Assessment Information Guide: Student Learning in Academic Programs



Assessment Information Guide: Student Learning in Academic Programs Version 1.0 created by Robert Todd Bruce, Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment, Fall 2017

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# PREFACE

John Carroll University's students excel in learning, leadership, and service in the region and in the world; however, it is not enough for faculty, administrators, students, and other stakeholders to believe that this is happening. Data must be collected, analyzed, and displayed to support such a belief. In addition, without systematically collected data, how can a department, program, college, or institution clearly identify areas for change and assess the results of such changes? It is clear then that assessment must take place, and assessment is best when it is routine, systematic, and embedded in numerous institutional processes. The central activity of any institution of higher education is student learning; therefore student learning must occupy the central position in an assessment system.

Student learning assessment is a routine part of each academic program's activities, in which they use a variety of direct and indirect measures to compare student learning to their articulated learning goals. Based on the assessment data, program faculty make changes to improve student learning and report on their progress annually to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Student learning assessment also occurs in the Integrative Core Curriculum (the university's general education program), in the cocurriculum, in student support areas, and at the institutional level.

# The ultimate goal of student learning assessment is continuous improvement of student learning.

This document provides information about the routine assessment of student learning at the program level and course level for academic programs (majors, minors, and concentrations) at John Carroll University. Some information, particularly information that may change frequently, is hosted on the assessment website and in the Canvas course called Assessment Forms and Reports.

#### Relationship between Assessment of Student Learning and Academic Program Review

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is charged with oversight of two separate but inter-related processes: Academic Program Review (APR) and the routine assessment of student learning.

Student learning assessment is a routine part of each academic program's activities, in which they use a variety of direct and indirect measures to compare student learning to their articulated learning goals. Based on the assessment data, program faculty make changes to improve student learning and report on their progress annually.

APR is a periodic examination of the entire academic program. While there is a focus on student learning assessment data, the full body of data examined in APR reaches far beyond student learning. The changes made because of APR are tracked and assessed as part of the annual student learning assessment reports.

#### An Offer of Assistance

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The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is charged with enabling faculty to successfully maintain an assessment system that uses data to improve student learning. This charge is one of our central functions, so do not hesitate to seek assistance.

# SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

## The Assessment Plan

As part of program-level assessment of student learning, each academic program must adopt, use, and publish program-level <u>learning goals</u>. These intended student learning outcomes articulate what students who complete the program should know, be able to do, and/or value upon completion. These goals are required to be specific, measurable, focused on student learning, and <u>aligned</u> with John Carroll's nine Academic Learning Goals. For each program-level learning goal, each academic program must choose at least one direct summative <u>measure</u> and at least one indirect measure.

## **Curriculum Mapping**

New academic programs are required, as part of their assessment plans, to include a tentative curriculum map, which will be updated on a regular cycle. Existing academic programs are encouraged to create a curriculum map when making changes to learning goals or the curriculum. Existing programs without a curriculum map will be required to create and maintain one when so directed by the Assessment Committee.

## **Meeting and Reporting**

Each academic program must meet at least once during an academic year to examine student learning data collected via their chosen assessment measures. Programs must examine data on at least one student learning goal each year. At the meeting, topics of discussion should include changes to the program in response to data and changes to the assessment system in response to data and to the experience. Following the meeting, the program must submit an Annual Assessment Report to the Office of Academic Assessment.

## Follow-Up on Changes

Programs will be asked, as part of their Annual Assessment Report, to provide evidence that changes have been made and to provide data assessing the impact of the changes on student learning.

# THE ASSESSMENT PLAN: Articulating Learning Goals

As part of program-level assessment of student learning, each academic program must adopt, use, and publish program-level learning goals. These intended student learning outcomes articulate what students who complete the program should know, be able to do, and/or value upon completion. These goals are required to be specific, measurable, focused on student learning, and aligned with John Carroll's nine Academic Learning Goals. Alignment is discussed in the next section.

There is no single right way to establish learning goals. Many programs look at other institutions' goals as models (some are linked from the assessment website), adopt or adapt goals provided by a professional organization, or brainstorm among the faculty and other important stakeholders. Another option is to begin with the Academic Learning Goals or University Learning Goals and consider how they are manifested within the program in question.

**Quick research tip:** Searching for "student learning outcomes" rather than "learning goals" will usually lead to better search results with a search engine or scholarly database.

## Adopt and Publish

Each academic program should officially adopt learning goals in whatever manner is appropriate for the particular program (vote of department faculty or program steering committee). Once adopted, the learning goals should be posted on the program's website, printed in the *Bulletin*, and posted on the Office of Academic Assessment's Learning Goals website.

Changes to learning goals that occur outside of the normal assessment process (in response to new guidelines from a professional organization, for example) must be reported to Office of Academic Assessment.

## **Program-Specific**

Strictly speaking, each distinct major, minor, or concentration within a major is a separate program. Closely-related programs (concentrations within a major, majors and minors in the same discipline, or majors within a single discipline) should have a number of commonalities but some distinct features as well (otherwise, why distinguish the program as a separate concentration or major?).

## Knowledge and Skills

It may help, in designing learning goals, to consider two rough categories: knowledge and skills. What should students **know**? What should they be able to **do**? Is there a certain body of knowledge that students completing the program should possess? If so, articulate that. Emphasize the aspects of the body of knowledge that are important to the program or that set the program apart from its competitors. In terms of skills, the nine Academic Learning Goals emphasize critical analysis, aesthetic appreciation, creativity, innovation, communication, promotion of social justice, leadership, and collaboration. Some of these skills may be crucial to the program in question, or perhaps, there are discipline-specific skills.

## Domains and Taxonomies of Learning

A slightly more complicated model divides learning into three domains: cognitive (which includes both factual and procedural knowledge), affective (feelings and values), and psychomotor (movement and perception). The affective domain adds the question "What should students value/feel/believe when they complete the program?" While many programs are uncomfortable or even hostile to the suggestion of including affective learning goals, some are interested or even required to do so (education has long been required by accreditors to identify and nurture teaching dispositions that strengthen student learning). The use of affective learning goals is neither encouraged or discouraged at John Carroll University.

#### Blooms' Taxonomy

The literature on learning goals/outcomes will often suggest making use of Bloom's taxonomy, an organization scheme which places cognitive processes into a hierarchy. The original hierarchy, as described in

Bloom, B. S.; Engelhart, M. D.; Furst, E. J.; Hill, W. H.; Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). *Taxonomy* of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: *Cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay Company.

moved from *knowledge* to *comprehension* to *application* to *analysis* to *synthesis* to *evaluation*. In the 1990s, a team of researchers "updated" the taxonomy by changing the nouns to verbs (*remember* instead of *knowledge*, exchanging the top two categories (*create* now supersedes *evaluate*) and adding a second dimension reflecting different types of knowledge (*factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive*). It is well explained <u>here</u> and originally appeared in

Anderson, L.W. (Ed.), Krathwohl, D.R. (Ed.), Airasian, P.W., Cruikshank, K.A., Mayer, R.E., Pintrich, P.R., Raths, J., & Wittrock, M.C. (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Complete edition). New York: Longman.

The assessment website also links to a document which provides verbs categorized by level of Bloom's taxonomy that may be helpful in writing learning goals.

Similar schemes exist for the affective and psychomotor domains, but they are not as widely used.

## Aligning Program Goals with Institutional Goals

As part of program-level assessment of student learning, each academic program's learning goals must be aligned with John Carroll's institutional goals, usually the nine Academic Learning Goals.

## Institutional Goals

Flowing naturally from the mission and vision of the institution, the University Learning Goals describe our institutional commitment to student learning. Within the Academic Affairs division, a subset of University Learning Goals has been selected to serve as the Academic Learning Goals, which inform and direct both the Integrative Core Curriculum and program-level learning goals within each academic program and academic support unit. All graduate programs at John Carroll University have aligned their learning goals with a specific set of Graduate Learning Goals (derived from the Academic Learning Goals). All programs in the Boler School of Business also align with and support a common set of learning goals for the entire School.

If a particular program wishes to align their learning goals with the entire set of University Learning Goals, they are free to do so.

## **Making Connections**

The University Learning Goals describe the total experience of a student at John Carroll University. Similarly, the Academic Learning Goals describe the total academic experience of an undergraduate students. For this reason, it is not expected that any one program will meet all of the goals. Similarly, it acceptable to indicate alignment with a goal even if the program only provides a portion of that goal. A program that has a goal for majors related to content knowledge should feel free to indicate that it aligns with the Academic Learning Goal about integrative knowledge because deep knowledge of content within their major is important to developing integrative knowledge about the human and natural worlds. Likewise, a program with a goal on critical thinking should connect with the Academic Learning Goal "Develop habits of critical analysis and aesthetic appreciation" even if the program does not address aesthetic appreciation."

## **Describing Alignment**

Place each program learning goals as the header in a column, with the Academic Learning Goals listed as rows. Place an X in a cell to indicate that the program goal in that column is aligned with the Academic Goal in that row.

#### Alignment with Academic Learning Goals

Graduates will		2	3	4	5
Demonstrate an integrative knowledge of the human and natural worlds;		Х	Х		
Develop habits of critical analysis and aesthetic appreciation;		Х	Х	Х	Х
Apply creative and innovative thinking;			Х	Х	
Communicate skillfully in multiple forms of expression;				Х	Х
Act competently in a global and diverse world;	Х				Х
Understand and promote social justice;		Х		Х	Х
Apply a framework for examining ethical dilemmas;		Х	Х		Х
Employ leadership and collaborative skills;			Х		
Understand the religious dimensions of human experience.		Х		Х	Х

## **Curriculum Mapping**

## Requirements

Curriculum mapping can be a valuable part of the academic assessment cycle; however, because of the time pressures involved in getting the program-level assessment process up and running at John Carroll University, curriculum mapping was not mandated for existing programs when the assessment cycle began. The Director of Academic Assessment and the Assessment Committee will work with existing programs to create curriculum maps as part of their on-going assessment cycle. New Programs are required to create a curriculum maps and will periodically update them as part of their on-going assessment cycle.

## Making a Curriculum Map

A curriculum map is a graphical display that indicates how learning goals are addressed in the various courses and other requirements that make up a program's curriculum. In simplest terms, a curriculum map takes the form of the grid. A list of courses, typically arranged in the order students move through them, serves as either the top cell in each column or the first cell in each row. The other heading is the program's learning goals. The remaining cells in the table indicate in which courses each learning goal is addressed. Most sources suggest marking the cells I (for introduced), R (for reinforced), or M (for mastery). Other sources encourage programs to also mark the assessment points for each goal. Some programs find it helpful to use numbers to indicate the degree of emphasis goals receive in each course. Programs are encouraged to experiment with finding a format that makes sense for them.

## The Benefits of Curriculum Mapping

Curriculum mapping can be useful because it can document what is taught and when, reveal gaps in the curriculum, and strengthen the design of the assessment plan. The process can also improve communication among faculty, improve program coherence, increase the likelihood that students achieve program-level outcomes, and encourage reflective practice.

This site may also be helpful:

http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/mapping.htm

The Director of Assessment is happy to help any department or program with the process of curriculum mapping with an individualized workshop.

## Identifying Measures

For each program-level learning goal, each academic program must at least one direct, summative measure and at least one indirect measure. In this context, a "measure" is any task that enables students to demonstrate learning and instructors or other evaluators to evaluate learning.

### Direct vs. Indirect

Please see the Direct and Indirect Measures material hosted on assessment website for more information. It is important to recognize that grades alone are not a direct measure because there is rarely a one-to-one connection between grades and learning. Consider the many reasons for student failure or the students who "only need a C."

### **Summative**

Summative measures are taken from or near the end of the student's time in the program. The focus is on evaluating the students' final performance, rather than providing feedback for student improvement.

## **Choosing Direct Measures**

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The following two charts provide some guidance in thinking through the best choice for direct measures.

If you want to	Consider using
Assess thinking and performance skills	Assignments/prompts with scoring guide
Assess knowledge, conceptual understanding, or skill in application and analysis	Multiple-choice tests
Assess attitudes, values, dispositions, or habits of mind	Reflective writing, surveys, focus groups, or interviews
Draw an overall picture of student learning	Portfolios
Compare your students against peers elsewhere	Published tests or surveys

or

Types of Outcomes	Direct Measures	
Cognitive (subject matter knowledge)	Standardized tests; instructor-created exams;	
	portiollos; assignments from courses	
Behavioral (skill acquisition)	Juried performance; portfolios; assignments from courses; major projects; certain tests/exams (language proficiency, mathematical reasoning, critical thinking)	
Affective (attitudes, awareness, interest, concerns)	Survey of student response to value-laden issues; certain tests (ethics); pre-/post- test measures of attitude/value/belief	

## **Standardized Tests**

Standardized tests offer a number of advantages. Since they already exist and are often scored by the vendor or by a computer, they offer a savings of time and effort to faculty. Norm-referenced standardized tests are the only practical way to compare a program's students with those at other institutions, and they are often required or encouraged by external accreditors.

There are, though, a number of disadvantages associated with the use of standardized tests for assessment. If the test's content is not well correlated with the program-level learning goals, there are limits to the conclusions about relevant student learning that can be drawn from exam scores. Student motivation is also an issue, since standardized tests are usually given outside of the context of a class. Raising the stakes of the exam can improve motivation for some students but may trigger text anxiety in other students. If the exam is scored externally, it is important that results are appropriately disaggregated to enable good decision making. Finally, it is important to weigh the results with the financial cost to the student and/or the institution.

**NOTE:** It is also important to recognize the purpose of the test in question. Admissions tests (like the GRE) are primarily designed to predict success in the subsequent program, NOT students' knowledge, abilities, or values.

## **Embedded** Assessment

Assessments that are embedded in coursework have a number of features to recommend them. By completing the assessment, students are fulfilling the normal requirements of the course; it is not something external, which helps with motivation. Faculty can score the assessment as part of or parallel to grading, which eliminated the workload associated with an external assessment, like a special project or portfolio. Assessments using coursework can also more easily allow a developmental view which is difficult with a summative assessment.

## Student Performance Tasks

For goals that related to skills ("The student will be able to..."), a performance task is often the best direct measure. If we expect students to be able to do something, the best assessment is asking them to do it and evaluating their performance. Performance tasks are often best assessed by a rubric or scoring guide, but a written review by an external critic could be analyzed for assessment purposes.

## Pre-Test/Post-Test

Answering the question "Do our students get the education we've promised in the learning goals?" can be interpreted two ways: "When they left, did our students know and were they able to do what we articulated in our goals? or "Did our program move the students from where they started to where we wanted them to be?" The former requires only evaluation of a summative assessment. The latter required a measure of their knowledge/skills at the beginning of the program. Using an assessment twice (or a pair of closely matched assessments), once early and once late in the program, provides data to answer the question of growth or change over time. Of course, growth that is seen may simply be attributed to development, so pre-test/post-test is not foolproof.

### Do I Have to Use a Rubric?

No.

In Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Barbara Walvoord provides an example of a group of faculty who all read a selection of student papers, paying attention strengths and weaknesses of individual papers and of the entire group. Finally, in a group meeting, they came to consensus on the strengths and weaknesses of the student work and used that information to make decisions about improving student learning in their program. They did not use a rubric, but "the process yielded action based on careful faculty analysis of student work" (p. 20).

This section includes information based on material from Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide by Linda Suskie and from the assessment website of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

## **Designing Assignments and Scoring Guides**

### **Designing Assignments**

Assignments from a course are an excellent choice to measure student learning, especially of skills. Assignments and instructor-created exams are the most common measures used for course-level assessment and assessment within the Integrative Core Curriculum. Assignments are also very commonly used for program-level assessment.

An assignment that is useful for measuring student learning should present students with a task that is meaningful, a worthwhile use of learning time, and a direct match with the appropriate learning goals. The topic, student process, and intended product should be clearly defined, so as to aim students at the desired outcome.

#### Assignment Design Process Suggestions

First, list the learning goals this assignment will measure, then draft a prompt that will allow students to demonstrate their ability to meet the learning goals. Use the prompt and the learning goals to create evaluative criteria (a scoring guide), then revise the prompt to elicit the work described in the criteria of the scoring guide.

A helpful resource is Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment in College by Barbara A. Walvoord and Virginia Johnson Anderson. John C. Bean's Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom also contains a number of good model assignments. Copies are available to borrow from the Faculty Lounge or from the Office of Academic Assessment.

## **Designing Scoring Guides**

Developing a formal scoring guide which is provided to students prior to beginning work on the assignment is important for a number of reasons. A scoring guide both clarifies instructor expectations to students and provides consistency in scoring across sections or multiple instructors. Scoring Guides can take a variety of forms. The simplest might be a checklist of the criteria for successful completion of the assignment. A slightly more complex variation might use the list of criteria as categories which are assigned points. A rating scale takes the checklist with its point values and assigns certain point values to different levels of performance. A rubric provides a description of each level of performance for each of the evaluative criteria. It is important to remember that, especially during the first use with real student work, the findings of the assessment process may include a need to refine or alter the rubric to better reflect student performance. A rubric does not have to be set in stone. This also highlights the need to "try out" a new rubric on authentic student work where possible.

The example that follows is adapted from Stevens, D. D. & Levi, A. J. (2005). *Introduction to Rubrics*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Press. The students' prompt is as follows:

Each student will make a 5 minute presentation on the changes in one Portland community over the past 30 years. The student may focus the presentation in any way s/he wishes, but there needs to be a thesis of some sort, not just a chronological exposition. The presentation should include appropriate photographs, maps, graphs, and other visual aids for the audience.

#### Checklist

Knowledge/Understanding Thinking/Inquiry Communication Use of visual aids Presentation skills

#### **Checklist with Points**

Knowledge/Understanding (20 points) Thinking/Inquiry (30 points) Communication (20 points) Use of visual aids (20 points) Presentation skills (10 points)

#### **Rating Scale**

Knowledge/Understanding (Excellent: 20 points; Competent 18 points; Needs work: 15 points) Thinking/Inquiry (Excellent: 30 points; Competent 15 points; Needs work: 10 points) Communication (Excellent 20 points; Competent 15 points; Needs work: 10 points) Use of visual aids (Excellent: 20 points; Competent 18 points; Needs work: 15 points) Presentation skills (Excellent: 10 points; Competent 8 points; Needs work: 5 points)

## Rubric

	Excellent	Competent	Needs Work
Knowledge/Understanding	The presentation demonstrates a depth of historical understanding by using relevant and accurate detail to support the student's thesis. Research is thorough and goes beyond what was presented in class or in the assigned texts.	The presentation uses knowledge which is generally accurate with only minor inaccuracies, and which is generally relevant to the student's thesis. Research is adequate but does not go much beyond what was presented in class or in the assigned text.	The presentation uses little relevant or accurate information, not even that which was presented in class or in the assigned texts. Little or no research is apparent.
	20	18	15
Thinking/Inquiry	The presentation is centered around a thesis which shows a highly developed awareness of historiographic or social issues and a high level of conceptual ability.	The presentation shows an analytical structure and a central thesis, but the analysis is not always fully developed and/or linked to the thesis.	The presentation shows no analytical structure and no central thesis.
	30	15	10
Communication	The presentation is imaginative and effective in conveying ideas to the audience. The presenter responds effectively to audience reactions and questions	Presentation techniques used are effective in conveying main ideas, but a bit unimaginative. Some questions from the audience remain unanswered.	The presentation fails to capture the interest of the audience and/or is confusing in what is to be communicated.
	20	15	10
Use of visual aids	The presentation includes appropriate and easily understood visual aids which the presenter refers to and explains at appropriate moments in the presentation.	The presentation includes appropriate visual aids, but these are too few, in a format that makes them difficult to use or understand, and/or the presenter does not refer to or explain them in the presentation.	The presentation includes no visual aids or visual aids that are inappropriate, and/or too small or messy to be understood. The presenter makes no mention of them in the presentation.
	20	18	15
Presentation skills	The presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard, using eye contact, a lively tone, gestures, and body language to engage the audience.	The presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard, but tends to drone and/or fails to use eye contact, gestures, and body language consistently or effectively at times.	The presenter cannot be heard and/or speaks so unclearly that s/he cannot be understood. There is no attempt to engage the audience through eye contact, gestures, or body language.
	10	8	5

#### Holistic Rubric

An alternative to a fully analytic rubric (above) is a more holistic rubric—often used when grading speed is valuable, such as scoring a standardized exam (SAT Writing, some AP questions, etc.). It describes how an "A assignment" generally differs from a "B assignment."

In an A essay, the text is analyzed in a coherent and sophisticated manner. The introduction leads skillfully to thesis statement, while specific references to the text and other supporting evidence are apt and demonstrate great insight into the work. The essay features superior organization, sophisticated language choices (with clear connections, smooth transitions), and precise usage and mechanics. The piece concludes skillfully rather than just stopping.

In a B essay, text analysis is thorough. The introduction leads to the thesis, while apt text references demonstrate understanding of the work. The essay features good organization, strong language usage (flows smoothly through connecting ideas and transitions), and mechanics. The conclusion is sufficient.

In a B- essay, text analysis is adequate. The essay introduces most of the context and orients reader to thesis, while text references show an adequate understanding of work. The essay is still organized, but inconsistent or imprecise usage and mechanics may appear.

In a C essay, the text analysis is surface. The essay relies on generalizations or summaries as opposed to text references and generally show limited understanding of the work. The essay's organization is basic with inconsistent or imprecise usage and mechanics.

In a D essay, analysis of text shows minimal understanding of work. The essay may feature a weak or incomplete thesis, confusing or illogical structure, few or no text references. Generally, the essay lacks organization, sentence variety, or a strong grasp of mechanics.

## Questions to Guide the Creation of Assignments and Scoring Guides

- Why are we giving students this assignment? What are its key learning goals? What do we want students to learn by completing it?
- What are the skills we want students to demonstrate in this assignment?
- What are the characteristics of good student work (good writing, a good presentation, a good lab report, good student teaching, etc.)?
- What specific characteristics do we want to see in completed assignments?

### **Additional Resources**

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On the website, there are links to a "meta-rubric:" a rubric for use in analyzing rubrics and the AAC&U VALUE rubrics, which tackle concepts (critical thinking, intercultural competency) often found in general education programs. A partially filled rubric template for your personal use is available upon request from the Office of Academic Assessment.

There are large number of online resources on rubrics. A few that I've found that are targeted at higher education rather than K-12 are listed below:

http://course1.winona.edu/shatfield/air/rubrics.htm

http://ctal.udel.edu/assessment/resources/rubrics/

http://avillage.web.virginia.edu/iaas/assess/tools/rubrics.shtm

https://usm.maine.edu/assessment/rubric-examples

## ASSESSMENT PROCESSES: Data Collection and Record Keeping

Data collection procedures and record keeping for program-level assessment of student learning are the responsibility of the program's assessment coordinator. Programs should collect data and store records in the way(s) that make the most sense given the program's context and the preferences of those involved. There are a few guidelines and suggestions

## Guidelines

The Annual Assessment Report asks for summaries of data. Where possible, programs should maintain a record of the most granular data (scores for each rubric item for each student for an assignment from a course used for program-level assessment). The information should also not be anonymous, where feasible. These guidelines will allow data to be used across programs for institution-level assessment.

All information should, however, be kept confidential. In no circumstances should data be presented publically that would allow the identification of an individual student. Where possible, data should not identify an individual instructor, as well.

#### **Suggestions**

Programs are encouraged to use existing institutional structures for data collection and record keeping. These include Banner, Canvas, and Qualtrics (a survey tool). For more information, consult the Director of Academic Assessment.

#### Canvas

Canvas allows the creation of what it calls *Outcomes* at the course, department, or institution levels. A Canvas *Outcome* is essentially a single row from a rubric: a learning statement (goal/objective/rubric dimension) and a series of levels of performance. When *Outcomes* are included in grading rubrics within Canvas, the scores entered by the instructors for those *Outcomes* can be dumped into a report, and someone with administrative access to those *Outcomes* can also look at the actual student work uploaded and graded for those *Outcomes*. When an instructor has created course *Outcomes* or imported department or institutional *Outcomes* into a course, he or she can use a Gradebook feature called the Learning Master Gradebook to look at student performance by Outcome rather than by Assignment. The Director of Academic Assessment is more than happy to help configure Canvas for programlevel (or course-level) assessment use and train faculty (in groups or individually) on the use of Canvas for assessment.

The website maintains a repository of current instruction sheets for instructors teaching courses where Canvas is being used for assessment.

## The Annual Assessment Meeting and Reporting

As part of program-level assessment of student learning, each academic program must meet at least once during an academic year to examine student learning data collected via their chosen assessment measures. Programs must examine data on at least one student learning goal each year. At the meeting, topics of discussion should include changes to the program in response to data and changes to the assessment system in response to data and to the experience. Following the meeting, the program must submit an Annual Assessment Report to the Office of Academic Assessment.

### Preparing for the Meeting

The faculty at the meeting are the primary audience for the data so organize the information in a way that makes sense to them. It is important to tie the collected information to the program's student learning goals; for example, overall performance on the capstone project is probably less useful than seeing how students performed on all of the "critical thinking" indicators.

### **Conducting the Meeting**

Faculty should explore the data with an eye toward better understanding student learning, looking for strengths and places where students have failed to meet the goals that were set for them. Once the participants have clarified what they know now about student learning, it may be important to make changes to the program as a response. Possibilities include changes to learning goals, pedagogy, assignments in particular classes, activities, and curricular requirements and/or structure. Participants should identify an anticipated timeline for both implementation of the changes and assessment of the impact of the changes.

### **Changes to Assessment**

Participants should consider two questions: 1) Do the measures and processes provide useful data with a reasonable amount of effort? and 2) Are the measures reliable, valid, and sufficient? If the answer to either question is no, then the program should consider changes. Additionally, participants should identify the student learning goals to be focused on during the next assessment cycle and additional measures required to better understand some of their findings.

## Reporting

When the meeting is concluded, each program's assessment coordinator should then submit an electronic Annual Assessment Report to the Office of Academic Assessment with electronic copies of the data examined during the annual meeting. The website links to a suggested template with prompts to guide the meeting. During the 2014-2015 academy year, each program was asked to select a semester during which they would subsequently file their annual reports: fall reports are due by January 15, spring reports are due by June 15, and summer reports are due by September 15.

## Follow-Up

At the beginning of the semester subsequent to the filing of the Annual Assessment Report, the Office of Academic Assessment will provide a template for a Follow-Up Report. Programs will be asked to provide evidence that changes mentioned on the Annual Report have been implemented and to provide evidence that they have assessed the impact of those changes.

# ASSESSMENT IN COURSES

Course-level assessment of student learning is fairly similar to program-level assessment, and many of the course-level resources will be helpful at the course level, as well.

## Learning Goals

Instructors should establish learning goals for their courses. Like program-level goals, these intended student learning outcomes articulate what students who complete the course should know, be able to do, and/or value upon completion. Again, these goals should be specific, measurable, and focused on student learning. In fact, course-level goals should probably be more specific than a corresponding program-level goal, explaining how the goal will be realized in the context of the specific course. Learning goals must appear in the syllabus for each course.

## Alignment

Learning goals in courses that satisfy requirements of the Integrative Core should align with the goals established for that Core category. Instructors will typically have made those connections explicit in their application for the Core designation and should communicate that information to students in syllabi.

Courses required for a particular major or minor should align course goals with the relevant program goals. If the program has completed a curriculum map, specific program goals may have been identified as important for the course. Instructors must communicate the relationship between course goals and higher-level goals (program and institutional) via the syllabus.

## Assignments

While program-level assessment formally identifies measures and focuses on summative assessment, course-level assessment focuses on assignments and uses both formative and summative assessment. Assignments should relate directly to the learning goals for the course. Formative assessment provides feedback about learning to both the instructor and the students. Students may change their study habits in response to a poor quiz grade. The instructor may decide to re-teach a concept after seeing how poorly the entire class did on an assignment. Summative assessment evaluates student learning at the end of the course (a final exam or final project), when neither the instructor nor the student can make changes for that particular course. (However, students may use feedback from summative assessment in later courses, and instructors may use feedback to make changes in the way the course is taught in future semesters).

There is rarely the need to formally separate out assessment from the normal grading and evaluation processes at the course level, UNLESS the assignment is being used for program-level assessment or for assessment of the Integrative Core Curriculum.

However, syllabi should explain to students how their learning will be assessed. In other words, course learning goals should be linked to assignments, tests, quizzes, and activities.

## Reporting

Program-level assessment requires an annual meeting and regular reports. There are no such requirements for program-level assessment. It is expected that all instructors will use inform information they collect about student learning (as part of grading or from more formal assessment procedures) to make changes to improve student learning in future courses. It is appropriate to expect that faculty annual reports and promotion and tenure applications will discuss how data about student learning is informing an instructor's planning and pedagogy.

# ASSESSMENT IN THE CORE

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The Integrative Core Curriculum was implemented in tandem with the development and implementation of an assessment plan. The current assessment plan is available on the assessment website.

## APPENDIX A: Timeline for New Programs

## Year 0

This is the academic year in which the new program is approved.

## Year 1 and Year 2 (fall semester)

There are no assessment requirements in the first year and a half of the new program's operation.

## Year 2 (spring semester)

The program should revisit the preliminary learning goals from the proposal. By the end of the spring semester of the second year, the program should adopt and publish learning goals and provide the Office of Academic Assessment with a chart aligning the program's learning goals with the appropriate institutional learning goals.

## Year 3 (fall)

By the end of the fall semester of the third year, the program should create a curriculum map.

## Year 3 (spring)

By the end of the spring semester of the third year, the program should provide the Office of Academic Assessment with a list of their chosen assessment measures. For each goal, there must be at least one direct measure (preferably summative) and one indirect measure.

## Year 4 (fall)

Early in the fall semester of the fourth year, the program should establish a preliminary timeline of which learning goals will be assessed during in the three to five years and choose the semester in which they will file their first Annual Assessment Report (spring of Year 4, summer between Year 4 and 5, or fall of Year 5). Subsequent reports will be filed on an annual basis during the chosen semester.

## APPENDIX B: Assessment Coordinator Position Description

This section, developed and approved by the Institutional Assessment Committee, is intended to provide guidance to academic departments and interdisciplinary major programs in selecting an assessment coordinator.

#### Selection and Approval

Academic departments and programs should select and approve the assessment coordinator in the same way they select and approve other departmental positions they may have (such as tenure committee chair, graduate coordinator, or curriculum chair). If there is no other procedure in place, the coordinator should be appointed by the chair or director. The chair or director may, in fact, serve as assessment coordinator; however, the committee recommends that departments and programs carefully consider the workload of both positions before making that decision.

#### Term and Tenure

The Institutional Assessment Committee recommends that the assessment coordinator serve for a term of three years. The Committee also recommends that coordinators not serve more than two consecutive terms. The Committee strongly recommends that the assessment coordinator be tenured to prevent the tenure-track power differential from constraining the coordinator as she/he completes the duties of the position.

#### **Description of Position**

For new programs or programs undergoing significant changes to an existing plan, the coordinator, in close consultation with the Director of Assessment, will work with instructors and other designated members of the department

- To design (and/or locate) assignments, surveys, interview protocols, and other instruments to be used in assessment.
- To plan the logistics of administration, collection, and scoring of assessment data.
- To plan the logistics of managing and sharing assessment data.

For all programs, the coordinator will ensure that all assessment measures are administered and the collected data are shared with the Director of Assessment, following established plans.

At least once each academic year, the coordinator, in consultation with the Director of Assessment, will decide how best to prepare the data for analysis by the department (calculating relevant statistics, creating tables or charts to summarize the data, etc.). The precise division of labor can be decided based on departmental and coordinator preference. The coordinator and chair/director of each department or program will lead the program faculty through a process of interpretation to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program in terms of student learning, and also ways to improve both student learning and the assessment system itself. After the meeting, the coordinator will file the program's Annual Assessment Report with the Director. Coordinators will also be responsible for documenting that changes were made and assessing the impact of those changes.