

Academic Learning Outcomes Assessment Overview

Responsibilities and Due Dates

- **DUPs and DGPs: Write and submit Assessment Report by Tuesday, February 28, 2023:**
 - Write and route completed reports to department head in the [APA Application](#)
- **Department Heads: Review Assessment Report(s) by Friday, March 31, 2023 and write Summary Report by Friday, April 14, 2023:**
 - Evaluate departmental reports according to the criteria in “Rubric to Review Academic Assessment Reports”
 - Return reports that do not meet the criteria to program directors to revise
 - Write department Summary Report
- **Dean’s Designee: Review Assessment Reports by Friday, April 28, 2023 and write Summary Report by Friday, May 12, 2023:**
 - Evaluate college reports according to the criteria in “Rubric to Review Academic Assessment Reports”
 - Return reports that do not meet the criteria to department to revise
 - Write college Summary Report

Purpose of Assessment

NC State Academic Assessment provides systematic data for the continual enhancement of programs rather than to provide proof for accountability. As such, the process is designed so that faculty determine what is important (curricular outcomes), how it is taught, how it is measured (using direct evidence), how the data is interpreted (identifying strengths and areas for improvement), and what actions, if any based on findings, should be taken to enhance the curriculum. Assessment Reports are shared internally and with appropriate accrediting agencies.

Basic Requirements

Each degree program and transcribed certificate:

- Will have a set of comprehensive, measurable student learning outcomes (often 4 to 7);
- Will assess at least one outcome annually;
- Will assess all undergraduate program outcomes within a 3 to 5 year cycle (three example assessment plan cycles are illustrated below) and all graduate program outcomes within a 3 year cycle;

Example Assessment Plan (Outcome A measured annually)				
	Outcome A	Outcome B	Outcome C	Outcome D
Year 1	X	X		
Year 2	X		X	
Year 3	X			X

Example Assessment Plan (2 Outcomes measured each year)				
	Outcome A	Outcome B	Outcome C	Outcome D
Year 1	X	X		
Year 2			X	X
Year 3	X	X		

Example Assessment Plan (1 Outcome measured each year, except Year 3)				
	Outcome A	Outcome B	Outcome C	Outcome D
Year 1	X			
Year 2		X		
Year 3			X	X

- Will use direct measures of learning that are specifically aligned with the outcomes;
- Will analyze the data at a level that allows for the identification of strengths and areas for improvement within the outcome (e.g. no holistic rubric scores, no test or course grades, but scores for elements within the rubric or sets of test questions mapped to an element of the outcome are suited for analysis); and
- Will make clear decisions based on the data collected (e.g. change to the curriculum, change to a course, change to an assignment, or the determination that no change is currently necessary).

Collecting Evidence

Many approaches for collecting direct evidence do not require the creation of new or additional measures, rather data that are already being collected from upper-level courses (test questions, projects, etc.) can be used. The intention is to assess student learning so we can in turn assess the curriculum, not to assess the course or faculty member. By the time a student reaches upper-level courses or capstone, they are usually displaying knowledge gained throughout the curriculum when creating projects or other tasks. Upper-level courses often have assignments that can be used to measure multiple, if not all, outcomes. It is best if multiple sources of evidence can be used to demonstrate the achievement of outcomes. Some common ways faculty collect evidence of student learning for curricular assessment include:

- **Comprehensive Discipline Exam:** Can be created in-house or by using a national instrument. The vital piece to keep in mind is how you will retrieve the data upon completion and that you are provided with detailed, skill-specific data rather than holistic scores so that you can determine strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Test Questions:** Some faculty take groups of test questions and map them to the content elements within an outcome. This provides evidence at the appropriate level to determine strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Rubric:** For assessment of the curriculum, rubrics are a way of organizing criteria to systematically determine if the outcome is met by articulating the key elements within the outcome. Faculty often use rubrics to assess outcomes by applying them to activities in an upper-level course or capstone such as presentations, capstone project, portfolios, research paper, or case studies.

Analysis

- Data must be analyzed at a deep enough level so that strengths and areas for improvement within the outcome can be identified.
- Overall means or other holistic scores, such as grades, do not provide enough detail to allow for the identification of strengths and areas for improvement.
- When using a rubric, data should be presented and analyzed at the item/element/dimension level.
- When reporting means, frequencies/percentages should also be provided, as these too can help uncover patterns or trends useful in highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Decisions

- For each area for improvement, the report must include new actions that the program has already begun to implement to improve students' achievement of the specific outcome, such as: "We developed...," "We revised...," "We implemented our plan to..." *Note usage of past tense. Please do not use language in the future tense or language that is indecisive in tone such as "We are considering..., We may..."
- If the analysis of the data identifies an area for improvement, an action needs to be taken to address the area for improvement.
- If there is no evidence that any change is needed, then it is ok to say something like: "Based on the data, no changes are needed at this time."
- Not all needed changes are big. Some changes will be things like additional class time, materials, assignments or practice on a given topic in an existing course.

Reporting

- The report is a snapshot of the process. It does not need to be long to demonstrate that the program is assessing student learning to enhance the curriculum and that the faculty are engaged in the assessment cycle.
- Clear alignment from the outcome to the decisions is very important. Be sure that it is apparent how:
 - The assessment method that was used directly measured the outcome;
 - How the data inform the identification of strengths and areas for improvement of the program; and
 - How any areas for improvement (and sometimes strengths) were addressed with a specific decision(s).

Assessment Timeline

Planning ahead for assessment reports allows faculty to be proactive in managing the assessment plan and cycle. Faculty plan and take actions to address the current assessment report as well as the upcoming assessment report during each academic year.

Current Assessment Report (Spring 2023)	Upcoming Assessment Report (Spring 2024)
Fall Semester	
Faculty collect and analyze data	Faculty review assessment plan for 2024
Faculty review data and make decisions	Faculty verify outcomes, data collection method and course(s)
Spring Semester	
Faculty write and submit assessment report	Faculty collect and analyze data

Key Definitions

- **Direct Evidence**- collecting information that requires the students to display their knowledge and skills (Direct Evidence) rather than the student or others indicating that they believe the student learned something (Indirect Evidence).
- **Measures**- may be quantitative or qualitative, they go beyond performance indicators such as graduation rates and may take the form of questions on tests/quizzes, assignments, or student products from portfolios and capstone courses, interviews, etc.
- **Outcome**- detailed and specific statements derived from the objectives/goals; they are detailed and meaningful enough to guide decisions in program planning and improvement, and decisions regarding pedagogy and practice. Curricular outcomes are less specific than course outcomes and will need to be defined in such a way that the content elements within the outcome can be measured to provide information for strengths and areas for improvement.