Top Ten Tips for Improving the Annual Assessment Report

(Created April 2017)

Contents

1. Remember to Complete All Required Fields

Complete all required fields. Otherwise, the assessment plan (the outcome, the direct and indirect assessment methods) and assessment report (findings, analysis, actions, and next time for assessment) are not complete. The greatest omission was not selecting one or more items in the **Action(s) Taken Category(ies)** check box field.

We run reports within the assessment management system that utilizes data in the fields to generate an annual audit to determine the status of assessment at the university. The 2015-2016 audit revealed that for over 250 outcomes (out of 960 outcomes) the Action(s) Taken Category(ies) field was left empty (no action was selected).

Items we look at are the

- number of outcomes in each program,
- number of outcomes assessed in each program,
- direct and indirect assessment methods used by faculty
- types of actions taken by the faculty

The data helps us understand the type of training and professional development to conduct for faculty and staff working on assessment.

See *Planning Module How to Guide* and *Explanation of Fields for Major Learner Outcomes* available online **here** for detailed steps on how to complete the form. Below is a table that lists the fields - those at are automatically filled by the system, and those that are required or optional.

Auto-filled Field	Required Field	Optional Field
Academic Major	Person Completing Report	Assessment Team Members
AY Start	Learner Outcome Number	Description
AY End	Learner Outcome	Course(s) or collection schedule detail
	Term data collected	Baseline Resources
	Direct Assessment Method(s)	Notes
	Direct Assessment Method(s) Description	
	Indirect Assessment Method(s)	
	Indirect Assessment Method(s) Description	
	Assessment Results & Analysis	
	Action(s) Taken Category(ies)	
	Action(s) Taken (Required)	
	Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Term	
	Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Year	
	Progress	
	Program level	

Fields not edited by the unit reporting are:

- College Approval
- Date of College Approval
- Institutional Review
- Date of Institutional Review
- College and Institutional Review Notes

2. Remember to Include All Supporting Documentation

If you've used an assessment tool, please attach a copy. Having the tool helps with the review and provides a record for future reference. Examples of assessment tools include

- Rubrics, scoring sheets, or criteria sheets
- Test questions such as essay or multiple choice
- Indirect measures such as student or alumni surveys

If you use course-embedded written assignments, attach the assignment.

If you want, you may also include **redacted** examples of student work that corresponds to any scoring scale you might use.

3. Please Redact the Names or Other Identifiers of Individual Students

We continue to see samples of student work or spreadsheets with tally of scores that include students' names. Please delete names and/or other identifiers or use the different tools in Word (change text color to white or a black highlight tool or simply delete), Excel (change text to white or a black highlight tool or hide the column) or Adobe Acrobat (redaction tool) to block names. Printing files to PDF format and using the Adobe redaction tool is the best method.

Also, when you attach files that contain student work, don't include the name of the student in the file name.

4. Include a Thorough Presentation of Results

More often than, there is an incomplete presentation of results. A rubric, scoring sheet, test questions, or some other device is used to assess student work. Rather than providing a breakdown by question, rubric dimension, or scoring sheet item, an overall score is given,

> Thirty students' work was assessed. The average across the five questions relating to this outcome was 77%.

A more thorough presentation would be,

> Thirty students' work was assessed. The average across the five questions relating to this outcome was 77% with the following breakdown by question

Question #3	85%
Question #5	64%
Question #8	72%
Question #11	90%
Question #12	75%

Use tables to show multi-year results (trend data) or provide an abstract and attach a file with the details.

> We use a rubric with dimensions of clear writing, sound arguments, proper citation, and supported conclusion scored from 1 = Beginning, 2 = Developed, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Advanced. We sampled 20 papers from three senior-level courses to determine whether we are meeting our outcome for writing in the discipline.

Year	Clear writing	Sound arguments	Proper citation	Supported conclusions	Total score
2013-2014	2.7	3.2	2.1	3.1	2.8
2014-2015	2.8	3.3	2.6	3.2	3.0
2015-2016	3.0	3.4	3.0	3.3	3.2

5. Analyze Results Completely

Using the example in Item 4, it is not uncommon for reports to simply state

> The overall score was 2.8, satisfactory. We will continue to monitor student work.

That statement does not demonstrate a complete analysis of the data available to you. A more complete analysis statement would be:

> When we assessed this outcome in 2013-2014, we determined students had poor writing skills and didn't understand citation style for the discipline. As a faculty we decided to include draft review and an assignment where students had to prepare citations for different types of primary and secondary sources. In subsequent years (2014-2015 and 2015-2016), the scores progressively improved to where all sub-scores for 2015-2016 are now satisfactory and the overall score is satisfactory achievement of this outcome.

The above analysis informs the reviewer that

1. you are using all possible data collected through the rubric or scoring sheet,
2. the faculty determined a course of action intended to improve student learning based on a deeper analysis of the findings, and
3. after two years, the additional assignment and feedback have worked to improve student achievement of the outcome.

6. Remember to Review Multi-Year Results and Analyses

Using the data as presented in Item 4 above, the three annual reports would look something like this,

The 2013-2014 Report:

> The overall score was 2.8, almost satisfactory. We will continue to monitor student work.

The 2014-2015 Report:

The overall score was 3.0, satisfactory. We will continue to monitor student work.

The 2015-2016 Report:

The overall score was 3.2, slightly above satisfactory. We will continue to monitor student work.

Taken one year at a time and only looking at one factor, the overall score, the department is missing out on trends and areas where they can be making slight changes to improve student achievement. Whereas, the improved version presented in Item 4, demonstrates a multi-year presentation of results and then in Item 5, the analysis statement presents a multi-year perspective.

7. Provide a Complete Discussion of Actions Taken

It's not uncommon to see statements such as

- No actions are needed at this time.
- We decided to revise the course.
- We will mentor students.
- We will provide faculty development.

Those are incomplete discussion of actions taken. Give a richer description of what you are doing.

- **Why were no actions needed?** After review of the findings, the faculty discussed at the April 2016 department meeting that we feel the student performance is satisfactory and will reassess this outcome in two years.
- **What was the nature of the course revision?** Based on the review of the results, the faculty who teach the DISC 301 agreed to revise the approach used to teach students how to frame an argument in support of an idea. This will be implemented the next time the course is offered and reviewed when the semester is completed and prior to the next time the course is offered.
- **What was the nature of student mentoring?** Based on the review of the graduate student seminars, we will require the faculty advisor to: 1) share the scoring rubric and explain the dimensions of a good presentation and 2) hold a practice session to critique the student's presentation using the scoring rubric prior to the actual presentation to the department.
- **What is the proposed faculty development recommendation?** We will conduct a workshop on use of the rubric used to score seminars to ensure uniform application of the descriptors (levels of performance) and understanding of the dimensions (performance criteria).

8. Provide an Explanation for Extended Cycle

For various reasons, outcomes may be placed on an extended cycle for assessment. Marking the *Action(s) Taken Category(ies)* Extended Cycle requires an explanation why the outcome is placed on

Extended Cycle. Providing an explanation is needed to indicate you have a reason and that there is a plan in place to actually get the outcome assessed.

- Very low enrollment which requires collection of samples of student work over two or three years
- Student achievement is at a high level and outcomes are placed on a rotation for assessment.
- A small department with few faculty (tenure- and non-tenure-track) making it burdensome to assess each outcome each year.
- Change in personnel which affected the department's ability to conduct the assessment.
- Department decided to retire an outcome (information on this is available **here**) and establish a new one needing some time before the new outcome can be assessed.

See the document, *Extended Cycle: The Why's and How*, for more detailed discussion about this topic.

9. Relate Assessment methods and/or Actions Taken to the Outcome

In the example below that was taken from an actual assessment plan and report, the Theses Assessment Rubric is simply a repeat of the outcome and doesn't provide any detail that can identify areas for improvement. The Seminar Score Sheet doesn't have any dimension that addresses professional scientific ethics. It solely addresses presentation technique, visuals, and flow, and technical content.

> Outcome:
>
> Understanding of professional scientific ethics, including issues such as designation of authorship, and patent rights.
>
> Thesis Assessment Rubric:
>
> - Below Expectations (1 through 3): Inadequate knowledge of professional ethics, patent rights, and designation and referencing of authorship.
> - Satisfactory (4 through 7): Adequate knowledge of professional ethics, patent rights, and designation and referencing of authorship.
> - Excellent (8 through 10): Complete knowledge of professional ethics, patent rights, and designation and referencing of authorship.
>
> Results and Analysis:
>
> Theses were reviewed by graduate committee and advisor, and demonstrated acceptable achievement of the outcome with a 100% pass rate. Specific learning outcome assessment using the final exam rubric averaged 8.5 out of 10, in the excellent category.
>
> Average seminar scores were 3.4 out of 4 (between good and outstanding).

It is difficult to "connect the dots" between the outcome, the assessment method, and the results to determine the action of "No Action Taken after Review." The department was advised to review the AACU Ethics Rubric that has the dimensions of 1) ethical self-awareness, 2) understanding different ethical perspectives / concepts, 3) ethical issue recognition, 4) application of ethical perspectives / concepts, 5) evaluation of different ethical perspectives / concepts, as a place to start thinking about how to frame assessing ethical behavior in the discipline.

10. Fully Explain the Use of Conference Presentations and Publications

Typically, conference presentations and publications are indirect measures of assessment.

Publications indicate the ability of students to prepare professional writings for a broader audience. The number of successfully published papers is not being directly assessed by faculty to determine the level of student achievement. It is an outside measure of work. Internal review of manuscripts can serve as the direct assessment if data are collected.

The number of presentations at disciplinary and/or industry meetings does not speak to the quality of the presentation. Internal review of practice presentations, either in a course or during departmental seminars or practice sessions, can serve as a direct measure, if data are collected.