

Note: This document is meant to supplement the University Handbook description of the content of assessment reports and plans and to serve as a planning tool for departments in preparing their Assessment Reports. The Assessment Subcommittee will be using a rubric to evaluate your Assessment Report. For a copy of the latest version of the rubric, please see the resource page on the ASC website.

Assessment Report Format

(For more examples or guidelines for any the below items, please see the resources available on the ASC website.)

- 1. Departmental Mission:** What does the department prepare students for? For example, is the program designed to produce graduates who are socially responsible citizens, pre-professionals, entry level teachers, and/or graduate school applicants?

The Department's Mission might be articulated in terms of vision, values, or goals. The terms are flexible and should be selected as appropriate in your discipline(s). (Some departments have just a Mission Statement, some a Mission Statement and Goals, etc.) While it is not the place of the ASC to judge your mission statement, it is useful to have a clear statement of your overarching goals. This helps you as a department craft more specific Learning Outcomes for your program and us as a committee to assist in that process.

- 2. Brief Description of Departmental Improvements / Changes:** Referring back to the findings and implications of previous assessment report(s), identify and describe specific improvements that have been made in the department. Describe what has been changed and with what goals, based on the evidence of past assessment.

This is an important part of your ongoing assessment process: using assessment results to improve your program, and continuing the assessment to gauge the effectiveness of the changes. Ideally, this section of one assessment report will overlap a great deal with the "Implications" section of your last report, where you projected changes to come. If what was planned five years ago was not implemented, it will be useful to indicate why.

- 3. Program Learning Outcomes:** Describe the broad learning outcomes of the program. What knowledge, skills, and attitudes (dispositions?) will graduates have? For example, will graduates be able to work effectively in teams, think critically, have good work attitudes, be able to solve complex problems, communicate effectively. What are the criteria for success? Focus on "enduring understandings" that are at the core of your academic program.

A Program Learning Outcome (PLO) is a statement that describes what a student will know, be able to do, and/or value as a result of a learning experience. Ensure that your PLOs are articulated as student learning outcomes (rather than delivery-focused inputs or what students will be exposed to). Examples:

Students will be able to read, interpret, and analyze common reference maps.

In an annual survey, juniors will score at the 60th percentile for writing and reading on the CAAP.

It is recommended that you “cluster” your PLOs so that you identify 6-9 broad learning outcome categories, which may include: content knowledge, methodologies, dispositions/values, variety of skills (reading/writing/communicating/team-work), applications (field work/lab work/performances/lesson plans), life-long learning/responsible citizenship, etc. (More detailed learning outcomes can be stated within each broad category.)

4. **National/Professional Standards:** Describe the extent to which your PLOs represent the national/professional standards. Is your program accredited by an external, national and/or professional agency? If so, are there established learning outcomes or professional standards? If there are, then how do the learning outcomes/professional standards align with your Program Learning Outcomes? Is there a perfect overlap? Are your PLOs a partial sample of the national standards? Have you paraphrased (and clustered) your PLOs to align with most/all of the national standards?
5. **New / Updated Curriculum Map:** Describe how the program curriculum aligns with the PLOs. In which courses is each PLO taught? You may choose to specify how great an emphasis is given to each PLO in each course, and/or at what level of mastery (introduction, reinforcement, etc.). How do learning experiences such as internships or service-learning courses support the development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions identified as PLOs?

This information might be presented in the form of a simple curriculum map (a visual presentation/matrix), or a pivot table, etc.

This section should include descriptions of the various activities that will be used throughout the curriculum to teach the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes. For example, if working with teams is an objective, students might learn through formal team training, service learning projects, or internships.

6. **Assessment Strategies/Measures/Techniques/Methods:** What tools will you use to determine whether students have acquired the knowledge, skills and dispositions identified in the PLOs?

Measures must be valid and reliable. They should be designed to measure outcomes and gather data that are useful in determining whether PLOs are being achieved and goals are being met. For example, a portfolio might be used to collect information on writing skills and a commercial fields test might be used to collect information about student's understanding of principles in the major. Additionally, the measures should result in information that will be useful in improving instruction and curriculum.

Consider both direct and indirect measures. The two types have different strengths and weaknesses, so your assessment process will benefit from a combination of both. A direct measure is an evaluation of actual student work. Some examples include tests (local or national, pre- and post- or one-time), evaluation of portfolios, and observation of performance. Direct

assessment can be done by faculty members or external reviewers and benefits greatly from a scoring rubric or other explicit description of the criteria for various levels of achievement.

Indirect measures gauge perceptions of student achievement and attitudes. Surveys of current students, alumni, and employers are commonly used indirect measures. Focus groups and exit interviews are other examples. Employment rates and graduate school admissions also provide indirect evidence of student success.

Also consider both embedded and non-embedded measures. It's not necessary to include both types, but thinking of those two categories may suggest a wider range of possibilities.

Embedded measures are found within your courses or other parts of your program, such as papers, tests, and supervisor reports from required internships or field work. (Your Curriculum Map can be a useful guide to identifying courses from which student work can be extracted for purposes of program assessment.) Non-embedded measures happen outside of students' normal progress through the program. Alumni surveys are a good example, as are GRE, LSAT, and MCAT scores.

Indicate which measures will be used with each PLO. Not every PLO needs a separate measure—a portfolio, for example, may provide evidence for assessment of all of a program's PLOs—but it's important to make sure each PLO gets measured in at least one way.

In addition to identifying what assessment measures will be used, a good assessment plan lays out a **timeline** for when and how each measure will be used. Reports are submitted every five years, but assessment should be ongoing. A good assessment process also involves the faculty as broadly as possible. Indicate what happens when and who does what. You may choose (or need for other reasons) to do some kinds of assessment every year; others may happen only once in a five-year assessment cycle.

Describing your assessment process in detail will allow the ASC to better help your department, and will help your department continue your assessment process seamlessly when personnel changes.

Where feasible, include examples of surveys, questionnaires, and other assessment measures.

- 7. Assessment Results/Findings/Interpretation:** Describe what the assessment evidence reveals about student learning in the program. This section of the report should include *conclusions* about the program's effectiveness, the *evidence* on which those conclusions are based, and the *performance criteria, standards, or expectations* that shape the conclusions. For example, if 80% of students were rated "proficient" or better on a task, such findings may lead you to conclude that the program is doing well at preparing students for that task but has room for improvement: what percentage of students should perform at that level?

Be specific, avoiding generalities such as "students seemed to have trouble with . . ." or "students seemed to be skilled writers." Instead respond with specifics counts about strengths or weaknesses. For example, 25% of the students were unable to correctly write a citation for an article appearing in a group of readings. Provide data examples, qualitative or quantitative, where appropriate. These data are required for year-to-year comparisons.

There are a variety of ways for departments to communicate findings. That being said, departments will want to consider the most efficient and accurate methods to convey their data. Consider presenting quantitative results in tables or charts.

- 8. Dissemination of Findings:** How will assessment results be distributed? To whom? In what format? At a minimum the department faculty should discuss the results. This feedback is necessary for assessment activities and to emphasize the importance of assessment. Individual assessment results may be provided to students so that they can evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. It may also be useful to share results with employers, alumni, recruiters, prospective students, or funding sources to demonstrate program quality. (The co-chairs of the ASC will forward all Assessment Reports to the appropriate Dean.)

Departments should also give thought to the archiving of reports. As part of an ongoing assessment process, it will be necessary to refer to previous assessment work. Easy access to current assessment plans and past reports will ease transitions as personnel and roles change. Consider electronic storage, files of hard copies, and/or posting on a department web page.

- 9. Implications:** How will the results be used by the department? Reflect on the findings from this assessment cycle and identify changes the program is planning, or will consider, that may improve student learning in the program. This can include changes to the curriculum, such as new or revised courses and requirements, changes in teaching methods, etc.

Also consider what the assessment results suggest about the efficient and effective use of the program's staff time and other resources. Are there goals the program is simply not able to achieve with its current resources? Can some goals be better achieved with some reallocation of its resources? Are there changes the program would like to make that would require seeking out additional resources? While the ASC does not have control over resources, or their subsequent allocation, departments are invited to discuss and comment on resources in this section.

- 10. Reflections on the Department Assessment Process:** Describe what worked and what didn't. Did your assessment measures give you the kind of information you needed to assess each Learning Outcome? If not, you may want to look for different measures to use in the next assessment cycle. Or you may find that the Learning Outcomes themselves aren't getting at what you really want, and therefore need revision.

The ASC also invites your comments on our institutional process. Do you need more or different guidance or resources, for example? How can the assessment subcommittee assist your academic program in figuring out how well your students are learning what you want them to?