates, pass rates on national exams, or other components that are not specifically related to the knowledge, skills, abilities students should obtain in the program.
- Outcomes should align with the mission/vision of the program and be specific to the academic discipline.

Methods/Measures

A procedure describing how students will demonstrate they meet the specific outcomes.

- Focus on 300-400 level courses as much as possible to assess outcomes (UG programs); usually at the end of the curriculum and includes mostly majors.
- Multiple courses should be aligned with each outcome.
- Data should come only from major required courses (not electives, if possible).
- Want to assess the outcomes from a variety of types of assignments (papers, presentations, exams, discussions, etc.).
- Be sure to articulate how that specific assessment method aligns with the specific learning outcome.

- Course grades should not be used to assess a specific learning outcome.
- Multiple assessment methods should be used to assess each outcome.

Targets

Specification or thresholds of desired results; cutoff criteria.

- Targets need to be identified for each assessment method for each outcome.
- State targets as a percentage (e.g. 80% of the students will score an 8 [out of 10] or above on the assignment rubric).
- Targets should be based on past data or external accreditation criteria requirements. If unsure, 80% is a good place to start.

Results

The information related to the data collection and assessment methods outlined. Aggregated results.

- Report the results in the same language that aligns with the target statement.
- It's OK to not meet every target.
- Try to include data points from only students enrolled in the major or certificate.

Findings (Analysis)

An analysis of the results and conclusions that align with the learning outcome.

- Clearly state whether the target was met or not.
- Conclusions about the results align with the student learning outcome and assessment method.
- Compare current data (results) to past assessment data.

Action Plan

Strategies for continuous improvement of student learning; demonstrate data-driven decision making.

- Previously called 'closing the loop'. "What are we doing to do with what we know now".
- Action items must be noted anytime an outcome is "not met".
- Focused on the ongoing, continuous improvement of student learning outcomes and/or improvements in the assessment process.
- Action plans should be specific and should include a reassessment plan.
- Action items should address the student learning outcome or how to improve the assessment process for the educational program.
- Include how results are discussed with key stakeholders.