

Guiding Questions for Assessment Planning – Academic Assessment

Please feel free to use this document in conjunction with your curriculum map, final report (detailed assessment report) from the previous year and any evidence collected as you review and update your assessment plans. This information is also described in depth in the Institutional Effectiveness Guidebook, which can be found on the assessment resources section at <https://www.cobleskill.edu/academics/assessment/>.

Deciding what to assess?

Ideally, an assessment plan will take into consideration the goal of assessing all required courses over the course of a 5-year period to ensure that the entire major is fully assessed for each comprehensive program review. Developing a plan to ensure that happens in advance can ease the burden as trying to determine which courses fall into the assessment sequence each year may seem daunting if not planned for. Developing these plans in conjunction with the measures (or evidence) as determined on the curriculum map and planning an annual or semester review date for the review of data by the department and subsequent implementation of changes as a result in advance can also be helpful to the process.

Writing Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes should reflect the most important outcomes for students and state the desired end result, not the process to achieve the result. Student learning outcomes are precise, specific, statements about the intended accomplishments of the students in the academic program. Outcomes are stated as descriptions of what we want students to be able to do; that is, outcomes state expected behaviors. Outcomes use observable verbs such as recall, demonstrate, perform, explain, increase/decrease, reduce, and compare. They need to be as specific as possible, avoiding vague statements of purpose. Providing clear achievement points facilitate determining whether outcomes have been achieved. For example, stating the outcome as “Students will understand the use of sterile techniques” is less precise than “Students will demonstrate the mastery of sterile techniques of media preparation for tissue culture.” Outcomes must be measurable and realistic; they should reflect skills and behaviors for which data can be captured using instruments. Results for each outcome will be reported and used for program improvement, so articulating clear, straightforward outcomes is crucial in order to set the stage for data collection and use. In designing student learning outcomes, all of the following should be included:

- Alignment with the mission statement and institutional goals
- Clear description and definitions of expected abilities, knowledge, values, and attitudes of the graduates of the program
- Simple statements for which more than one measurement method could be used
- Focus on the learning results, not the learning process
- Potential for use in program improvement

Development of Plans in Conjunction with Maps – Curricular Alignment of Outcomes

Questions to consider when reviewing the curricular alignment between learning outcomes and required courses include:

- Does the curriculum map indicate that students have adequate opportunities to learn and demonstrate achievement of each learning outcome?
- Do students have multiple opportunities (that is, more than one course) to learn and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes?
- Are learning outcomes addressed at several points in the curriculum, and not just clustered in introductory courses or senior-level courses?
- Does the curriculum map indicate increasing levels of proficiency?
- Are there any overlaps, gaps or misalignments between the curriculum and the expected student learning outcomes?
- Is there a senior capstone course in which several outcomes might be assessed?

Evidence Collection – More than Just the Overall Grade

When planning your assessment collection in advance, understanding what evidence you'll be collecting (what your measure will be for your target) will make the review of your data much simpler and more meaningful. In order for continuous program improvement to occur, it is important to be able to point to where gaps in learning are occurring and to be able to do so requires an understanding of how student achievement is being evaluated. See the [assessment resources](#) section for a refresher on [What's in a Grade](#) PD session.

Questions to consider about evidence of student learning include:

- Other than course grades, what data/evidence will be used to determine that students have achieved stated learning outcomes?
- Are multiple methods of assessment included?
- Does the plan include at least one direct assessment of student learning?
- In which courses will evidence of student learning be collected? What assignments or test questions will be used?
- Are samples of students and student work large enough to be representative?
- Have achievement standards been established for each outcome measure (be sure they are in Weave)? How will faculty decide the degree to which student work reflects achievement of the programs learning outcomes?

Now What? Review and Change – Continuing the Cycle

For continuous improvement to occur, departmental review and ownership of evidence collected is expected. Dedicating a time at the end of **each semester** to review what has been learned and to plan for changes if needed is an important part of the process. Some questions to consider:

- Who in the department will lead the discussion of the assessment results?
- When will the review process take place? Are there plans for the review process to take place at a certain time during the year or as part of regular faculty activities?
- How will the review take place? What activities will be carried out during the review process? Will the process include review of student work, analysis of assessment results, and making recommendations for changes (plan ahead if you'll be reviewing student work and need evidence available)? Is a follow-up meeting planned to study the impact of the changes made?
- Once decided, *what changes were made and were they documented effectively in Weave?*

- What impact do the changes you are proposing have on your budget? Document this in the action plan section under budget!

Putting it in Weave – How do I Know It Is Complete?

Weave provides a dashboard for each program which will indicate if each outcomes has been assigned a measure, each measure has been assigned a target and finally, if each target has been updated with a finding.

AA Advising

- 100% Outcomes with Measures
- 100% Measures with Targets
- 100% Targets with Findings

When beginning a new cycle, it is important to review your outcomes and ensure that each one has been assigned a measure and target. To check this, you can toggle between your Weave project and the dashboard.

Once you are ready to update your project with your findings, you can ensure your project is updated by toggling between the dashboard and your project.

Other critical aspects include linking your outcomes to relevant institutional learning outcomes (ILO) and strategic planning (SP) initiatives for each outcome. For a refresher, the ILO’s can be found [here](#) and on the assessment resources web page and the SP initiatives found [here](#) and on the SP home page. This is accomplished on the Supported Initiatives section of the Weave project under each outcome.

Supported Initiatives (2) ^

Add Supported Initiatives to Student Learning Outcomes - May be found in syllabi -should link to PLO 1.1 X

Select Supported Initiatives

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Adding evidence is a key aspect of your plan. This is accomplished at the bottom of your project in Weave by dragging and dropping or uploading your files directly into the project. Please note that **files do not carry over year to year.**

Project Attachments (2) ^

📁 Drag and drop files here or [browse for files](#)

Once your project is complete for the academic year and you have added your analysis of findings, please update the status to **“Internal Review”** which will prompt a review, reflection and feedback.

A new shell will be created for the next year.

