Assessment Handbook 2017-2020
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History of Grantham University

History
Grantham University, founded in 1951, is one of the oldest, private, postsecondary, degree-granting distance education universities in the United States. Grantham University is proud of its history, which spans nearly seven decades and exemplifies continuous commitment of service to the Armed Forces of the United States of America, veterans, active guard and their families, as well as public agency staff and students from around the world.

In 1961, GSE became accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC), which received formal recognition by the Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency in 1959. After that date, Grantham delivered accredited programs to an adult student population both in the classroom and at a distance to serve a geographically dispersed student body of active-duty service members.

Today, the University offers certificates, associate, baccalaureate and master level degree programs and has received specialized accreditation for its business programs through the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE). The business programs in the following degrees are accredited by the IACBE:

- Master of Business Administration
- Master of Science in Performance Improvement
- Master of Business Administration in Project Management
- Master of Science in Business Intelligence
- Master of Business Administration in Information Management
- Bachelor of Business Administration in Human Resource Management
- Bachelor of Science in Accounting
- Bachelor of Science in Business Administration
- Bachelor of Science in Business Management

The College of Nursing is a candidate for accreditation by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). The following programs are included in the candidacy:

- RN-BSN Degree Completion (Bachelor)
- RN-MSN Bridge Program Option
- Master of Science in Nursing:
  - Case Management (MSN)
  - Nursing Management & Organizational Leadership (MSN)
  - Nursing Education (MSN)
  - Nursing Informatics (MSN)
The Bachelor of Science degree program in Electronics Engineering Technology is accredited by the Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission of ABET.

Mission, Vision, and Core Professional Competencies

**University Mission**
The Mission of Grantham University is to provide quality, accessible, affordable, professionally relevant programs in a continuously changing global society.

**University Vision**
Grantham University is committed to being a globally recognized innovator in higher education, serving those who serve® and serving those who strive to make a difference in their professional lives and community.

**Core Professional Competencies (CPCs)**
The University, in alignment with the published recommendations from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) annual job outlook survey developed six core professional competencies all graduates should possess at the completion of their degree program. All students are required, throughout their academic journey, to demonstrate a fundamental, level appropriate, understanding and application of the following competencies:

**Communication.**
Formulating and expressing thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and non-verbal communication skills in person, in writing, and in a digital world.

**Distributed Collaboration.**
Working effectively across distributed locations and asynchronously to achieve a common goal through relationship-building, shared responsibility, empathy, and respect.

**Professional and Social Responsibility.**
Engaging in social responsibility through seeking justice, valuing diversity, respecting the environment; and demonstrating professionalism through integrity, mutual accountability, and ethical behavior. This includes considering the social and global impact of individual and organizational decisions, and an awareness of and adhering to regulations, professional standards, and industry best practices.

**Critical Thinking/Problem Solving.**
Using analytical reasoning when gathering and evaluating relevant information to effectively formulate possible solutions for an issue, problem, or a variety of issues; includes the ability to recognize potential consequences of a decision.

**Career management.**
Identifying knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal strengths and experiences necessary to pursue career goals. Recognizing areas for professional growth, how to navigate and explore job options, and to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace.
Data aptitude.
Develop information literacy and the capacity to manage data with subsequent finding, structuring, evaluating, and interpreting, in order to provide meaningful analysis to accomplish a specific purpose.

Introduction to Assessment

Definition, Purpose, Principles, and Function (Role)

What is Assessment?
Assessment is a systematic process by which designated assignments are collected, scored, and analyzed to determine if an academic program or its institution are meeting their stated learning outcomes. It is the process by which academic units seek to (1) improve teaching and learning and (2) demonstrate program and institutional success.

Purpose of Assessment.
The purpose of assessment serves to gather aggregate evidence of student satisfaction, student learning, and academic achievement, serving both immediate and long-term programmatic and university strategic goals. Assessment, when based on the mission and values of Grantham, provides a means for the institution and the individual schools and colleges to document respective graduates have obtained a level of mastery in selected categories and areas of study.

Principles of Assessment.
Understanding the purpose of assessment is important to the sustainability of a degree program and academic institution. Through this process faculty and administrative staff have the opportunity to both learn, as well as teach students the value and importance of assessment. Grantham integrated the 9 Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (Appendix A) as a foundation for the development and implementation of the Assessment Handbook and the components therein. Although the primary function of these principles is to support student learning, they can also be applicable to assessing the achievement of institutional-wide goals (AAHE, 1992).

Role of Assessment.
Assessment of student learning and institutional improvement is a core value and an ongoing process at Grantham University. The comprehensive assessment and evaluation of student-learning outcomes is the foundation of effective planning and revision, necessary to ensure Grantham continues to provide quality, professional education, in support of the institutional mission and goals.

Further, a continuous and well-established assessment cycle enables the university to communicate the achievements and opportunities of improvement to stakeholders and other constituents in an objective and accountable manner and serves as a basis for making resource allocation and budgetary decisions.
The flow chart illustrates a model by which student learning supports course outcomes, program outcomes, and the institutional mission.

The assessment process allows for data-driven decisions to be made both at the program level and institutional level. It is here that student achievement is documented and institutional goals and mission of the university is fulfilled.

This handbook provides an overview of the assessment process and a brief description of the role of assessment as it relates to institutional effectiveness.

The Academic Role and Institutional Effectiveness

Individual departments across the University are responsible for developing unit strategic plans which support the Institutional Effectiveness Plan (I.E.P.). One component of the I.E.P. is the assessment of student learning which is performed by faculty, and resides in, the academic department.

Deans, or their designee (to include faculty), are ultimately responsible for the development and implementation of their colleges’ or schools’ assessment plans. Assessment plans should reflect a reasonable timeline to ensure the assessment of selected artifacts are reviewed in accordance with the University’s accrediting agency and programmatic accreditors. The reported results of the assessment should include:

- The program outcome(s) assessed;
- The benchmark;
- The instrument used;
- The findings; and
- Improvements needed.

Results are then reported to the Assessment Committee, who in turn report findings to the Academic
Council and respective Advisory Boards.

The Charter for the Assessment Committee defines responsibilities as:

- Develop, review, and monitor the university assessment plan for purposes of compliance with external accreditors;
- Participate in meta-assessment (assessing the assessment plans);
- Facilitate and coordinate university-level assessment with the appropriate departments;
- Evaluate annually the university assessment results and provide recommendations as needed;
- Programs are properly measuring whether their stated goals and outcomes are being achieved;
- Assessment results are being used to make improvements, update strategic plans, and make appropriate budget requests.
- Review programmatic assessment plans to ensure alignment with university plans;
- Serve as advisory resource, including providing training, to the Academic department regarding assessment and accreditation requirements; and
- Designated member will share responsibility with Marketing to ensure currency of the assessment website.

Annual changes will be presented to the Academic Council, with final approval given by the Provost.

Accreditation Standards and Institutional Effectiveness

Grantham University is accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) and adheres to the Standards set forth in their accreditation handbook. Per Standard V, Student Achievement and Satisfaction:

The institution demonstrates a commitment to its educational offerings and administrative operations through processes that monitor and improve institutional effectiveness. The institution engages in sound research practices and analysis of data used to improve operations, educational offerings, and services. Institutional effectiveness, as defined by most colleges and universities, is the degree in which the institution is meeting their stated mission (DEAC Handbook, 2018, pg. 70).

Compliance to this standard, as well as other standards set by the various programmatic accreditors is accomplished through comprehensive assessment plans and cycles. Each academic program, to include the general education courses, is required to maintain an Outcomes Assessment Plan (O.A.P) which will identify both the indirect and direct measures used to demonstrate student learning.

The plans and cycles are not only required to document student learning, but they also support the I.E.P. Through a purposeful and systematic approach, the institutional effectiveness plan ensures important components such as strategic planning, institutional assessment, and program level assessment are being implemented and, results are acted upon. Thus, an effective institutional assessment plan maintains an ongoing process for collecting, analyzing, and acting upon data results to achieve and maintain the fulfillment of the mission and strategic goals.

To further demonstrate a commitment to institutional excellence and continuous improvement, Grantham incorporates the requirements set forth in Criterion 4 of the Higher Learning Commission Standards: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
The standards of Criterion 4.B. require: The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

- The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
- The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
- The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
- The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members (Higher Learning Commission Policy Book, 2018, pg. 22).

An effective assessment plan should provide accountability and actionable results, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with the mission, core professional competencies, and strategic initiatives of the university.

**Institutional Research**

The Office of Institutional Research (I.R.), through their Director of Institutional Research, is an active member of the Assessment Committee and supports strategic planning and institutional assessment activities for the University. It is the role of the Director to collect, maintain, preserve, and report the institutional data such as survey results, graduation and retention rates, and assessment findings to executive leadership, accrediting agencies, and other mandated reporting by state and federal agencies. Further, the Director should ensure the methodologies developed lead to better alignment between programmatic and institutional goals.

**The Assessment Cycle**

Through an established assessment cycle, faculty and staff conducting assessment have the ability to measure and report academic success or shortcomings through the appropriate reporting structure. The diagram highlights the process, whereby artifacts are identified, collected, scored, compared to internal and external benchmarks, and corrective action taken. It is important to note that assessment is taking place at all levels of a student’s degree program, though we may not officially call it assessment.

Ensuring consistency among evaluators is critical to accurate assessment results. The established rubrics used for scoring must be calibrated and evaluators trained. A key element of reliability among evaluators is a process called norming (Step 2). Steps include:

- Anchor assignments- an anchor assignment is an artifact used as a guide of what constitutes an exceeds/meets/or does not meet criteria.
- Practice using a rubric.
- Discuss with the group how you arrived at the score.
- Come to an agreement to ensure reliability.
Figure 2. Assessment cycle describing what occurs at each step in the process.

Assessment of Student Learning

The deans and their respective faculty members have mapped (Appendix B) and, currently measure student learning. After careful review of the various accreditation standards, program and curricular reviews, and feedback from advisory boards and faculty members, the individual colleges and schools determine a benchmark for which student learning should be occurring (Step 2 of Figure 2). Specific direct and indirect instruments, such as capstone projects and End of Course Surveys completed by faculty and students, are used to support the individual outcome assessment plans. Individual programs will vary with respect to the outcome chosen for measurement. Following this assessment cycle, there is continuous collection of data and the opportunity to provide ongoing improvement (Appendix C).

General Education

General education, as defined by most colleges and universities, is a selected group of foundational courses all students are required to take, regardless of their major. Section III.D.3 of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) handbook; Program Outcomes, Curricula, and Materials. Per DEAC:
General education courses place an emphasis on principles and theory not associated with a particular field of study. General education courses encompass written and oral communication; quantitative principles, natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts that are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning. General education courses convey broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develop skills and attitudes that contribute to civic engagement and advance professional attainment (DEAC handbook, pg. 72).

Grantham no longer mandates a core set of general education courses, but allows for a selected number of credit hours from standard, higher education, categories. This shift in general education requirements can make assessment challenging; however, shared components of general education should provide the student with the opportunity to recognize common elements of the six CPCs because the methods used for assessment are woven throughout the curriculum. At the completion of the general education courses, the student should be able to demonstrate proficiency, at the appropriate level, in the selected CPC.

The assessment of the six CPCs does not end with general education. Assessment must continue throughout the student’s degree program, to include the completion of the degree requirements. Although the College of Arts and Sciences is responsible for the assessment of the general education, it is the responsibility of the individual programmatic deans to ensure components of the CPCs are distributed throughout their program core. Thus, it is important for specific, programmatic, learning outcomes to be identified so these outcomes as well as the CPCs are assessed.

**Program-Level Outcomes Assessment**

The program-level outcomes should support the institutional mission as well as be aligned to the mission statement of the program (Figure 1). The outcomes must be written in a manner in which they can be measured. This requires clear and concise methods which details where, when, and by whom the artifact will be collected and scored; the artifact is often the program capstone course as it is a culmination of the skills learned throughout the student’s degree program. The end goal of program-level assessment is to determine: (1) whether the program is teaching what it is supposed to be teaching, (2) how this is being accomplished, and (3) what are the findings and proposed changes? Defining the methods used for assessment and completing curriculum mapping helps to answer these questions. This process also provides pertinent information on the sustainability and success of the program to administrators, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders.

Equally important, and associated with assessment, are program reviews. Grantham has established a three-year cycle whereby the reviews are performed internally, with faculty, and under the guidance of the dean or their designee(s). There are several components of a program review, one of which is the respective assessment cycle and findings. The review is intended to provide an overall understanding of the academic degree program to internal and external stakeholders. The documented evidence serves as one additional measure to ensure students are achieving the required knowledge and competencies in their degree program.

**Course-Level Outcomes Assessment**

Course-level assessment engages faculty and staff in evaluating course outcomes and, at the time of a course revision, the content is mapped to the course outcomes. Exams, quizzes, written assignments, discussion forums, and projects all measure the extent to which student learning is taking place. Thus,
course-level assessment should align to the program outcomes, general education, and the institutional outcomes and mission statement (Figure 1).

**Methods-Student Learning**

Grantham abides by to the standards set by the regional, national, and programmatic accreditors which require the implementation a of comprehensive assessment program to capture student learning and academic achievement. DEAC identifies three components required as part of an assessment program:

- Student Achievement;
- Student Satisfaction; and
- Performance Disclosures

The three components require the institution to evaluate student learning and academic achievement through direct and indirect measures, using internal and external benchmarks, collecting and analyzing data, and making course and/or programmatic improvements. The assessment of student learning should be based on clear, measurable outcomes whereby the results are published for internal and external stakeholders.

Within these requirements, the colleges and schools use one or more in a combination of the following direct and indirect measures:

**Direct measures**

- Peregrine Academic Services- a nationally normed exam which provides external benchmarking to ensure selected topic areas are being taught;
- Capstone projects- artifacts scored using a program specific rubric; or
- Portfolio artifacts, group projects, final exams, or case studies

**Indirect measures**

- End of Course Surveys (students)- course quality, resources and facilitation subjects;
- End of Course Surveys (faculty) Graduate Surveys- surveys graduates 3 months after graduation;
- Graduation/completion rates;
- Self-assessments;
- Focus groups;
- Interviews;
- Job placement data; or
- Advisory boards

Measuring student learning should be occurring throughout the student’s degree program and is demonstrated through course and program level assessment. The use of a capstone project or other end of program assessment instrument represents the culmination of the student’s academic experience and allows the student the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to synthesize the knowledge and skills acquired throughout their program of study. If benchmarks are not being achieved either at the course or program level, the dean and their faculty must review the course materials and determine if, and where, a deficiency exists. Courses should then be reviewed to determine if they align with the program outcomes.
Assessment Reporting Requirements

Reporting

Reporting assessment provides internal stakeholders the data to make decisions regarding budgetary and resource allocations, curricular changes, and the quality of an existing academic degree program. Colleagues may provide recommendations, but more importantly, assessment findings should be shared with students and alumni as they share their feedback through various surveys. Their feedback, when used appropriately, may serve as a means to improve the overall effectiveness of their program and student experience.

In collaboration with The Office of Institutional Research, Grantham University is expected to report assessment results to DEAC on an annual basis and post the results on the university website. This external reporting ensures Grantham is providing quality academic degree programs which support the institutional mission.

Summary

Administrators and faculty members have established assessment methods and cycles to ensure student learning, student satisfaction, and university excellence is occurring. Through this process, Grantham can provide evidence which supports the Institutional Effectiveness Plan and the requirements of regional, national, and programmatic accreditors.
Glossary

**Achievement Target.**
This is the overall level for satisfactory or desirable performance on a student learning outcome. It also outlines what percentage of students is expected to achieve this level of performance. Rubrics can help to clarify these items.

**Action Plan.**
This is an activity sequence designed to help accomplish intended outcomes/student learning outcomes and/or improvement of academic assessment plan. Action plans might include revising organizational structure, reallocating resources, revising administrative policies/procedures, revising curriculum, individual course revision, sequencing of courses, inclusion and/or modification of educational experiences and strategies (e.g., undergraduate research, internships, practicum, study abroad, service learning).

**Assessment.**
Outcomes assessment is any systematic inquiry whose goal is to improve the teaching/learning process. It can be understood more precisely as a four-step process of 1) defining what students should be able to do, think, or know at the end of a unit of instruction (defining, that is, the student learning outcomes), 2) Designing the curriculum and students’ learning experiences to address these outcomes, 3) determining whether, and to what extent, students can do, think, or know it, and 4) using this information to make improvements in teaching and learning.

**Benchmark.**
Similar to an achievement target, this is a point in time (e.g., the sophomore year) or a performance standard (e.g., 80% of the students in a particular group will score at a particular level) which measures student progress.

**Bloom's Taxonomy.**
Beginning in 1948, a group of educators undertook the task of classifying education goals and objectives. The intent was to develop a classification system for three domains: the cognitive, the affective, and the psychomotor. Work on the cognitive domain was completed in 1956 and is commonly referred to as *Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain* (Bloom et al., 1956). A revised version of Bloom’s Taxonomy is currently being used.

**Direct/Indirect Assessment.**
*Direct assessment* requires students to display their knowledge and skills in response to the measurement instrument itself, as in tests or exams, essays, portfolios, presentations, etc. *Indirect assessment* usually asks students to reflect on their learning rather than demonstrate it (as in interviews, surveys, or focus groups). Indirect assessment may also ask employers or other interested parties to evaluate student learning as they have had occasion to observe it. Both forms of assessment are valuable, particularly when used in tandem.

**Embedded Assessment.**
Using existing coursework (e.g., common questions asked of all students on a final exam in every section of a course) as a means of assessing student learning in aggregate. Collecting assessment information from within the classroom provides an opportunity to use already in-place assignments and coursework for assessment purposes. This involves taking a second look at materials generated in the classroom.
Findings.
These are the assessment results used for comparison of actual versus expected achievement level. It is important to include specific numbers/percentages when possible that are connected to the learning outcomes and achievement targets.

Formative/Summative Assessment.
Formative assessment is any evaluation taking place during the course of instruction; summative assessment is an evaluation that takes place at the end of a unit of instruction. Formative assessment enables assessors to modify instructional practices in time to improve learning for the particular students being assessed. Summative assessment results inform changes in pedagogy or curriculum for future students. Both forms of assessment are essential to an overarching institutional assessment process.

Goal.
This is a broad statement about desired ends for the students. The goals should be linked to the academic degree program mission and reflect long range outcomes.

Learning Outcome.
What students can be expected to do, think, or know as a result of a particular course of study. Outcomes are performance oriented, focusing less on what instructors will cover in a course or what their instructional goals are (these are often designated as “objectives”) than on what students can produce, perform, or achieve as a marker of success in the course or program. Learning outcomes should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant/Results Oriented, and Time bound.

Mission Statement.
The mission statement outlines the highest aims, intentions, and activities of the entity. For degree programs, the mission statement should connect to the departmental, college/school, and university mission statements.

Measurement.
This is the method to gauge achievement of expected results. Examples include using a rubric for essays, quizzes, tests, journals, group projects, class discussion, portfolios, etc.

Portfolio.
Any purposeful collection of work done by a particular student. Students themselves are usually encouraged to gather the materials for their portfolios themselves, often using a selection process specifying various criteria. Portfolios are then usually evaluated against a rubric. Aggregating the data as one evaluates a number of portfolios in a single class or program (or even across an entire institution) leads to potentially rich outcomes assessment data. Increasingly, portfolios are being digitalized in what are called electronic portfolios or e-portfolios. Besides their value for assessment purposes, portfolios potentially enable students to demonstrate their achievement to prospective employers, graduate schools, etc.

Qualitative/Quantitative Assessment.
Quantitative assessment results can be expressed in numerical terms; qualitative assessments are usually expressed in narrative form. Both forms of assessment can be valuable.

Reliability.
The measure of consistency for an assessment instrument. The instrument should yield similar results over time with similar populations in similar circumstances. (Contrast with validity.)
Rubric (Analytic vs. Holistic).
A rating scale with explicit criteria, used to evaluate any performance, including essays, speeches, presentations, etc. Essays may group various performance criteria under each numerical category (a holistic rubric), or break out each criterion separately and allow for different ratings for each distinct criterion (an analytic rubric). Holistic rubrics are useful for grading purposes, but analytic rubrics are more effective for doing outcomes assessment, since they capture very specific performance characteristics.

Validity.
The extent to which the assessment measures the desired performance and appropriate inferences can be drawn from the results. A valid assessment accurately measures the learning it claims to measure.
Appendix A

9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values. Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are bypassed, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what is easy and obvious, rather than a process of improving those standards that are important to the University.

2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time. Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods including those that call for actual performance, using them over time to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving students' educational experience.

3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to focus attention and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be placed and evaluated. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way—about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic. Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the progress of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The goal is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved. Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions cannot be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae,
trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus, understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the public that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation to ourselves, our students, and society is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

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## Appendix B
### Mapping Template
**IRA (Introduce, Reinforce, Assess)**

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<th>Obj 2</th>
<th>Obj 3</th>
<th>Obj 4</th>
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Appendix C
Outcomes Assessment Plan

**Note** This is only a recommended template. Not all degree programs will have the same template due to different requirements of their programmatic accreditors.

## Section 1 – Identifying and Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person Completing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Phone:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Section 2 – Outside Accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Does this program undergo program-specific accreditation? If yes, please list the program(s). If no, proceed to Section 3.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Please provide the name of your accrediting agency.</td>
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<td>3. How often does your accreditation occur, and when is your next self-study, site visit, and/or interim report due? Include all dates as necessary for each program included in this plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How often do you submit interim reports to your primary accreditation agency or agencies?</td>
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</table>
**Section 3 – Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes**

Describe the process for reporting on all the student learning outcomes for each program. This may include one or two SLOs to measure or those that must be given priority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year in Cycle (list year)</th>
<th>1. List student learning outcomes measured each year</th>
<th>2. Method for collecting data</th>
<th>3. Performance criteria</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 (20xx-xx)</td>
<td>Many programs have around 4-6 learning outcomes. You do not need numerous outcomes unless your accrediting agency requires it. Each SLO should be clearly written, measurable, and focused on a single skill or knowledge set.</td>
<td>Describe two methods for each SLO. At least one must be a direct measure. Explain where the measures will be taken (e.g. capstone, practicum). The same two measurement tools could theoretically cover all your learning outcomes. (You do not need 14 tools for seven outcomes, for instance).</td>
<td>How will learning in the program be evaluated? Significant development of criteria is expected—checklists, grading criteria, rubric for evaluation, etc.</td>
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<td>Year 2 (20xx-xx)</td>
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<td>Year 3 (20xx-xx)</td>
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<td>Year 4 (20xx-xx)</td>
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<td>Year 5*</td>
<td>If applicable.</td>
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</table>
Section 4 – Use of Data

Learning Outcomes (Section 3) and using that data to: reflect upon the current state of student learning; make changes to the curriculum (when necessary); share that data with stakeholders (both internal and external). The use of data will primarily be reported on the yearly Assessment Updates.

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<td>4.</td>
<td>How will you share data in an ongoing basis with all faculty in your program? <em>For example, it is recommended that all departments meet once a year to discuss assessment processes.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>How will you share the results of the data discussed in section three with your students, your college, and other stakeholders? <em>Stakeholders must include groups internal (e.g., students) and external (e.g., Career Services, college-wide assessment committees) to your department.</em></td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Optional: Is there anything else you would like to share and is there any particular area that you want feedback on that would assist you?</td>
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**Tips & Examples: Assessment Plan**

**Tips and Examples for Section 3 – Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year in Cycle</th>
<th>1. List student learning outcomes measured each year</th>
<th>2. Method for Collecting Data</th>
<th>3. Performance criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many programs have around 4-6 learning outcomes. You do not need numerous outcomes unless your accrediting agency requires it. Each SLO should be clearly written, measurable, and focused on a single skill or knowledge set. Notes: You may focus on priority SLO’s (ex: SLO2 below) across multiple years.</td>
<td>Describe two methods for each SLO. At least one must be a direct measure. Explain where the measures will be taken (e.g. capstone, practicum). The same two measurement tools could theoretically cover all your learning outcomes. (You do not need 14 tools for seven outcomes, for instance.)</td>
<td>How will learning in the program be evaluated? Significant development of criteria is expected—checklists, grading criteria, rubric for evaluation, etc.</td>
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</table>
| **Year 1**    | • SLO1: Students will deliver competent oral presentations.  
• SLO5: Students will apply knowledge in real world settings.  
• SLO2: Students will produce persuasive written work. | • SLO1: capstone project; senior exit interview  
• SLO5: pre/post exam in all three junior year labs; rubric on capstone project  
• SLO2: Research on best practices for ways to develop writing in the discipline; report out to program faculty | • SLO1: Capstone assessed with a comprehensive rubric; benchmark of 80% of projects “meets standards” or “exceeds standards;” Exit interview will be analyzed for student confidence in SLO 1  
• SLO5: pre/post exam evaluation in all three junior labs; capstone using same rubric, 80% for SLO 5 section |
| **Year 2**    | • SLO3: Students will demonstrate skillful team work in community group projects.  
• SLO2: Students will produce persuasive written work. | • SLO3: capstone presentation; capstone project team member evaluation)  
• SLO2: Revise research methods intro module for writing instruction; revise capstone project guidelines and possibly include draft report review deadline (TBD with faculty input) | • SLO3: capstone evaluated using same rubric, 80% for SLO 3 section; team member evaluation form (in use) |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
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| • SLO 4: Students will synthesize accurate content knowledge.  
  • SLO 2: Students will produce persuasive written work. | • SLO4: internship evaluation by supervisor and instructor  
  • SLO 2: capstone project assessed with rubric; research methods final paper assessed with rubric | • SLO4: field site supervisor evaluation form and internship coordinator observation form (both in use now)  
  • SLO2: revise writing portion of capstone rubric and seek departmental approval; revise research methods final paper rubric and pilot both rubrics |
| • SLO 6: Students will evaluate ethical dilemmas in the field of X.  
  • SLO 2: Students will produce persuasive written work. | • SLO6: case studies from legal issues class assessed with rubric (in use, will include in future report); senior exit interview question analysis  
  • SLO 2: capstone project and research methods final paper | • SLO6: rubric evaluation of case studies; exit interview question evaluation (question on professional preparation for unscripted problems)  
  • SLO2: capstone project assessed with revised rubric, 80% satisfactory or above with SLO2; research methods assessed with rubric |

**Tips and Examples for Section 4 – Evaluation of Data**

3. **How will you share data in an ongoing basis with all faculty in your program?** For example, it is recommended that all departments meet once a year to discuss assessment processes—the highlights of such a meeting could be included here.

This can include an annual faculty meeting to discuss assessment processes, as well as other ways the department is working to get more faculty involved—this does not necessarily have to be formalized (e.g., discussions in faculty meetings about student strengths/challenges could be summarized and documented). **The goal is to have all faculty participating in the assessment process in some way.**

**Example:** At one department meeting (prior to the annual department meeting on assessment) faculty discussed examples/artifacts of students’ work at three different levels: proficient, adequate, and inadequate. At the annual meeting, all faculty reviewed the revised criteria and approved the recommended changes.
4. How will you share the results of the data discussed in section three with your students, your college, and other stakeholders? Stakeholders must include groups internal (e.g., students) and external (e.g., Career Services, college-wide assessment committees) to your department.  

*Include information on both internal (e.g. students) and external (e.g. advisory groups) audiences. In particular, it is critical to share the information back to students.*

**Example:**

1. **Students:** Faculty supervising students on their senior capstone provide a summary of patterns in senior students’ capstones as the students begin their capstone project. Students provide input at the beginning of the capstone course about ways to improve writing skills and skill perception. Themes from the class discussion are shared in class and during faculty meetings.
2. **College:** Faculty present methods, findings, and action steps during one meeting of the college-wide assessment committee.
3. **Additional:** Information on student learning is also included in the departmental communications (sent by Marketing).

5. Optional: Is there anything else you would like to share and is there any particular area that you want feedback on that would assist you?  

*This question will not be scored; however, it can be a way to inform the Assessment Council on parts of your “assessment story” we did not give the opportunity to discuss in other questions. We also want to know what assistance you need for your planning and reporting.*

**Example:**

Rather than use a rubric, our department found that it was more helpful for faculty to review/discuss the key criteria for evaluating the students’ writing and oral communication skills. The capstone project was a good starting point for us because there were a lot of conversations already happening by faculty about the capstone and Quest presentations. The criteria are summarized in the meeting minutes of April 14, 2012 and are attached to this plan. Now we want to look at student work at earlier points in the students’ progress through the program. To assist us, our department requests examples of how other departments gather students’ input and share aggregate data on student learning with them. We would also like information on how to increase faculty participation.
# Rubric: Assessment Plan

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Progressing</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
<th>No Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Learning outcomes stated.</td>
<td>All of the programs’ student learning outcomes (SLOs) are included. The learning outcomes are clearly written, measurable, and focused on a single skill or knowledge set.</td>
<td>All of the programs’ student learning outcomes are listed. Learning outcomes are measurable, but may be focused on more than one knowledge/skill area or could be streamlined.</td>
<td>Attempt at learning outcomes included, but may not be measurable or not focused on student learning.</td>
<td>Little or no reference to learning outcomes. May focus on program outcomes only.</td>
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<td>2/3. Methods that will be used to assess student learning.</td>
<td>Clear and effective choice of two methods (and not more) for measuring learning are provided for each SLO over the course of the plan. At least one method for each SLO is a direct measure. Where measures will be used is included. Clear that performance criteria are in place for most measures. Ideally, samples of performance criteria are provided.</td>
<td>Two methods for measuring learning outcomes provided for each SLO. At least one is a direct measure. Includes reference to where measures will be used and development of criteria</td>
<td>Includes only one effective method for each SLO. -or- Some/all methods may not be aligned with SLO or may not measure student learning. -or- Measures for each SLO are all indirect measures. -or- Incomplete information about where measures will be assessed or performance criteria lacking</td>
<td>No measures identified no information about those being assessed, or no performance criteria evident.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Faculty engagement in the assessment process.</td>
<td>Department faculty are an integral part of assessment activities; multiple faculty are involved in the collection and analysis of data; and all are involved in ongoing review of data and results as well as the development and carrying out of action steps to improve student learning.</td>
<td>Responsibility for assessment is not only in the hands of the assessment coordinator, e.g., other faculty assist in collection, review, and/or analysis. Department faculty meet at least once a year to review data and develop action steps.</td>
<td>There is some evidence that assessment is or is becoming a shared departmental activity, but significant portions are the responsibility of the assessment coordinator alone (and no explanation, such as a course reduction, exists). Faculty may occasionally meet as a department, but on less than a yearly basis.</td>
<td>It is clear that vast majority of assessment related activities are done only by the assessment coordinator. Other faculty in the department do not assist in or discuss assessment.</td>
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<td>5. Major stakeholders identified and how data will be share with stakeholders.</td>
<td>Information on both internal (e.g., students) and external (e.g., advisory groups) are clearly identified. Both the type and frequency of communication is explained. Specific reference to both active communication and inclusion of students as a stakeholder group.</td>
<td>Internal and external stakeholders identified and the modes of communication explained. Students should be included as a stakeholder group.</td>
<td>Stakeholders identified, but may exclude significant stakeholders or major groups (e.g., students). May incompletely explain ways of communicating with stakeholders.</td>
<td>No relevant stakeholders identified and no description of how or when the unit communicates with stakeholders.</td>
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<td>Overall Score; Comments/Recommendations made by the assessment team:</td>
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**Strengths of the Plan:**

**Feedback/Recommendations:**

**If revisions are needed please list the items:**
Assessment Cycle Reflection Worksheet

These questions should be included in the assessment section of the program review.

1. **What are the student learning outcomes for the program?**
   a. List all the student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the program. This is typically 5-7 statements of what students should know and be able to do upon completion of your program. In some cases there may be more or fewer SLOs, depending on the length of the program and programmatic accreditation requirements.

2. **In the cycle, what were major strengths or challenges in student learning?**
   a. Provide an analysis, based on all reports in the last assessment cycle, of major strengths or challenges in student learning. Focus on the larger, more significant findings, rather than just listing every single finding in the last cycle. Programs should include at a minimum several of each (as long as they were previously identified).

3. **Were there action steps identified in the past assessment cycle?**
   a. If there were challenging in student learning, what action steps were identified in order to improve student learning?

4. **Where those changes made? What is the evidence of these changes?**
   a. If the program decided that an action step was needed, was that action step completed and what is the evidence for completion? For example, if a curriculum change was made, did it receive approval from the curriculum committee? If an emphasis change was made in a course, do you have a sample of the revised syllabi? It is not necessary to attach, but you should include it in the program assessment archive.

5. **What is the impact of those changes on student learning in the program?**
   a. In order to “close the loop” in outcomes assessment, a program must first go through the process of assessing student learning and evaluating the data. If changes are made in order to improve student learning, how does the program know if they were effective? In order to evaluate the efficacy of a curriculum change, the program must consider if the change made had the intended impact.

6. **If there is no evidence of impact, what data is needed to collect in order to evaluate change? What is your timeline for evaluation, starting in the next academic year?**
   a. If there is no current evidence for action step impact on student learning, how could you evaluate it within the next year? If there are multiple action steps to evaluate, then a timeline for assessment should be outlined.
   b. It is not necessary to have evidence of impact of every single curricular improvement, but every program should be able to show evidence of completing the assessment loop.
7. **How well does your assessment process adequately evaluate student learning in the program?**

   a. *How adequate is the assessment process in your program? Do you have sufficient participation, continuity, and structure? Do the methods and sampling adequately evaluate learning by the end of the program, or adequately respond to further investigate learning challenges? Does the sample include all types of students in your program (on-campus; online; off-site)?*
   
   b. *This question requests that faculty self-reflect on the structure of the assessment processes in the program.*

8. **What are current concerns regarding student achievement of program learning outcomes?**

   a. *Are there any larger concern areas that you have regarding student learning? Do faculty conversations about student learning veer towards the same areas over and over? Is there an area in which faculty would like to focus concentrated effort and/or see improvements?*
References


