

# Academic Learning Outcomes Assessment Overview

## Responsibilities and Due Dates

- **Directors of Undergraduate Programs and Directors of Graduate Programs**
  - o Write and submit their program Assessment Report in the [APA Application](#) by **Friday, March 1, 2024**.
- **Department Heads**
  - o Review, evaluate and advance Assessment Report(s) for programs in their department according to the criteria in the "[Rubric to Review Academic Assessment Reports](#)" by **Friday, March 29, 2024**.
  - o Return reports that do not meet the criteria to program directors to revise.
  - o Write and submit the department Summary Report by **Friday, April 12, 2024**.
- **Deans/Dean's Designee**
  - o Review, evaluate and advance Assessment Report(s) for programs in their college by **Friday, April 26, 2024**.
  - o Return reports that do not meet the criteria to the department to revise.
  - o Write and submit the college Summary Report **Friday, May 17, 2024**.

## 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 (learning outcomes), how it is taught, how it is measured (using direct evidence), how the data are interpreted (identifying strengths and areas for improvement), and what actions, if any based on findings, should be taken for program improvement. Assessment Reports are shared internally and with appropriate accrediting agencies.

## Basic Requirements

Each degree program and transcribed certificate will:

- maintain a set of comprehensive, measurable student learning outcomes (often 4 to 7);
- assess at least one outcome annually;
- 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

- administer direct measures of learning that are specifically aligned with the outcomes;
- analyze the data at a level that allows for the identification of strengths and areas for improvement related to the outcome. Appropriate data include detailed, dimension-level rubric scores and scores for individual or sets of test items that have been mapped to the outcome. Overall/ holistic rubric scores, test scores and course grades are not acceptable; and
- use their analysis to make clear decisions for program improvement, such as changes to the curriculum, courses and/or assignments. Programs may also determine 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 Exams:** 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.
- **Rubrics:** 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:
  - o The assessment method that was used directly measured the outcome;
  - o How the data inform the identification of strengths and areas for improvement of the program; and
  - o 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 (2024)	Upcoming Assessment Report (2025)
Fall Semester	
Faculty collect and analyze data	Faculty review assessment plan for 2025
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-** information collected directly from students' demonstration of their knowledge and skills as articulated in a student learning outcome.
- **Indirect Evidence-** information collected, often through surveys or other perceptual measures, regarding thoughts or beliefs about students' knowledge and skills. Student success measures such as retention or completion rates, participation data and graduation rates are also considered indirect evidence sources.
- **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. that are rated using a detailed rubric.
- **Outcomes-** detailed and specific statements regarding the demonstrable knowledge and skills students should possess at the conclusion of the program. Outcomes 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 about strengths and areas for improvement.