Assessment FAQs

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General Questions About Assessment

Q: **Why do we do assessment?**
Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning (Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus From Teaching to Learning by Huba and Freed, 2000). Assessment occurs at course, department, college, and institution levels. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT), is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), yet assessment practices at the university extend beyond SACSCOC to include programmatic accreditation agencies, as well as our own practices of assessment. However, assessment is not just important to our accreditors; it is also important for student learning and continual improvement of our university’s programs.

Q: **I’m new to assessment. What do I need to know about the reporting process?**
Every academic program on campus undergoes an assessment reporting process each year. All academic programs are covered by the institution’s SACSCOC regional accreditation, and some academic programs also have programmatic accreditation from an external accrediting body. SACSCOC requires that UT submit with the Decennial and Fifth-Year Interim Reports progress each department has made over time in improving assessment practices and, ultimately, the programs. The next Interim Report will be due in March 2021, and will need to include multiple years of assessments. This means that all departments must report on their assessments every year. Once those reports are completed, they are reviewed by the respective colleges and by members of the Assessment Steering Committee.

Q: **What should be included in the yearly reports, and how does the reporting process work?**
All reports should have the following: Student learning outcomes, a description of the direct and indirect methods used to assess those learning outcomes, an analysis and discussion of the results of the assessments and a plan for use of the results to improve student learning (what the department will do, based on the assessment data, to improve the program). The Assessment Steering Committee uses a rubric to determine the strength of annual assessment reports. Each department should have learning outcomes that describe the competencies that students in the program should master by the time they graduate. The learning outcomes for the following term are usually discussed/developed/revised in late spring. Once they have been established, the faculty in the department must decide how they will measure student performance in these areas. This is generally also decided in late spring or during the summer semester. In the subsequent fall and spring semesters, data from the assessments chosen are collected. During the spring semester, faculty discuss the results and, if the data reflect a need for improvement, develop a plan to address what they will do as a department to improve the program. If the data reflects adequate improvement, there may not be any action taken for the following year. Irrespective of the results, all information is reported by the program in the Planning module of Compliance Assist by September 15th (or earlier, depending on the college). This process is summarized in graphic form in the following document (click on image to open file):

![Assessment Reporting Best Practic](image)

Q: **What’s a student learning outcome (SLO)?**
A student learning outcome (SLO) is a statement that describes what a student should know once they complete a course or a program. A good SLO describes an observable behavior that can be measured within a specific timeframe (e.g., by the end of a course, by the time the student graduates, etc.). Generally, SLOs use active verbs from a level of...
Bloom’s Taxonomy or a similar taxonomy. For more information about developing good SLOs and Bloom’s Taxonomy, please see the following websites:

- TennTLC’s Learning Outcomes page: http://tenntlc.utk.edu/learning-outcomes/
- TennTLC’s Programmatic Assessment page (also talks about Bloom’s Taxonomy): http://tenntlc.utk.edu/programmatic-and-course-based-assessment/

**Q: What’s the difference between formative and summative assessment?**

**Formative assessments** are used as a means of gauging student learning before or during a learning activity/unit. Evaluative activities in this category can be used before or during a class session to provide feedback to the instructor regarding what students know before a subject is introduced, how well students are understanding new material, as well as the efficacy of his or her instruction. These activities generally take little time to complete, and can therefore occur one or more times during a class session. They are also invariably low-stakes, meaning that they have little to no impact on a student’s overall grade. The main purposes of formative assessments are to guide/adjust instruction and to help students see what they need to know / improve upon. Some examples of formative assessments include one-minute “papers” in which students summarize what was covered during a class session in their own words, informal quizzes, short homework assignments, class discussions or mid-semester class evaluations. These are not always discussed in a program’s annual assessment report, but can be useful in preparing students for the summative assessments that will be reported.

Conversely, **summative assessments** are activities that evaluate student effectiveness in meeting a learning outcome. These assignments typically take place after instruction for a unit/module in a course has ended. Some examples of summative assessments include, but are not limited to final exams, oral presentations, portfolios, group projects and papers. These activities are typically discussed in annual assessment reports.

For more information about formative and summative assessments and how they can be used in conjunction with one another, check out the Course Assessment page on the TennTLC website at http://tenntlc.utk.edu/course-development/assessment/. A more detailed list of examples of formative and summative assessments can be found on the document entitled “Assessment Toolbox” found here (click on image to open file).

**Q: What’s the difference between direct and indirect methods of assessment?**

**Direct assessment** is used to determine the level of student learning achieved against established learning outcomes. Activities in this category usually have a direct impact on measures of student performance (e.g., grades in a course). Some examples of direct assessment may include, but are not limited to exams, quizzes, oral presentations, dissertations, theses, essays and portfolios. **Indirect assessment** is typically used to evaluate the quality of student learning experiences. For instance, students might be given a survey to gauge their perceptions of their growth in a skill as a result of a class or a study abroad experience. They might also evaluate the quality of instruction in a course or during a service-learning experience. Some examples of indirect assessments include self-efficacy surveys, end of course evaluations, focus groups and questionnaires for alumni regarding program effectiveness and retention.

Both forms of assessment should be completed as part of the curricular or co-curricular programs. For more information about direct and indirect measures, please read this article on Cornell University’s Center for Teaching Excellence website: https://www.cte.cornell.edu/documents/Direct%20Indirect%20Measures.pdf.
**Q: Can conference papers and presentations be considered a form of direct assessment?**
Conference papers and presentations cannot be considered a form of direct assessment because they are not requirements for all students, and they are usually not evaluated by program faculty. Such work is generally categorized as an indirect assessment of student learning because it is reflective of the quality of the student learning experience in a program. However, if program faculty decide to score or evaluate conference papers or presentations as part of a course, they can consider the student work a direct assessment.

**Q: What’s the relationship between formative/summative and direct/indirect assessment?**
The terms **formative** and **summative assessment** refer to **types** of assessment. **Direct** and **indirect assessments** refer to **methods** of assessment.

A formative assessment can be direct or indirect given that it is a low stakes activity used to guide instruction as the teacher helps lead the students to the fulfillment of a learning outcome he or she has set. Having students complete a midterm self-assessment of their mastery of an outcome is an example of a formative/indirect assessment because the activity gives the instructor information about the quality of the students’ learning experience, while providing him or her with feedback that can be used to improve course delivery.

A summative assessment is always going to be direct because it is comparing a student’s performance to an established learning outcome. Therefore, an exam for a class is a summative/direct assessment.

**Questions About Reporting**

**Q: I am the new assessment person for a program. Where do I start?**
Read last year’s report for the program, available in Compliance Assist (make this a link). The report will tell you what the program’s outcomes are and the faculty’s plan for assessing them this year. If you are unable to access the system, you may contact the Faculty Consultant for Assessment in the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center via email at tenntlc@utk.edu, the Office of Accreditation at SACS_Liaison@utk.edu, or the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at assessment@utk.edu to grant you access.

**Q: When are reports due?**
Annual reports are submitted via the Planning module of Compliance Assist no later than September 15th, unless the college has established an earlier deadline.

**Q: How many outcomes should there be for a program?**
As a basic rule, faculty should strive to assess at least three student learning outcomes (SLOs) for a program each year. However, for programs with enrollments of 5 to 20 students, the number of outcomes assessed can be smaller. It is recommended that departments do not assess more than five SLOs per year to keep the reporting process manageable. If you are unsure how many outcomes your department should assess, or need assistance in revising or writing your learning outcomes, please contact the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center via email at tenntlc@utk.edu or by phone at 865-974-3807. For more information about the reporting process and the requirements for programmatic assessment, please see the FAQ “What should be included in the annual report, and how does the reporting process work?”

**Q: What if the program has a small number of students?**
If an academic program has a small number of students, the assessment coordinator should continue to assess the few students enrolled, and data can be stored in the Planning module; however, the assessment coordinator should put the outcomes on “extended cycle” to indicate a rolling review of students. Here is an example:
“The individualized nature of the certificate program and small enrollments require combining evaluations across academic years. Data will be collected annually, but for most objectives, assessment will take place as a rolling review of students who have completed the course in the most recent three years” (Women’s Studies Certificate).

To place an outcome on extended cycle, follow the instructions for entering results and, after hitting the Edit tab, go to the AY End Date field and adjust the year. Provide a justification for extended cycle under the Notes section of the report. Then, under “Progress,” select “Extended Cycle” from the drop down menu. After making all the necessary changes, scroll down and click the Save and Close button to save all changes.

Questions About Assessment Methods and Data Collection

**Q: CAN WE USE COURSE GRADES AS A MEASURE?**

Course grades cannot be used as an assessment method because what they measure goes beyond a single outcome (i.e., they may also take into account attendance, quality of writing, etc.). For the purpose of assessing student learning outcomes (SLOs), the method must be outcome-specific. A course grade provides little information about what could be enhanced to help students more effectively master the outcome. An alternative to a course grade could be a grade on an assignment whose focus is to demonstrate the outcome. Another example would be to submit a sample of student work focused on the outcome from a select group of courses, and for the assessment group to examine the artifacts using a rubric or criteria list.

**Q: CAN WE USE A TEST GRADE AS A MEASURE?**

If the sole purpose of the test is to measure one specific student learning outcome, the grade on the test can be used as a measure. If the test measures several outcomes, sub-scores for relevant questions should be used for each outcome.

**Q: WHAT ARE SOME UNIVERSITY TOOLS AVAILABLE TO HELP COLLECT DATA?**

The university currently uses several modules offered by Campus Labs in order to collect data using assessments. Annual programmatic outcome reports are entered into the Planning module. The new Outcomes module can be used to enter course-level data. The Baseline module can also be used to collect survey and rubric data. In addition to the Campus Labs modules, several programs utilize the survey tool Qualtrics to collect data for the assessment of student learning.

**Q: HOW DO WE DECIDE ON A SCALE FOR OUR PROGRAM RUBRIC?**

While there is no set scale for program rubrics, it is generally acceptable to have a scale of four to five levels. Three levels provide a baseline for student performance. For example, it is not uncommon for departments to use program rubrics with the levels Excellent, Proficient and Beginner. In most cases, it is useful to start with a three-point scale, grade a small sampling of student work to check validity/user-friendliness of the rubric, and then add additional levels as needed. For instance, as an extension of the Excellent, Proficient and Beginner categories, one can adjust the scale as follows: Excellent, Proficient, Developing and Beginner. On the other hand, rubrics with a scale of fewer than four levels and more than five will almost always have validity issues and are often difficult to score. For assistance with creating a rubric, please contact the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center at tnttlc@utk.edu or 974-3807. For additional resources about rubrics in general (e.g., how to make them, samples, and types of rubrics), check out the following websites:
• Cornell Center for Teaching Excellence: Discusses the value of rubrics and how they can be integrated into courses. Also provides helpful links to general information about rubrics - https://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/assessing-student-learning/using-rubrics.html
• American Association of Colleges and Universities: Has several samples of rubrics - http://aacc.org/value-rubrics
• University of South Carolina’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment: Provides samples of different types of rubrics for different fields of study - http://jpr.sc.edu/effectiveness/criteria/

Q: Do we have to use a rubric?
No. It is not necessary to use a rubric. However, the way in which students are evaluated should be very clear in the report (e.g., test results, dissertation defense, etc.). Other methods similar to rubrics that may better fit your needs, include criteria sheets and checklists. For more information about these methods, check out the following websites:

• Assessment Strategies and Tools: Checklists, Rating Scales and Rubrics: http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/mewa/html/assessment/checklists.html
• “Save Time Grading as an Instructor or a Professional”: http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jewel001-CollegeWriting/TEACH/grading.htm

Q: What are the benefits of using a rubric or checklist?
There are three main benefits to using a rubric or checklist. First, rubrics make grading easier. Because the requirements are explicitly included on the actual document, instructors do not have to spend as much time writing feedback. Moreover, if a rubric is created with the student learning outcomes (SLOs) in mind, it facilitates the reporting process. For example, if faculty want to assess student performance in the areas of oral presentation and writing proficiency in one assignment, they may create one rubric that measures both. However, in their report, they may discuss oral presentation and writing proficiency as two different SLOs. Having a rubric isolates specific data about each outcome so that reporting is easier for departments and programs. Finally, rubrics are an effective means of communicating expectations to students.

Q: What is the right sample size?
Appropriate sampling size varies according to the academic program. To determine the appropriate sampling size for an assessment report, it is helpful to look at trends of student involvement in the program over time. In larger departments, it is not uncommon to have a sample size of 30-100 students. However, in smaller departments such as Interdisciplinary Programs, it is not uncommon to have a sample size of 5-10 students. In smaller departments, any sampling size below 5 students may be considered too small, and it is recommended that the outcomes be put on extended cycle so that faculty continue to collect data until the sampling size is sufficient for analysis. Generally, for any program, a good sample size would be at least 20% of student enrollment in the program, with a minimum of 5 students. Therefore, given a total program enrollment of 200 students, the sample size would be 40 students. The following table includes some examples of sample sizes from assessment reports across disciplines.
Examples of Sample Sizes from Various UT Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>20% of enrolled students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Studies – BA</td>
<td>17 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics – BA</td>
<td>11 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s Studies – BA</td>
<td>15 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology – BA</td>
<td>39 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Engineering – BA</td>
<td>18 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing – BA</td>
<td>51 students</td>
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<td>Social Work – Ph.D.</td>
<td>5 students</td>
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<td>Accounting – MA</td>
<td>108 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Science and Technology – MA</td>
<td>6 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music – BA</td>
<td>19 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Design – BFA</td>
<td>31 students</td>
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Alternatively, Johnston and Christensen (2012, Educational research - Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. p. 234) provide the following guidance. N stands for the total number of students in the degree program; n stands for the recommended sample size. The samples sizes are based on the 95% confidence level and a random sampling methodology. These numbers typically exceed the 20% sample size with a minimum of 5 students as is recommended for UT General Education courses.

Recommended Assessment Sample Sizes for Academic Programs

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Q: What is the right sample size?
Q: How do I show evidence of improvement?
Interpret the results and compare them to last year's. Present the data and highlight the improvement in an explanation.

Q: What is evidence of improvement?
Evidence of improvement involves any positive change from one year to the next. To determine whether there has been improvement, faculty compare the results from the current evaluative year to the results from the previous cycle. For example, note the following outcome:

Learner Outcome #2: Students will perform at or above the national mean on North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE). – (Veterinary Medicine)

If 55% of students performed at or above the national mean on the NAVLE in Spring 2014, and 65% of students scored at or above the national average in Spring 2015, there is evidence of a 10% improvement from one year to the next. This data should be reflected and explained in the report. Let’s say, though, that the outcome were changed to the following:

Learner Outcome #2: 75% of students will perform at or above the national mean on North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE). – (Veterinary Medicine)

Although this benchmark was not met, the previously stated data (55% of students in Spring 2014 and 65% in Spring 2015) would still show some evidence of improvement. This growth should be explained in the Assessment Analysis and Results section of the annual report.

Q: What types of documentation can be included in the report?
In Compliance Assist, there is an option to upload files in the report to provide evidence of student mastery or non-mastery of the established student learning outcomes (SLOs) and to demonstrate that faculty are making strides toward improving their programs. Note that Compliance Assist will only support the following file types: pdfs, .docs or .docx, .htm, .html, .ppt, .pplx, .xls, .xlsx. Some possible documents that might be helpful to upload include, but are not limited to:

- **Samples of student work**: These can be exams, papers, artwork, videos or any other projects that are used to directly assess established SLOs. All names on student work must be redacted before uploading. It is recommended that faculty upload a small sample of work that is representative of the range of student ability (e.g., a report may include one example each of excellent, average and/or poor work) to show how the assignments were evaluated. If a video is used, it is best to attach a link to a website instead of trying to upload the file.

- **Rubrics, checklists or criteria sheets used to score assessments**: These can be completed and the results summarized in a table to demonstrate students’ overall performance or they can be uploaded without the results to show the criteria by which the assessments were evaluated.

- **Minutes of faculty meetings**: These notes are useful to document when program faculty meet to discuss the results of the assessment completed during the academic year and make decisions about what changes – if any – should be made for the following assessment cycle. These files are typically uploaded either in the “Actions Taken” or the “Assessment Analysis” sections of the report.

- **Self-assessments, alumni questionnaires, senior exit surveys**: These documents can be uploaded as examples of indirect assessments used to evaluate program effectiveness and the quality of student learning experiences.

- **Exams, capstone projects, writing prompts**: These are examples of direct assessments that can demonstrate that a specific learning outcome or set of learning outcomes were assessed during an assessment cycle. When
uploading this type of evidence, it is necessary to point out which parts of the assignment were used to assess the particular outcome.

Q: WHERE SHOULD I GO TO ENTER RESULTS?
In Compliance Assist, click on the “My Dashboard” tab, then the “Academic Assessment” tab (next to the role tab). Click on the outcome to open the form, then on the edit tab at the top of the form. Fill in all fields marked “required.” See the Planning Module Guide under Resources on the UTK SACSCOC Accreditation website for a step-by-step how-to guide on assessment reporting (URL: http://sacs.utk.edu/resources/). If you need additional assistance working in the system, contact assessment@utk.edu.

Q: SO MY REPORT IS DONE, THEN WHAT?
Email your department head and the dean of your college to inform them that your report is complete. The report will be reviewed by your college and then by a member of the Assessment Steering Committee. You will receive comments and suggestions via the Feedback Form within Compliance Assist. Once the feedback has been received, you can update the report and resubmit it for review.

Questions About the Use of Results

Q. HOW DO WE USE THE RESULTS OF ASSESSMENTS TO DETERMINE WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN?
Once the results have been collected, the next step is to define the data. This involves asking yourself and your fellow colleagues the following questions:

- **What was the benchmark?** A benchmark is a quantifiable means of determining whether or not students have satisfied a learning outcome. For example, note the following outcome:

  - Graduates of the UTK Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering program communicate effectively in writing, speaking, and listening in a variety of contexts (Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, BS).

  In the Direct Assessment Method(s) description box of the report, the reporter identified the benchmark as:

  - “…80% of students are expected to maintain a 70% average in all graded components of the course, including written and oral reports.”

Setting a benchmark allows departments to quantify the student success rate in meeting an outcome while clearly defining areas where growth is needed.

- **Once a benchmark has been established, what do the data tell us?** Now that a benchmark has been set to determine what success looks like in terms of fulfilling the outcome, faculty can begin to organize and report their findings in the “Assessment Results and Analysis” portion of the report. In keeping with the previous example, the department might look at the graded components of the course and find that 85% of students maintained an average of 70% or higher in their written and oral reports. Therefore, the analysis section might say something like this:

  - “…80% of students maintained an average of 70% or higher in their written and oral reports. This indicates that students are meeting the learning outcome.”

However, if the outcome is not met – imagine that only 60% of students met the learning outcome – the faculty must not only state this, but they will also want to discuss possible factors that may have contributed to the students not meeting the outcome.
• **What factors might have contributed to student failure or success in meeting an outcome?** In addition to communicating the results, faculty should also think about what might have caused the results. Was there a change in the curriculum? Were students lacking in a certain skill? Was there a change or a loss in personnel? This discussion will also go in the “Assessment Results and Analysis” section of the report.

• **Now that we have discussed the results, how do we move forward?** Assessment is an ongoing process where the ultimate goal is improvement. Therefore, after looking at the data and hypothesizing about what worked and didn’t work in terms of curricular activities, it is important to think about what should be done to enhance student learning and to improve the program curriculum. Imagine that 80% of students in the Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering Department met the learning outcome. The department might respond in one of two ways:

  o Faculty may decide that, because students met the established SLO, no actions should be taken to alter the curriculum, or
  o Faculty may decide that to change the benchmark to say “…85% of students are expected to maintain a 70% average in all graded components of the course, including written and oral reports.”

Should the faculty decide to change the learning outcome, they will need to indicate this in the “Actions Taken” section of the report. Actions to change the SLO based on results can be documented in minutes or notes from a faculty meeting where the changes were discussed.

Conversely, if students did not meet the SLO, the faculty will want to explore what they can do to help students reach the benchmark they set. An effective strategy might involve a change in the curriculum - in this case, creating a Technical Writing course for engineers, etc. – or providing students with extra tutoring opportunities. Irrespective of the decision, the actions explored should be reported in the “Actions Taken” section of the report.

**Q. What are some examples of actions that can be taken?**

Once the data have been collected and analyzed, there are a number of actions that faculty can take to address the needs of the students in their programs. These actions must be reported in the Planning Module of Compliance Assist in the “Actions Taken” section of the report. The following are some examples of actions taken as derived from other reports:

1. **Course Revision**

   **Use:** For changes made to course content, such as adding a new unit, revising a required assignment, changing a required textbook, adding a practicum rotation, adopting a common syllabus for multi-instructor course.

   **Example 1:** Revised persuasive speech evaluation rubric to include intercultural component; initiated textbook revision to include intercultural content; collect baseline data for review of delivery and content components of informative speech. *(Communication Studies-BA)*

   **Example 2:** Faculty instructors and clinical mentors who supervise CFS 470 students will ... begin instruction on the assessment of young children earlier in the semester. *(Child & Family Studies-BS)*

2. **Curriculum Revision**

   **Use:** To reflect curricular changes including adding a new course, modifying the sequencing of courses, changing prerequisites, and dropping a course.
Example 1: As a faculty, we have approved the creation of HIST 299, which will be a requirement of the major beginning in 2015-16 and a prerequisite for HIST 499. HIST 299 will place emphasis on teaching and learning historical thinking in small-format, seminar-like settings. This course will have many different iterations, depending on the particular subject specialty of the faculty teaching it. But the emphasis in each case will be on intensive reading, problem solving, modeling critical analysis, and lab-like exercises designed to offer hands-on training in historical methods, research, and writing. (History, BA)

Example 2: Instructors of all 100- and 200- level classes must assign at least one piece of formal writing which will include instructions requiring students to discuss a play or performance through a broader historical, social, or theatrical context. (Theatre-BA)

3. Faculty Development / Training

Use: For activities aimed to more effectively prepare faculty to teach or assess a learning outcome, including training of practicum supervisors, convening of norming session for faculty using a program rubric, etc.

Example 1: We are also planning to offer workshops in “how to teach HIST 299” beginning in summer 2015. Faculty who choose to participate in these workshops will work together to develop standards for the course (length of writing assignments, basic skills to be learned, etc.) and to exchange ideas about how to teach it. (History BA)
Example 2: To continue to improve critical thinking scores, a faculty workshop will be created during Fall 2014 to help faculty understand how to incorporate critical thinking into the curriculum. (Hotel, Restaurant & Tourism-BS)

For examples of possible actions taken for both graduate and undergraduate programs and how they can be worded in the system, please see the document entitled “Examples of Actions Taken” provided here (click on image to open file).
What is Assessment and Why Do We Do It?

- Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. (Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus From Teaching to Learning by Huba and Freed, 2000)
- Assessment occurs at the course, departmental, college, and institutional levels. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), yet assessment practices at the university extend beyond SACSCOC to include many other accreditation agencies and as well as our own practices of assessment. However, assessment is not just important to our accreditors, but it is also important for student learning and continual improvement of our university programs.

Timeline for Annual Assessment Activities

**Early Fall**
- Decide what students in dept. should be able to do.
- Decide what assessments will best help students demonstrate these competencies, and develop a plan for how these assessments will take place.

**Fall/Spring/Summer**
- Carry out the assessments.
- Collect the data.

**Late Spring / Summer**
- Analyze and interpret results.
- Compare results with last years’ data, if applicable.

**Summer / Early Fall**
- Share results with faculty and determine if there has been improvement from the previous year.
- Identify what needs to be done to improve programs, if applicable.

**September 15th**
- Submit previous academic year’s report in Compliance Assist. This is done every year.
Assessment Reporting Best Practices

- Learning Outcomes
- Methods
- Overall Assessment Report
- Actions Taken
- Analysis and Results
Learning Outcomes
- Reflect the program's goals.
- Identify specific skills, knowledge and abilities/behaviors that students will demonstrate.
- Use action verbs and are clearly stated.
- Are measurable and observable.
- Represent appropriate levels of cognition and other aspects of learning based in Bloom's and/or other taxonomies.
- Are readily available to stakeholders.

Methods
- Are a clear fit for the outcomes.
- Lend themselves to outcome-specific results.
- Include at least one direct method for each outcome.
- Identify the assessment context (i.e. course or event) as well as a clear procedure for analysis by program faculty (i.e. criteria, rubric, process).
- Clearly defines desired results— informed by results and actions from previous— for each outcome.

Analysis of Results
- Establishes the integrity of the process (through description of sampling process, testing conditions and protocols, student motivation), and the validity of the results.
- Clearly links results to instrument that yielded them.
- Compares current year's results with results from the previous assessment cycle.
- Presents a sensible interpretation of results consistent with the outcomes, methods and desired results, referring back to past actions when appropriate.
- Demonstrates faculty engagement in the process, involving more than one individual.

Actions Taken
- Are specific and viable for the program; addresses any issues that came up during the assessment process.
- Are clearly derived from the interpretation of results, with evidence that results were disseminated to faculty.
- Include a rationale.
- Are clearly agreed upon by faculty in the department.
- Aim to enhance student learning in the program.
- Address specific, measurable strengths as well as deficiencies / weaknesses in student performance and in the program (if applicable).
• Have been implemented or at least initiated, with clear details about the implementation timeframe and responsible individuals.

**Overall Assessment Report**

• Establishes how the assessment process informs the program's efforts to enhance student learning over time.
• Provides evidence of the program's sustained efforts to enhance its assessment process (through past or planned actions).
• Is complete with all required fields, including dates, filled.
• Include supporting documents (rubrics, criteria sheets, etc.).
• Provides evidence that all or most outcomes are assessed annually.
• Includes a rationale for extending assessment cycle, if applicable.
Assessment is the process by which programs evaluate what students know, think, or do as a result of those programs. Programs then use assessment results to make any improvements needed to the curriculum.

**Types of Assessment**

**FORMATIVE**
- It is assessment for learning. Its focus is on students' future achievement. It is usually ungraded, and provides instantaneous feedback for instructors.
- We use it because it provides us with insight of how well students are meeting the learning outcomes, and guides us in terms of our instruction.

**SUMMATIVE**
- It is assessment of learning. It assesses what has been learned in the past. It is usually graded, and serves as culminating activities for demonstrating student learning of an outcome.
- We use it because it provides us with feedback that ultimately can be used to improve our program(s) as a whole.

**Examples of Formative Assessments**
- "Low Tech" Tools
  - Think/Pair/Share
  - World Café
  - Gallery Walk
  - Muddiest/Clearest Point
  - 1 Minute Papers
  - Punctuated Lectures
  - One-Sentence Summary
  - Applications Cards
  - Paper/Project Prospectus
- Online Tools
  - Poll Everywhere
  - Kahoot
  - Mentimeter
  - Linoit
  - Twitter
  - Socratic
  - Quizlet
  - Online Surveys
  - Discussion Board (Blackboard or Canvas)
  - GoSoapbox

**Examples of Summative Assessments**
- Traditional
  - Multiple-choice /short answer exams
  - Essay tests
  - Research papers
  - Oral Presentations
  - Team projects
  - Literature review
  - Thesis / Dissertation
  - Lab report
  - Web pages
  - Case studies
- Alternative
  - Group Exams
  - Portfolios
  - Prezis
  - Visual Essays
  - Video
  - Game/ app creation
  - Concept maps
Formative Assessments – “Low Tech” Tools

- **Think/Pair/Share** – Present students with a reflection question and ask them to pair up and discuss their answers. Invite some of the pairs to share their ideas with the entire class: [http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/the-simplicity-of-think-pair-share/36094](http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/the-simplicity-of-think-pair-share/36094)
- **World Café** – A form of classroom discussion that involves students moving from one station to another sharing ideas: [http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/](http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/)
- **Gallery Walk** – Post a question on several posters around the room and invite students walk around and write their ideas on the posters: [http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/gallery-walk](http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/gallery-walk)
- **Muddiest/Clearest Point** – Students write down the “muddiest” and the clearest point of a lecture or a presentation: [http://tenntlc.utk.edu/formative/](http://tenntlc.utk.edu/formative/)
- **1 Minute Paper** – Present students with an open-ended question and give them one minute to answer on a sheet of paper or index card: [http://tenntlc.utk.edu/formative/](http://tenntlc.utk.edu/formative/)
- **Punctuated Lectures** – This technique provides immediate feedback on how students are learning from a lecture or a demonstration and how their behavior may be influencing the process: [http://tenntlc.utk.edu/formative/](http://tenntlc.utk.edu/formative/)
- **One Sentence Summary** – Students summarize a concept in one sentence: [http://tenntlc.utk.edu/formative/](http://tenntlc.utk.edu/formative/)
- **Application Cards** – On index cards, students write one or more real world applications for a concept: [https://tlc.provost.gwu.edu/classroom-assessment-techniques](https://tlc.provost.gwu.edu/classroom-assessment-techniques)
- **Paper / Project Prospectus** – Students write a detailed plan for a project or a paper: [http://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/learning-activities/Pages/checking-students-learning.aspx](http://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/learning-activities/Pages/checking-students-learning.aspx)

Formative Assessments – Online Tools

- **Poll Everywhere** – Can be used to ask questions or create polls: [https://www.polleverywhere.com](https://www.polleverywhere.com)
- **Kahoot** – A game-based online quiz tool. Can be used in large classes: [https://www.getkahoot.com](https://www.getkahoot.com)
- **Mentimeter** – Can be used to ask questions, create polls, and create online quizzes: [https://www.mentimeter.com/](https://www.mentimeter.com/)
- **Lino** – Can be used to brainstorm ideas or answer questions: [http://en.linoit.com/](http://en.linoit.com/)
- **Twitter** – Can be used to ask questions or field responses to questions: [https://twitter.com/](https://twitter.com/)
- **Socrative** – Can be used to create quizzes andexit tickets for easy assessment of student learning: [http://www.socrative.com/](http://www.socrative.com/)
- **Quizlet** – Creates flashcards for students and can be used to create quizzes for large classes: [http://www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com)
- **GoSoapBox** – A web-based clicker tool that checks for student understanding of concepts: [http://www.gosoapbox.com/](http://www.gosoapbox.com/)

Summative Assessments – Additional Resources

- How to create multiple-choice tests and set up portfolios, case studies and group exams: [http://tenntlc.utk.edu/summative-assessment/](http://tenntlc.utk.edu/summative-assessment/)
- **Prezi** – visually stimulating presentation software – [https://prezi.com/](https://prezi.com/)
ACTION TAKEN CATEGORIES WITH EXAMPLES—UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

STUDENT SUPPORT/MENTORING

Use: For activities aiming to increase support for learners, such as adding review sessions for licensing exams or publishing workshops, making revisions to student handbook to clarify procedures that directly impact learning, creating new mentoring guidelines, or revising the process for checking student progress).

Example: Expansion of BlackBoard site to include the following: A copy of the assessment rubric that details the expectations for Capstone students; more models of successful project statements; artists’ statements; and resume to assist students in their work. A calendar or timetable for students to guide their work on Capstone throughout the semester; this will be coordinated with the instructors of record/mentors of the students enrolled in ARTA 496; ARTB 406; ARTC 496. (Studio Art- BFA)

COURSE REVISION

Use: For changes made to courses content, such as adding a new unit, revising a required assignment, changing a required textbook, adding a practicum rotation, adopting a common syllabus for multi-instructor course.

Example 1: Revised persuasive speech evaluation rubric to include intercultural component; initiated textbook revision to include intercultural content; collect baseline data for review of delivery and content components of informative speech. (Communication Studies-BA)

Example 2: Faculty instructors and clinical mentors who supervise CFS 470 students will … begin instruction on the assessment of young children earlier in the semester. (Child & Family Studies-BS)

CURRICULUM REVISION

Use: To reflect curricular changes including adding a new course, modifying the sequencing of courses, changing prerequisites, and dropping a course.

Example 1: As a faculty, we have approved the creation of HIST 299, which will be a requirement of the major beginning in 2015-16 and a prerequisite for HIST 499. HIST 299 will place emphasis on teaching and learning historical thinking in small-format, seminar-like settings. This course will have many different iterations, depending on the particular subject specialty of the faculty teaching it. But the emphasis in each case will be on intensive reading, problem solving, modeling critical analysis, and lab-like exercises designed to offer hands-on training in historical methods, research, and writing. (History, BA)

Example 2: Instructors of all 100- and 200-level classes must assign at least one piece of formal writing which will include instructions requiring students to discuss a play or performance through a broader historical, social, or theatrical context. (Theatre-BA)

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING

Use: For activities aimed to more effectively prepare faculty to teach or assess a learning outcome, including training of practicum supervisors, convening of norming session for faculty using a program rubric, etc.

Example 1: We are also planning to offer workshops in “how to teach HIST 299” beginning in summer 2015. Faculty who choose to participate in these workshops will work together to develop standards for the course (length of writing assignments, basic skills to be learned, etc.) and to exchange ideas about how to teach it. (History BA)

Example 2: To continue to improve critical thinking scores, a faculty workshop will be created during fall 2014 to help faculty understand how to incorporate critical thinking into the curriculum. (Hotel, Restaurant & Tourism-BS)

PEDAGOGY/INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

Use: For learning activities used within or across courses to address a learning outcome, such as sharing a rubric with students, adding a writing or speaking assignment; adding program-wide end-of-semester poster presentations,…

From 2013-14 reports submitted in Compliance Assist—University of Tennessee, Knoxville—April 2015
Example 1: More stringent grading scale for the review book prior to the final campaign book being submitted. This will give the students more instruction in how to improve their work and a more realistic picture of the final outcome of their final campaign book. (Advertising-BS)

Example 2: We plan to provide more detailed information at the beginning of the semester on what each student presentation should include, and we will provide additional information on how to do good presentations. This could involve … examples of good/bad presentation styles, and maybe even role-playing. (We already have on-line pre-class quizzes the students all do.) (IDP Neuroscience-BA)

NO ACTION (S) TAKEN AFTER REVIEW

Use: To indicate that results were discussed by the faculty who subsequently decided no changes were needed at that time.

Example: Although no immediate action is being taken (students reached the benchmark), the first year biology courses are undergoing revision in 2014-2015 specifically to address this objective (as well as the other two). We are hoping to see a larger post-score gain in spring 2015 as a result of these changes. (Biological Sciences-BS)

CRITERIA/ BENCHMARKING CHANGED

Use: For changes to the criteria for success used to determine whether the outcome was met. (i.e. Seventy-five percent of students will score a 4 or higher, or 80% of candidates will submit a journal article as first author.)

Example: We have added to the rubric for this learning outcome a criterion on the adduction of the essential primary sources to treat a given research question. We found that the current rubric does not give adequate scope to note the absence of such sources. (Classics-BA)

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Use: For changes/ revisions to assessment methods, including development of new instruments (i.e. new rubric). This action should be used sparingly.

Example: All questions on the exam were reviewed by the Departmental undergraduate program committee. Several questions were identified as potentially confusing or misleading. Actions taken include (1) the development of a common body of knowledge for all finance courses to insure all sections cover same core material; (2) exam was administered later in the semester. (Finance-BS)

ASSESSMENT OUTCOME REVISION

Use: To reflect revisions to the wording of the outcome that modify its intent, as well as the retiring or addition of new outcome. A rationale should be included. This action should be used sparingly.

NO STUDENTS ENROLLED/ GRADUATED

Use: To indicate that assessment was not carried out because there were no students in the course or in the program.

ACTION TAKEN CATEGORIES WITH EXAMPLES—GRADUATE PROGRAMS

PEDAGOGY/ INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

Describes activities used within or across courses to address a learning outcome, such as sharing a rubric with students, adding a writing or speaking assignment; adding program-wide end-of-semester poster presentations, …

Example 1: To facilitate improvement in criteria #3 and #4, professors will be encouraged to spend a limited amount of time in class going over the basics of citation and of Works Cited entries. When shorter

From 2013-14 reports submitted in Compliance Assist—University of Tennessee, Knoxville—April 2015
pieces of writing such as bibliographic essays are assigned before final papers, professors can use commentary on these to provide feedback. (English-PhD)

Example 2: The faculty will inform students if a seminar paper is of sufficient quality to warrant submission to conferences and/or journals and will advise students about conferences and/or journals which are a good fit for their particular papers. (Philosophy-MA)

STUDENT SUPPORT / MENTORING

Describes any program-wide initiative to provide support to students to enhance learning such as adding review sessions for licensing exams or publishing workshops, making revisions to student handbook to clarify procedures that directly impact learning, creating new mentoring guidelines, or revising the process for checking student progress.

Example 1: When advising portfolio papers, faculty members will be encouraged… to help students at the early stages of paper development, when they are settling on an idea that aims to be creative and of philosophical importance. (Philosophy-PhD)

Example 2: Increase potential funding for conference presentations. (Retail, Hospitality, & Tourism Management-PhD)

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT/ TRAINING

Describes any development activities the program organizes to further the teaching of the learning outcome. This may include training of practicum supervisors, convening of norming session for faculty using a program rubric,…

Example: Scheduled panel presentation to faculty concerning teaching foundational concepts in scholarly writing to students who may lack sufficient background in the area. (Law)

COURSE REVISION

Describes any changes made to the content of a course not based on individual instructor preference, such as adding a new content unit, revising a required assignment, changing a required textbook, adding a practicum rotation, adopting a common syllabus for multi-instructor course.

Example 1: Changes to EDPY 533 (Program Evaluation I): additional time in this course will be given to incorporating support from the literature for their evaluation study. (Evaluation, Statistics & Measurement-Certificate)

Example 2: Theories class: Will revise the course content to expand on the application of theories into student research models and papers. (Retail, Hospitality, & Tourism Management-PhD)

CURRICULUM REVISION

Describes adding a new course, modifying the sequencing of courses, changing prerequisites, dropping a course and replacing with new content.

Example 1: Leadership course moved to later in the sequencing so that theoretical concepts and research methods could be applied. (Nursing PhD)

Example 2: Beginning with the 2014-2015 academic year, the comprehensive exam paper becomes the first of the three required papers for the dissertation. This improves students’ opportunities to develop expertise on their substantive research topic then apply that knowledge to their formal dissertation research. (Social Work-PhD)
NO ACTION (S) TAKEN AFTER REVIEW

Results were shared with and discussed with the faculty who subsequently decided no changes were needed this year.

Example 1: Since students are currently scoring in the exemplary category of the rubric for this learning outcome, no action beyond continued monitoring is needed at the present time. (Forestry-MS)

Example 2: The current dataset is small. Data just started being collected in 2013-2014. We are therefore taking no action for at least one year, so we can increase our dataset. (Geology-PhD)

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Describes changes/ revisions to assessment methods, including development of new instruments (i.e. new rubric). This action should be used sparingly.

Example 1: Faculty on the graduate committee created a rubric to assess achievement of this learning outcome in April to May 2014. The rubric (see attachment) will be applied beginning with summer 2014 thesis defenses. (Sociology-MA)

Example 2: Qualifying exam - The qualifying exam is being eliminated effective August 2014. The Ph.D. program is implementing a new curriculum wherein the Ph.D. Program Committee will evaluate every students’ progress annually. Evaluation criteria focuses on students’ demonstration of research skills and achievement of scholarship goals as outlined in the College’s Ph.D. Student Handbook. (Social Work PhD)

CRITERIA/ BENCHMARKING CHANGED

Describes changes to the criteria for success used to determine whether the outcome was met. (i.e. Seventy-five percent of students will score a 4 or higher, or 80% of candidates will submit a journal article as first author.)

Example: Created new rubrics for both the comprehensive exam and the ePortfolio evaluations. (Information Sciences-MS)

ASSESSMENT OUTCOME REVISION

Describes revisions to the wording of the outcome to modify its intent, as well as the retiring or addition of new outcome. A rationale should be included. This action should be used sparingly.

NO STUDENTS ENROLLED/ GRADUATED

The assessment was not carried out because there were no students in the course or in the program.