Developing an Undergraduate Academic Assessment Plan

Institutional Assessment
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"...institutional assessment efforts should not be concerned about valuing what can be measured but, instead, about measuring that which is valued." (Banta, Lund, Black, & Oblander, 1996)

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Table of Contents

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Due date
Undergraduate Academic Assessment Plans are due **May 18, 2012**. Email plans to Ashley Caspary, acaspary@aa.ufl.edu, Office of Institutional Assessment, 352-273-4476.

Introduction

Comprehensive universities across the United States take pride in the academic achievement of their students, and measure that achievement to determine their effectiveness as educational institutions (Pennsylvania State University, 2011; University of Kentucky, 2011; University of Georgia, 2011; University of Texas at Austin, 2011; University of Wisconsin, 2011). At the University of Florida, all degree programs have *Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)* associated with them that specify what students will know and be able to do as a result of completing their degree. All units on the campus are responsible for assessing the SLOs for their programs. Academic Assessment Plans provide a comprehensive, organized report on how the units assess and measure student achievement of the SLOs as well as present the data and the process for how the data from these assessments are used to enhance the quality of student learning.

This resource provides a set of common components that all unit Academic Assessment Plans must address in their annual reports. The way that the components are operationalized in the units across campus is varied, but the common components are invariant. These components are:

- Mission Statement
- Student Learning Outcomes
- Curriculum Maps
- Assessment Cycle
- Methods and Procedures
- Assessment Oversight

Academic Assessment Plans will be evaluated according to a specific set of criteria for each component for the purpose of providing feedback to the units. This resource provides a description and explanation of each of these components and their evaluation criteria.

Mission Statement
All units on campus have a mission statement that describes the purpose of the unit and guides the unit's actions, spells out its overall goal, provides a sense of direction, and guides decision-making. This component is evaluated on two criteria:

- Clarity – the mission is clear, concise, and addresses teaching, research, and service

- Alignment with the university mission – the unit mission clearly supports the University mission

These criteria are met by reviewing the unit's mission and the university's mission (University of Florida, 2011-12c) and ensuring that they are aligned, and that the unit's mission supports the University's mission.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Student Learning Outcomes should be current, relevant, and rigorous; written concisely and clearly; and represent the consensus of the program faculty on what students should know and be able to do at the end of their program. Academic Assessment Plans should present a hyperlink to the online SLOs for the degree programs covered, or they can be written in the text. Each SLO will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- clarity – the SLO is concise and clear
- focus on demonstration of student learning – the SLO describes an observable behavior or action
- measurability – the SLO can be measured using a direct or indirect assessment (see Methods and Procedures for further information about assessments)

All SLOs fall into one of three broad categories: Content Knowledge, Critical Thinking, or Communication. The resource *Student Learning Outcomes* (in the *Continuous Quality Enhancement* series) provides recommendations for the development and review of SLOs.

Curriculum Map

A Curriculum Map is a matrix that graphically organizes important information about the introduction, reinforcement, and assessment of the SLOs in a degree program. Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes (University of Florida, 2011-12a) and General Education SLOs (University of Florida, 2011-12b) are presented in the online catalog. In their current format, the undergraduate SLOs are mapped across selected courses in each degree program. The Curriculum Map uses a similar table format as the current online SLO matrices but includes additional information. In the Academic Assessment Plan, the Curriculum Map is evaluated on these criteria:

- links SLOs to program courses
- identifies where SLOs are introduced, reinforced, and assessed
- identifies the assessments used for each SLO

Figure 1 presents a general example of a Curriculum Map. The top row lists the course number. The left column lists the SLOs by category (NOTE: in the actual map, these would be written out fully). The cells in the Map indicate if the SLO is introduced (I), reinforced (R), or assessed (A) in a particular course. For the courses where the SLO is assessed, the name of the assessment is included.

Not all courses in a degree program are mapped to the SLOs for that program. The only courses in the map are those where the SLOs are introduced, reinforced, and assessed. In Figure 1, the Map also shows that in some courses the assessments measure two SLOs in different categories. For example, the Case Study in Week 15 of Course 7 measures Content Knowledge SLO#2 (which is likely a paper) and Communication SLO #6 (which is likely an oral presentation related to the

paper). Also note that each course does not assess an SLO, but each SLO is assessed at least once in the program. In some programs, SLOs are assessed using methods that are not tied to particular courses – for example, licensure exams, state required proficiency tests, etc. For programs that use these types of assessments, an additional column should be provided to list these additional assessments.

Figure 1. General Example of a Curriculum Map

Curriculum Map for:

Program _____   College _____ _____

Key: **I**ntroduced   **R**einforced   **A**ssessed

Courses SLOs	Course1	Course2	Course3	Course4	Course5	Course6	Course7	Additional Assessments
Content Knowledge								
#1	I		R		R		R	A Program initiation - Freshman Entrance Exam Program completion -Licensure Exam
#2		I	R			R	A Case Study Week 15	Program initiation - Freshman Entrance Exam Program completion -Licensure Exam
Critical Thinking								
#3		I	R	A Final Paper Week 14		R		Program completion -Licensure Exam
#4	I	R			R	A Group presentation Week 10		Program completion -Licensure Exam
Communication								
#5			I		R	A Group presentation Week 10		
#6	I			R			A Case Study Week 15	

Assessment Cycle

The assessment cycle is a matrix that graphically organizes the frequency of SLO assessment. Because programs have multiple SLOs in three broad categories, not all SLOs are assessed each year. The assessment cycle is usually a multi-year process that is completed in three years; however the program faculty may choose to assess the SLOs annually or biennially. Program faculty should decide on when and in what year each SLO will be assessed. The Assessment Cycle is evaluated on the following criteria:

- clarity – the cycle is clearly articulated
- all student learning outcomes are measured
- data is collected at least once in the cycle for each SLO
- there is a date or time period for data analysis and interpretation
- there is a date for planning improvement actions based on the data analysis
- there is a date for dissemination of results to the appropriate stakeholders

Figure 2 shows a general example of a three-year Assessment Cycle over a six year period from 2010-11 through 2015-16. In this example, the unit plans to have its data analysis and interpretation take place from May-June each year, its improvement actions completed by August 15, and its results disseminated by September 15 (NOTE: these are examples only; units set their own internal dates). Dissemination dates should be set prior to the annual deadline for uploading assessment data to *Compliance Assist!*.

The matrix shows clearly that SLO#1 was assessed in the 2010-11 and will be assessed again in the 2013-14 academic year; SLO#2 will be assessed in the 2011-12 and 2014-15 academic years; and so on. The example in Figure 2 shows that the unit assesses and collects data on two SLOs per year so that all six SLOs are covered in the cycle.

Figure 2. General Example of an Assessment Cycle

Assessment Cycle for:

Program _____   College _____

Analysis and Interpretation: May-June
Improvement Actions: Completed by August 15
Dissemination: Completed by September 15

Year SLOs	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Content Knowledge						
#1	√			√		
#2		√			√	
Critical Thinking						
#3	√			√		
#4			√			√
Communication						
#5			√			√
#6		√			√	

Methods and Procedures

Each unit employs various methods and procedures to assess and collect data on student learning. In this section of the plan, units provide information on their specific methods and procedures for the SLO assessments they identify in their Curriculum Maps. In the Academic Assessment Plan, methods and procedures are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Clarity - methods and procedures are clear
- Measurements occur at appropriate times in the program (for example, entry and exit)
- Measurements are appropriate for the SLOs
- Methods and procedures reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods
- Examples of course/program assessment tools (links to online versions are fine)

Direct and Indirect Assessments: What is the Difference?

Direct assessments of student learning are those that provide for direct examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable performance indicators. *Indirect assessments* are those that ascertain the opinion or self-report of the extent or value of learning experiences (Rogers, 2011).

Examples of direct assessment include but are not limited to quizzes, tests, inventories, team/group projects, standardized tests, licensure exams, internships, service learning projects, case studies, simulations, and portfolios. Indirect assessments include but are not limited to quantitative data such as enrollments; questionnaires; honors, awards, scholarships; interviews, focus groups; employer satisfaction measures; retention/graduation rates; and job/graduate school placement data (Bosworth, 2011).

The balance of direct and indirect measures should be appropriate for the program. Most programs will have at least 50% of the SLOs measured using direct assessments.

Assessment Oversight

In this section of the plan, the appropriate personnel (coordinator, committee, etc.) charged with assessment responsibilities are identified. A list of names, department affiliations, and email addresses meets this criterion. If it is appropriate, additional information on the assessment oversight in the unit can be provided.

Due Dates and Evaluation

All programs must submit their initial Undergraduate Academic Assessment Plans by **May 18, 2012.** Once the initial Plan is submitted, the Academic Assessment Committee will review and evaluate the plans using the rubric shown in Figure 3. Feedback on the evaluations will be provided to the units in a timely manner. Updates to the Plan will be due annually.

Figure 3. University of Florida Undergraduate Academic Assessment Plan Rubric

Related resources are found at http://www.aa.assessment.edu

Program: Year:

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	**Partially Met**	**Not Met**	
Mission Statement	Mission statement is articulated clearly.				
	The unit mission supports the university mission.				
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) Related resource: *Student Learning Outcomes* (include link)	SLOs are stated clearly.				
	SLOs focus on demonstration of student learning.				
	SLOs are measurable.				
Curriculum Map Related resource: *Developing an Assessment Plan* (include link)	The Curriculum Map links SLOs to program courses.				
	The Curriculum Map identifies where SLOs are introduced, reinforced, and assessed.				
	The Curriculum Map identifies the assessments used for each SLO.				
Assessment Cycle *Developing an Assessment Plan* (include link)	The assessment cycle is clear.				
	All student learning outcomes are measured.				
	Data is collected at least once in the cycle.				
	The cycle includes a date or time period for data analysis and interpretation.				
	The cycle includes a date for planning improvement actions based on the data analysis.				
	The cycle includes a date for dissemination of results to the appropriate stakeholders.				

University of Florida Assessment Plan Rubric, continued

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
Methods and Procedures Related Resource: *Individual Student Assessments* (include link)	Methods and procedures are clear.				
	Measurements occur at appropriate times in the program.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLOs.				
	Methods and procedures reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods.				
	The report presents examples of course/program assessment tools.				
Assessment Oversight	Appropriate personnel (coordinator, committee, etc.) charged with assessment responsibilities are identified				

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