

University of the Cumberland Assessment Handbook

Welcome to the first edition of the University of the Cumberland Assessment Handbook. This handbook is intended to serve as a reference to faculty, staff and administrators as they develop and implement departmental assessment plans.

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University of the Cumberlands Mission and Goals

Mission Statement

The University of the Cumberlands has historically served students primarily, but not exclusively, from the beautiful mountain regions of Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio and Alabama which have traditionally been described as Appalachia. The University's impact can be seen in the achievements of its graduates who have assumed roles of leadership in this region and throughout the nation.

While located in the resort like area of Appalachia, with emphasis primarily on serving the beautiful mountain area, the university now reaches into every state and around the world through its student body and alumni.

The University of the Cumberlands continues to offer promising students of all backgrounds a broad based liberal arts program enriched with Christian values. The University strives for excellence in all of its endeavors and expects from students a similar dedication to this pursuit. Its commitment to a strong academic program is joined with a commitment to a strong work ethic. The University encourages students to think critically and creatively so that they may better prepare themselves for lives of responsible service and leadership.

Goals

1. Strengthen the University's academic programs
2. Strengthen the co-curricular facilities and programs necessary to support the needs and expectations of a diverse campus community
3. Maintain, improve, and develop the facilities and equipment required to support the programs of the University
4. Foster high morale and well-being among the campus community
5. Promote, nurture, and reward outstanding service by administrative and support staff
6. Strengthen the public image of the University
7. Develop and implement a long-range technology plan
8. Augment and strengthen the fiscal and material resources available to support the mission of the University

Mission and Goals for Assessment At University of the Cumberland

Mission

The mission of the office of assessment is to coordinate institutional assessment activities, to consult with departments in developing and implementing assessment plans and procedures, and to analyze institutional data.

Goals

Coordinate institutional assessment activities, including data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Consult with departments in the development and implementation of their assessment plans.

Document assessment processes and serve as a clearinghouse for assessment information.

Work with assessment committee to assess general education learning outcomes

Stay current on research literature and accepted practice in the areas of assessment.

Share information about assessment research and assessment activities conducted at other colleges.

University-Wide Assessment Plan

Academic programs have developed *Purpose Statements*, *Program Goals*, *Program Components*, and intended student *Learning Outcomes* that support the *Institutional Goals* based on the Mission Statement. Each academic program has identified *Course Descriptions* and *Course Objectives* to coordinate with the intended student *Learning Outcomes* and had developed the curricula to provide *Degree Requirements* that permit the program to achieve its purpose. Academic programs then identify *Assessment Methods* (e.g., *Course-Embedded Assessment Methods*) that can demonstrate the attainment of intended student *Learning Outcomes*. The faculty of each program has determined appropriate *Assessment Criteria* to demonstrate the program has achieved the *Learning Outcomes*. At the end of the academic year, the *Results* are tabulated and studied and faculty make or recommend changes. The program faculty implement *Actions Taken* and forward *Recommendations* to the department chair. The department chair may institute *Actions Taken* or forward *Recommendations* to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President oversees the routing of these *Recommendations* through, as appropriate, the General Education Task Force, the Teacher Education and Admissions Committee, the Catalog and Curriculum Committee, and the Graduate Committee. At any stage during the process, depending upon the type of recommendation, the Vice President or a committee can initiate *Actions Taken*, which feed into *Annual Budgeting* and directly back into the program or can make recommendations that can either be to other administrative or academic support units or feed into the strategic planning process. *Actions Taken* that necessitate special funding are included in the departmental budget for the next academic year. Needs that necessitate major expenditures in facilities or equipment are forwarded on to the Strategic Planning Committee for possible inclusion in the *Strategic Plan*.

Assessment of academic programs also includes the assessment of the General Education curriculum. Departments work together in developing *Learning Outcomes*, assessing the outcomes, and creating strategies for improvement. *Actions Taken* and *Recommendations* flow through the same process as detailed above and have the same impact on budgeting.

Administrative and academic support units have also developed *Purpose Statements* and *Objectives* that support the *Institutional Goals* based on the University's Mission Statement. The administrative and academic support units have identified appropriate *Assessment Methods* and *Assessment Criteria* for measuring their success at attaining their *Objectives*. After conducting appropriate assessment activities, each unit itemizes and analyzes the *Results* and documents the use of the *Results* by writing *Actions Taken* and *Recommendations*. *Actions Taken* include items handled at the unit level. *Recommendations* are forwarded up the administrative chain of command to the appropriate Vice President or Executive Director to facilitate both annual and strategic planning. The appropriate Vice President or Executive Director initiates *Actions*

Taken or forwards *Recommendations* to other administrative or academic support units. Along each stage of the process, *Actions Taken* feeds into *Annual Budgeting* and *Recommendations* may feed into the strategic planning process.

Annual planning strategies are based on assessment and immediately feed back into the programs and units. The Strategic Planning Committee receives all strategic planning recommendations and develops *Strategic Planning Goals* and *Strategies* for accomplishing the goals. The president's Cabinet completes *Strategic Budgeting* that permits accomplishment of the *Strategies* at the program or unit level, thus completing the strategic feedback loop. In addition, the Strategic Planning Committee monitors the direction of the University and reflects on the applicability of the Mission Statement and the *Institutional Goals*. The current Strategic Plan, entitled *In Pursuit of Vita Abundantior* and approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2004, reflects the depth and breadth of planning at University of the Cumberlands. This plan was based upon an exhaustive review of the institution's facilities, programs, and past performance. It was developed with input from all elements of the campus community. In its final format- with its detail, its identification of responsible parties for various strategies and its timeline for implementation- this document illustrates a major development of planning and assessment processes at the University of the Cumberlands over the past decade.

Institutional Research assists with the identification of appropriate assessment methods and analyses and performs necessary *Data Analysis*. The Assessment Committee assesses and, as necessary, modifies the process. The Director of Assessment serves as the reporting authority. After collating all *Annual Assessment Reports*, the Assessment Committee forwards the reports and its summaries to the Vice Presidents and Executive Directors for their review and analysis.

For further detail regarding University of the Cumberlands' assessment plan and the expected outcomes for each department and unit, see *A Comprehensive Plan for Assessing The Institutional Effectiveness of Cumberland College*, as well as the *Assessment Summaries* for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 prepared by the Assessment Committee.

University of the Cumberlands continues to improve its assessment program. In the spring of 2005 the University developed a more comprehensive assessment calendar to schedule all assessment activities, reports, and evaluations of University programs and units. This calendar is included in the *Comprehensive Assessment Plan*. During the summer of 2005 the University also employed a Director of Assessment to work with the Assessment Committee in coordinating the planning, administering, reporting, and evaluating of all assessment instruments and ensuring the use of assessment results in improving University programs.

Improvement Based On Assessment

Both academic departments and non-academic units provide assessment results and strategies for improvement. This section first reviews examples of changes in programs or in purchasing equipment by academic departments, then non-academic units, then General Education as noted in the *2007-2008 Assessment Summary*.

Art- In Summer 2007, the art faculty revised the art major, reducing the total number of hours. Changes were accepted by the TEAC Committee and the Catalog Committee in the fall of 2007.

Business Administration - B.S. in Management Information Systems was introduced in Fall 2007.

Chemistry – Increased emphasis on computer software in chemistry applications. Purchasing a new IR spectrometer in the fall 08 semester.

Communication Arts- In Fall 2007, a minor in Journalism was added to the department including courses in Print and Web Journalism, Media Law, Communication Graphics, and Journalism Practicum.

Education- Field hours in capstone courses EDUC 432, ELEM 430, and ELMS 430 were redesigned to more intentionally focus on special needs students.

Graduate Education – All graduate programs were rewritten to improve their impact on P-2 learning. Additional degree offerings were written including M.A. in School Counseling, Ed.S. in Administration and Supervision, Ed.S. In Special Education, Ed.S. in Reading and Writing, ELS in Instruction and Curriculum, and an Ed.D. program in Administration. The department developed online courses so that most of the graduate programs are now offered online. The Graduate Admissions Office was established with 3 full-time staff members for admissions, initial enrollment, and initial advising.

ESS - ESS 231, Care & Prevention of Athletic Injuries was added to classes under clinical experience. Clinical Experience will be added in ESS 131, 435, 437, 231 in 2008-2009.

Mathematics - Microteaching Experience was added.

Modern Foreign Languages - Plans are being implemented to offer a major in Spanish beginning in Fall 2008.

Music- The Theory IV Written Project was revised for the Spring 2008 school year.

Physics - A new dual-degree Applied Physics major was expanded to permit students to transfer to other ABET - accredited engineering schools other than the University of Kentucky.

Theatre - The Theatre program will update practices for Theatre Outreach and Theatre Outreach Lab to reach long term goals.

Non-academic units also made recommendations regarding purchasing new equipment, hiring personnel, and providing new services. These recommendations and their status as "Completed," "In Progress," or "Not Completed" can be found in the *2007-2008 Assessment Summary for Academic Support and Administrative Units*. Some examples are as follows:

Admissions - Literature was updated to better portray the University, academic programs, etc.

Academic Resource Center - Online Sign-up form, started in September 2007 provides a printable record of each tutoring request.

Alumni Services - Q-Base contract of December 26, 2007 provided data on alumni. Data received August 5, 2008 for processing.

Athletic Training- Purchased 3 additional Sports Ware Plus programs in July 2008 to help alleviate access problems by the staff. Began using Ambir Docket Scan technology to scan medical reports, insurance cards and other sensitive materials into reporting system to decrease hard paper accumulation and better direct information storage for the future. Challenge courses for ATC staff members' recertification in Professional Rescuer and Lay Responder Instructor status were made

available in May 2008 for coaching staff recertification for the upcoming year.

Career Services- Purchased new materials to keep information current. Relocated in May 2006 to BCC for better facilities to serve students. Established requirement for all freshmen to enroll in Alcohol and Substance Abuse preventative program at www.mystudentbody.com. This is being funded through a mini-grant from KYASAP Board.

Center for Teaching and Learning – Worked with Retention Committee to provide greater outreach. Offered information on greater use of technology available to students including course response systems, downloadable resources, and text web sites.

Church Relations - Combined mailings with those from Admissions to minimize costs.

Cumberland Inn - Pool and pool deck were resurfaced. New tile and coping were added to pool. Replaced roof on Barna Log home and replaced mattresses in the Inn.

Hagan Memorial Library- Added two additional databases to support new programs in Business and Education. Requested 1 new scanner and 12 optical mice to improve computer equipment. Added two additional databases to support new programs in Business and Education. Interlibrary loan form and web site are being revised to make them easier to use. Library instruction was revised to better train students in information literacy strategies.

Human Resources - New positions include Director of Ed.D. program, two Graduate Education support staff, one support staff in IT, one in Human Services, and a Director of MBA program.

Information Technologies – University decided to upgrade Internet

bandwidth to 45Mbps. Purchased PowerCAMPUS administrative system to provide better access to information.

Intramural Program - Added a 9-hole golf scramble and badminton tournament to the schedule.

Media Relations - A new camera was purchased to allow the department to cover multiple events.

Plant operations - Improvements include painting, carpeting, VCT flooring, furnishings and HVAC, addition of new media and smart boards in McGaw Music Building, repair and expansion of parking lots. Implemented an energy conservation plant that will retrofit boilers, cooling towers and other key HVAC equipment with new controls and sensors.

Registrar's Office - During the 2007-08 academic year, executive decision was made to upgrade to an new Administrative Computer System, through SunGARD Higher Education.

Residence Life - Safety Programs are being increased.

Safety - Security - Complete camera system installed in Robinson and Cook Hall. Emergency public address system installed on chimes tower for use in emergencies, implemented Emergency Alert Mass notification System to send emergency messages to students, faculty and staff by cell, text, email, and land lines. Installed additional weather alert radios throughout campus.

Sports Information - Continue to update equipment. Secured additional assistants. Provided webcast of most of UC's athletic games. Webcast most of UC athletic games.

Video Productions -- Recommended providing the Admissions

Promotional Video on the University website and in DVD.

In addition to programmatic or items involving budgetary decisions, many *Actions Taken* reflect changes in specific courses that improve student learning outcomes by providing better guidance and more varied opportunities.

Communication Arts – To accommodate students' needs, COMM 235 is being offered during the fall and spring semesters.

Education – Rubrics for the electronic portfolio have been revised to provide more specific data related to KY and UC standards.

Graduate – The Department has developed on-line courses so that most graduate programs are available totally through on-line delivery.

English – Implementation of an assessment rubric during Fall 2006 in ENGL 230. This rubric focused on assessing mastery of critical theory, particularly as reflected in the implementation of well-focused and well-organized literary

HESS – HESS 233 was established as a pre-requisite for ESS 330 to better prepare students for projects in this class.

MATH – Moved adjunct professor to full time status

Music – The new addition of the computer software (using Finale or a comparable notation program) has allowed this project to become a vital component of the class.

Physics – Students in PHYS 332 Experimental Physics and PHYS 337 electronics used a variety of instruments for data acquisition; computers, oscilloscopes, function generators, power supplies, multimeters, etc. Students were required to perform data analysis on the computer.

Psychology – The department started a concerted effort to get students to take Research Design early in their sophomore year to help reinforce this area prior to the ACAT exam.

Religion and Philosophy – Decided to invite more outside speakers with expertise into classes and for Theta Alpha Kappa presentations. Added a library in Bennett Building to house resources.

Theatre – Decided to develop capstone project for assessment purposes with new faculty for THTR 331, 332, 336, 431, and 437.

Non-academic units also initiated actions to improve their services 2007-2008 *Annual Assessment Reports for Administrative and Academic Support Units*). Some examples are the following:

Office of Admissions- Two “Meet and Eat” events were changed to attract more students from particular areas

Athletic Department- Will encourage all coaches to provide study halls for their athletes

Center for Teaching and Learning - CTL programs extended to outreach for retention efforts. Effort has also been made to form new collaborations to increase awareness of and access to resources to promote critical thinking and learning, especially through technology and assessment.

Library- The library staff is renewing the current electronic databases and has added two additional databases to support new programs in Business and Education.

Intramural Department - Added a 9-hole golf scramble and badminton tournament to the schedule

Sports Information Office – Plans to expand webcasting capability to other sports.

All of the recommendations for improvement mentioned above came directly from the assessment process. The implementation of the actions will improve the academic program and student services.

Connection to Strategic Plan

The University of the Cumberlands' *Strategic Plan* and the regular audits of the Plan further demonstrate the analysis of assessment data leading to improvements on the campus. Some significant improvements are:

Renovation of Facilities (Goal III)

Correll Science Complex: Total renovation of existing building and a 26,000 sq. ft. new addition.

Harth Hall: New women's dormitory complete. Extensive site development around this facility with new sidewalks, parking, water lines and sewer mains to serve other dormitories in this area.

Rollins Pool: New main entrance and environmental upgrades and roof system replacement.

Review of Academic Programs

UC expanded its academic offerings with a doctorate in educational leadership and an M.B.A. degree.

University of the Cumberlands will offer the Master of Arts in Professional Counseling program. The program, based upon a cohort, 8-week, bi-term model, will begin with the fall 2009 semester. Upon completion of the 60-hour M.A.P.C. program,

graduates will be prepared to sit for the examination to become a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC).

Updated Technology

Upgrade to a new Administrative Computer System, through SunGARD Higher Education was initiated with completion date during the 2008-2009 Academic year.

Safety and Security

A new complete security camera system was installed in both Robinson Hall and Cook Hall. Installed an emergency public address system on our chimes tower to publicly address campus community by loud speakers in the event of an emergency situation.

Implemented an Emergency Alert Mass Notification System to send emergency messages to students-faculty-staff by cell, text message; e-mail and land line call.

Installed additional weather alert radios throughout campus.

General Education

The General Education Curriculum is scheduled for discussion in 2008-2009 to decide if there is a need for revision. A committee has been assembled with representatives from each department. In the meantime, assessment of General Education curriculum in 2007-2008 led to a variety of actions to better assess expected student learning outcomes and to improve student learning. Although the General Education Curriculum is being reviewed, examples of current activities and assessments include the following:

Written Communication - English began tracking diagnostic pre and post tests for individual students and proposed a rubric to assess writing competency on ENGL 131 and ENGL 132 final essay covering 4-8 writing standards. The English Department is also reviewing texts in light of the QEP Critical Thinking across the Curriculum initiative.

Christian Faith and Service - To more accurately reflect the QEP commitment to improving critical thinking in reading and writing, all religion courses are increasing writing assignments that require reflection. Discussions about how to strengthen assessment of INST 101 and LEAD 100 are underway.

Scientific and Mathematical Awareness - Physics introduced inquiry based mini-labs for the purpose of developing a better conceptual understanding. Final exam is being revised in Biology 131 and 132 students' final exam assessing foundational concepts.

Physical and Social Well-Being - Health faculty decided to begin tracking pre and post exams for Health & Wellness, pilot use of MyHealthLab computer program in HLTH236, and implement writing rubrics in Fall 2008.

Human and Social Well-Being - Assignments, quizzes, and comprehensive final exams are used to reflect understanding. The content and assessment measures are being re-evaluated.

World Perspective - Additional assignments were added in Fall 2007 that require regular writing assignments that reflect understanding of information and of the significance of the

information. English established a writing rubric for use in all English composition, English Literature, and American Literature courses. History is discussing use of pre and post tests. Music replaced MUSC 235, Survey of Music Literature with MUSC 335 World Music to add diversity to the General Education Curriculum. Political Science- replaced POLS 234 *State and Local Government* with POLS 235 *Introduction to International Relations* since POLS 234 is offered once every two years and POLS 235 is offered annually.

Assessment Committee and Departmental Contacts

Assessment Committee:

Permanent:

Kirby Clark, Co-Chair 539-4170

Susan Weaver, Co-Chair 539-4325

Chuck Dupier 539-4226

Three-Year:

Gina Bowlin 539-4060

Michael Eskay 539-4078

Susan Felts 539-4472

Two-Year:

Angie Asher 539-4226

Joan Hembree 539-4264

Jeremiah Massengale 539-4527

One-Year:

Carrie Byrd 539-4160

Shelleigh Moses 539-4241

Russell Weedman 539-4499

Assessment Coordinators for Departments:

Accounting - Mike LaGrone 606-539-4273

Art - Keith Semmel 606-539-4494

Biblical Languages - Bob Dunston 606-539-4227

Biology - Sara Ash 606-539-4308

Business

Accounting - Michael LaGrone 606-539-4273

Business Administration - Micaiah Bailey 606-539-4272

MBA Vonda Moore 606-539-4293

MCIS Kenneth Sims 606-539-4344

Chemistry - Julie Tan 606-539-4379

Communications Arts - Keith Semmel 606-539-4494

Education - Norma Patrick 606-539-4393

Ed.D. - Barry Vann 606-539-4403

English - Tom Frazier 606-539-4414

General Education - Chairs and Susan Weaver 606-539-4325

Graduate - Gary Pate 606-539-4391

Hagan Memorial Library - Jan Wren 606-539-4328

Health - Cindi Norton 606-539-4315

HESS - Dr. Anita Bowman 606-539-4411

History - Eric Wake 606-539-4269

Human Services / Criminal Justice - Gina Bowlin 606-539-4060

Management Information Systems - Ken Sims 606-539-4344

Mathematics - John Hymo 606-539-4284

Modern Foreign Language - Laura Dennis-Bay 606-539-4441

Movement & Leisure Studies - James Key 606-539-4365

Music - Jeff Smoak 606-539-4332

Physics - Jim Manning 606-539-4376

Political Science - Bruce Hicks 606-539-4267

Psychology - Dennis Trickett 606-539-4153

Quality Enhancement Plan - Susan Weaver 606-539-4325

Religion - Bob Dunston 606-539-4227

Theatre Arts - Moe Conn 606-539-4443

Administrative and Support Units

Academic Resource Center - Carolyn Reaves 606-539-4312

Admissions - Erica Harris 606-539-4250

Alumni Services - Dave Bergman 606-539-4167

Athletic Department - Randy Vernon 606-539-4540

Athletic Training Department - Peggy Blackmore-Haus 606-539-4131
Business Services - Steve Morris 606-539-4597
 Campus Auxiliary Services - Steve Morris 606-539-4597
 Cumberland Inn - David Maggard 3294
Campus Ministries - Dean Whitaker 606-539-4343
Capital Projects - Kyle Gilbert 606-539-4236
Career Services - Debbie Harp 606-539-4259
Center for Teaching & Learning - Susan Weaver 606-539-4325
Church Relations - Rick Fleenor 606-539-4154
Development - Kay Manning 606-539-4367
Financial Planning - Steve Allen 606-539-4220
Financial Services - Jana Bailey & Randle Teague 606-539-4234
Hagan Memorial Library - Jan Wren 606-539-4328
Health Services - Linda Carter 606-539-4230
Human Resources - Pearl Baker 606-539-4211
Information Technology - Donnie Grimes 606-539-4197
Institutional Research - Chuck Dupier, III 606-539-4226
International Relations - Rick Fleenor 606-539-4154
Intramural Department - Kris Strebeck 606-539-4437
Leadership & Community Services - Debbie Harp 606-539-4259
Media Relations - Daphne Baird 606-539-4497
Mountain Outreach - Marc Hensley 606-539-4143
New Student Orientation - Linda Carter 606-539-4230
Plant Operations - Kyle Gilbert 606-539-4236
Registrar - Emily Meadors 606-539-4401
Residence Life - Linda Carter 606-539-4230
Sports Information - Jennifer Wake-Floyd 606-539-4132
Student Activities - Lisa Bartram 606-539-4232
Video Productions - Jeff Meadors 606-539-4401

Assessment Committee Process for Providing Feedback

Rationale

The Assessment Committee's role is to provide support and encouragement to departments and programs during any stage of the assessment process. The goal is to provide useful feedback to departments and programs. Seeking feedback from the Assessment Committee is voluntary and optional, encouraged, but not required in the assessment process.

The Assessment Committee will provide advice and support regarding departmental assessment efforts and will comment on what departments are doing, not on their results.

Assessment at University of the Cumberland is continually evolving, striving to move in directions that provide optimal information for departmental improvement efforts.

Assessment is a continual and ongoing enterprise; therefore, the Assessment Committee seeks to assist departments and programs throughout the assessment process.

Process

Departments are invited to solicit feedback from the Assessment Committee at any stage of the assessment process, from early drafts to data collection and analysis. Departments may submit information to the Assessment Committee requesting written feedback. Another option is that one or more representatives may choose to attend an Assessment Committee meeting to describe their process and to seek assistance.

It is not necessary that assessment plans are complete. The members of the committee are eager to provide feedback during the development and implementation phases of departmental assessment.

The Assessment Committee will view departmental assessment data only if requested by departments. For example, assessment results may be presented in order to solicit suggestions for analyzing the results, revising the plan, or for collecting further data.

The Assessment Committee is not authorized (nor are the present members of the Assessment Committee willing) to make judgments regarding departmental and programmatic assessment plans. The Assessment Committee is not an approval body for assessment plans, but rather serves in a role as advisors/consultants.

The Assessment Committee is not a depository for assessment reports. It functions as a peer

feedback mechanism through which departments and programs can receive help and assistance with their assessment plans.

All information submitted to the Assessment Committee is confidential unless departments decide otherwise.

Guidelines for Departmental Assessment Plans

Some characteristics of a good assessment plan:

- The focus is on the major as a whole rather than individual courses or the minor.
- The number of critical learning goals is small. Focus on your 5-7 most important goals.
- The goals and the assessment plan are a product of input and discussion by the entire department.
- The plan is ongoing rather than periodic.
- The plan is manageable (Do not try to do everything at once, use sampling techniques, if possible, involve several members of your department, etc.)
- The plan uses multiple measures.
- Students understand their role in assessment (tell students how assessment will be used and how it can help them).
- Faculty use results for decision making.

Busy Chairperson's Guide to Assessment

1. What is a departmental assessment program?

A departmental assessment program evaluates the effectiveness of its undergraduate and graduate programs in terms of measurable student outcomes. The program consists of (a) lists of educational objectives for each of the department's major programs expressed in terms of student learning outcomes; (b) measures of student achievement for each of the objectives; (c) methods of collecting

data; (d) procedures for involving departmental faculty in reviewing and using the results of assessment, including revision of the assessment plan when necessary; and (e) annual collection, analysis, and reporting of the results of assessment.

2. What should be included in the department's list of educational objectives?

The list of educational objectives for each academic program in the department should include knowledge, skills, and attitudes specific to the major plus, at a minimum, the three core University Studies objectives: locating and gathering information, written and oral expression, and critical thinking and reasoning. While the list of educational objectives should be comprehensive and detailed, it should still be feasible to assess every stated objective. Formulate each objective so that there is a credible connection between the objective and the method of assessing it.

3. Who should be assessed?

SACSEvaluators staff emphasize that all majors should be assessed—typically as they near completion of their program. Thus, voluntary testing in which only some majors participate is no longer acceptable. Though some departments may wish to assess the learning of non-majors in their service courses and students transferring to other colleges and universities, the focus of assessment is generally on graduates from the department's major programs.

4. How can the department insure that all students are assessed? What if students don't want to participate?

The most viable solution is to integrate assessment into the curriculum. For example, a department might design internship evaluations so that they provide useful information about student performance on key objectives, or incorporate senior projects and exit exams into a capstone course, or pre-test students in an introductory course. Students will engage in assessment activities that are an integral, logical part of their education. In any case, since voluntary participation is highly unlikely to produce satisfactory levels of student involvement, both the benefits of participating and the costs of abstaining need to be made evident to the students in terms that make sense to them.

5. What if an appropriate nationally normed test of achievement in the major is not available?

Departments are not required to use nationally normed tests. In fact, Southern Association Evaluators discourage the use of nationally normed tests if they do not provide relevant information about student achievement in the major. One advantage of nationally normed tests is that they provide a comparative standard of performance; a disadvantage is that they often do not relate

directly to a department's program objectives. Popular alternatives to the nationally normed exam are locally developed exams and performance-based assessments (a capstone project or a portfolio, such as the senior project in Geosciences or senior recital in Music). Locally developed exams are scored "objectively." Performance-based assessments typically use a criterion-referenced rating system.

6. Can you be more specific about acceptable and unacceptable measures of student learning?

SACS Evaluators distinguish direct from indirect measures of student learning. Direct measures include the capstone experience, portfolio assessment, standardized tests, certification and licensure exams, locally developed exams, essay exams blind scored by multiple scorers, juried review of student performances and projects, external evaluation of student performance in internships. Indirect measures include surveys, exit interviews, retention and transfer rates, length of time to degree, SAT and ACT scores, graduation rates, and placement and acceptance data. Grade point averages, grades in the major, faculty/student ratios, curriculum review documents, accreditation reports, demographic data, and other administrative data are not acceptable measures of student outcomes.

7. Is one good measure of student learning enough to satisfy the assessment requirement?

No. Departments are expected to use multiple measures of student learning. For example, a department might employ a capstone project, internship evaluations, writing test scores, ACT scores, California Critical Thinking Test scores, placement and acceptance data, exiting student interviews, and alumni survey data in its assessment program. One measure can be used for several objectives; a capstone project, for example, might be used to measure knowledge in the major, research skills, and communication skills. Departments are especially encouraged to use several measures for one objective; skill in writing, for example, might be measured by performance on the University's writing test, performance on the program's capstone project, and grades of the department's majors compared with other students in English composition.

8. Can you be more specific about standards? How do you set up and apply standards in assessment?

Standards constitute performance goals and should be defined in terms appropriate to the relevant method of measurement. Where comparative data are available, a department might define standards in terms of the percentage of students at or above a particular percentile. An individual department might have good reasons to state that all of its students should score above the 50th (or 65th, 70th, etc.) percentile on a standardized test in the major—provided that this is a meaningful expression of

standards. Departments with licensure exams might want to state that no fewer than 95% of its students will pass the exam on the first attempt. And departments with a criterion-referenced capstone project (or internship evaluations based on specified criteria) might want to state that all students will receive at least a satisfactory score in each criterial area with 30% performing at a level higher than satisfactory.

Performance-based assessments present specific problems. Though standards are usually written into scoring criteria, performance-based assessments have little credibility unless results are analyzed by comparison to performance of students outside the department, by external review, or through conscientious discussion among faculty of the relative strengths and weaknesses of student performance. The Art Department's evaluation of senior projects is strengthened by the fact that it employs an external judge, as is the evaluation of a department that identifies areas of weakness indicated by particular measures (for example, relatively weak understanding of the hypothetical method as indicated by performance in the senior portfolio) and proposes actions to strengthen them (for example, holding a department faculty workshop on teaching the hypothetical method). Whatever your approach, remember that statements such as "All graduating students passed the department's exit exam" are not credible indicators of standards unless supplemented with appropriate analysis, interpretation and follow-up.

9. How can I add assessment to the already busy schedules of my faculty and students?

To the extent that one can incorporate assessment into daily practice, assessment will not appear as an additional burden. We need to find creative ways to incorporate assessment into curriculum and instruction so that it is part of our normal work load. The burden will seem unbearable to a chairperson who tries to pull together disparate elements of an uncoordinated assessment program on the weekend before the Departmental Annual Report is due. For the chairperson who plans ahead and fully involves faculty in the collection, interpretation, and use of assessment data, the burden will be less onerous.

10. Do I have to use the results of assessment for the purpose of improvement?

In any given year, it may not be necessary or appropriate to launch a program improvement initiative based on assessment results. Still, SACS Evaluators have consistently faulted assessment programs on the grounds that the results of assessment are not being used to improve curriculum and instruction. The Association hopes to see a significant increase in the number of departments using assessment for improvement, and if there are any efforts to improve departmental programs

connected with assessment they should be reported. Reports of efforts to improve programs are telling indicators of a vital, ongoing assessment program. If your assessment program is not giving you useful information for program improvement, then this information (that the information is not useful) should be used to improve your assessment program. By a curious twist of logic, useless information thereby becomes useful.

Written by Dr. Dennis Holt, Vice Provost

Southeast Missouri State University

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Overview of Assessment Resources

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Determining the Status of Departmental Assessment Plans

<u>Status</u>	<u>Plan</u>	<u>Implementation</u>	<u>Analysis of Results</u>	<u>Action/Response</u>
Undeveloped	Absence of learning goals, methods of assessment, and plan for implementation	No implementation of assessment activities	No analysis of student outcomes	No action or response identified or implemented
Developing	Learning goals, methods of assessment, and procedures for implementation are partially developed	Some implementation of minimal assessment activities	Some analysis of student outcomes for some learning goals	Response or action identified but not implemented
Established	Learning goals, methods of assessment, and procedures for implementation are developed	Implementation of several assessment activities to assess multiple learning goals	Some analysis of student outcomes for most learning goals	Response or action identified and implemented for most learning outcomes
Exemplary	Clearly stated objectives, reasonable methods of assessment, and a manageable timeline are developed	Implementation of a variety of assessment activities to assess the most important learning goals	Comprehensive analysis of the most important learning goals	Response or action demonstrates use of data for improvement of the program

Sample of Linking Assessment to Syllabi

Consider linking your assessment plan to your syllabi. Examine the list of objectives that are linked to each goal in the mission statement. Identify those that are relevant to the course being considered and list them in the syllabus. This will help you, other faculty and students see the scope of your department's intentions. Here is an example taken from my PSY 340 Experimental Psychology course.

III. Objectives

In light of Trinity International University's statement of mission, the Psychology Department has developed departmental objectives stated in student outcome form. The following objectives are especially pertinent to this course. The Roman numeral in parentheses refers to the specific TIU mission goal statement.

- Students completing the B. A. program in Psychology will compare favorably in their knowledge of the basic content of the discipline of psychology with students in similar programs (I)
- Students will be able to apply scientific concepts and analyses to psychological problems which scientists and practitioners may encounter, and employ problem-solving skills to specific psychological phenomena or situations (II)
- Students will be able to evaluate research methods and research designs, statistics and psychometric principles (II)
- Students will be able to think scientifically, distinguishing observations from conclusions and distinguishing theories and findings based upon evidence from those without such support (II)
- Students will be able to assess situations for violations of ethical practices (VI).

Task: link your assessment plan to each syllabus. Pick the most relevant objectives for each course and document them in each course syllabus.

Source: Twelker, Paul A. (1999). Guidelines for Developing Departmental Assessment Plans. Internet resource available at URL:<http://www.tiu.edu/psychology/Guidelines.htm> (last updated March 20, 2001). Copyright © 2000 by Paul A. Twelker

Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

1. Good Practice encourages student-faculty contact.

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

2. Good practice encourages cooperation among students.

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding.

3. Good practice encourages active learning.

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

4. Good practice gives prompt feedback.

Knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. In getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

5. Good practice emphasizes time on task.

Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one's time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis for high performance for all.

6. Good practice communicates high expectations.

Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone--for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations of themselves and make extra efforts.

7. Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learning in ways that do not come so easily.

Source: Chickering, A.W, and Gamson, Z.F. "Seven Principles for Good Practice in

Undergraduate Education." *AAHE Bulletin*, 1987, 39(7), 3-7.

Another great resource: See [Mike Wohlfeil's Pedagogy Resources Page](#) for additional information about student learning.

Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public [AAHE, 1992, pp. 2-3].

Bloom's Taxonomy

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom headed a group of educational psychologists who developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning. This became a taxonomy including three overlapping domains; the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. Cognitive learning is demonstrated by knowledge recall and the intellectual skills:

comprehending information, organizing ideas, analyzing and synthesizing data, applying knowledge, choosing among alternatives in problem-solving, and evaluating ideas or actions. This domain on the acquisition and use of knowledge is predominant in the majority of courses. Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain, from the simple recall or recognition of facts, as the lowest level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels, to the highest order which is classified as evaluation. Verb examples that represent intellectual activity on each level are listed below.

1. **Knowledge:** arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, state.
2. **Comprehension:** classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate.
3. **Application:** apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.
4. **Analysis:** analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.
5. **Synthesis:** arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.
6. **Evaluation:** appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose compare, defend estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate.

Affective learning is demonstrated by behaviors indicating attitudes of awareness, interest, attention, concern, and responsibility, ability

to listen and respond in interactions with others, and ability to demonstrate those attitudinal characteristics or values which are appropriate to the test situation and the field of study. This domain relates to emotions, attitudes, appreciations, and values, such as enjoying, conserving, respecting, and supporting. Verbs applicable to the affective domain include accepts, attempts, challenges, defends, disputes, joins, judges, praises, questions, shares, supports, and volunteers.

Psychomotor learning is demonstrated by physical skills; coordination, dexterity, manipulation, grace, strength, speed; actions which demonstrate the fine motor skills such as use of precision instruments or tools, or actions which evidence gross motor skills such as the use of the body in dance or athletic performance. Verbs applicable to the psychomotor domain include bend, grasp, handle, operate, reach, relax, shorten, stretch, write, differentiate (by touch), express (facially), perform (skillfully).

Source:<http://www.wested.org/tie/dlrn/blooms.html>

More about Bloom's Taxonomy ...

Benjamin Bloom developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning. This taxonomy categorizes levels of abstraction, which can be a useful structure for categorizing test questions.

Competence Skills Demonstrated

Knowledge observation and recall of information

Knowledge of dates, events, places

Knowledge of major ideas

Mastery of subject matter

Question Cues: list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote,

Name, who, when, where, etc.
Comprehension understanding information
Grasp meaning
Translate knowledge into new context
Interpret facts, compare, and contrast
Order, group, infer causes
Predict consequences
Question Cues: describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend
Application use information
Use methods, concepts, theories in new situations
Solve problems using required skills or knowledge
Questions Cues: apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover
Analysis seeing patterns
Organization of parts
Recognition of hidden meanings
Identification of components
Question Cues: analyze, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer
Synthesis use old ideas to create new ones
Generalize from given facts
Relate knowledge from several areas
Predict, draw conclusions
Question Cues: combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, compose, formulate, prepare, generalize, rewrite
Evaluation: compare and discriminate between ideas
Assess value of theories, presentations
Make choices based on reasoned argument
Verify value of evidence
Recognize subjectivity
Question Cues: assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarize
Source: <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/bloom.html>
Adapted from: Bloom, B.S. (Ed.) (1956) Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals: Handbook I, cognitive domain. New York ; Toronto: Longmans, Green.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Assessment Initiative

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) has also recognized the importance of its member colleges demonstrating that they are fulfilling their

missions. Standard 3.3.1 of “Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement” states,

The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results (Commission on Colleges, 2004, p. 22).

In this statement, SACS has provided a strong motivation for campus-wide assessment. In doing so, we must believe that this is more than a mandate, but rather a challenge to clearly identify who we are, what we wish to accomplish, what we wish for our students to learn, how we can measure success, and how we can strive to improve. T. A. Angelo stated,

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education (AAHE Bulletin, November, 1995, p. 7).

While this quotation may refer more to the educational program, SACS clearly expects assessment to also involve administrative and academic support units. Nichols states, “The *reason* Administrative and Educational Support units are asked to take part in assessment activities is in order to provide information through which they can improve their services” (Nichols and Nichols, 2000b, p. 15).

In contrast to assessment of academic programs and administrative and academic support units, evaluation of individuals (faculty or staff) is outside the scope of the Comprehensive Assessment Plan.

Assessment *for effectiveness* in administrative and educational support units is clearly different from individual employee evaluation. Employee evaluation, an important and legitimate form of activity on our campuses, is focused upon the individual ... Assessment activities are focused at the unit level and address improvement of services without judgmental findings regarding individuals (Nichols and Nichols, 2000b, p. 23).