WVU Assessment Report Template for Academic Programs:

Guidelines for Using Template

These guidelines correspond to the Assessment Report Template for Academic Programs, providing definitions and detailed instructions for using the template.

Discussion among faculty is key to effective program assessment. Faculty should be engaged in discussion related to determination of program learning outcomes and program goals; creation of a comprehensive curriculum map and identification of long-term assessment cycle; results of current assessment cycle; and all aspects of the action plan. The Director of Academic Excellence and Assessment, [Lou Slimak](mailto:louis.slimak@mail.wvu.edu), and the Assistant Director of Assessment and Quality Assurance, [Robynn Shannon](mailto:robynn.shannon@mail.wvu.edu), are available to facilitate faculty discussions related to program assessment.

Components of academic program assessment include:

* A brief summary **report** of assessment activities, results, conclusions, and reflections from the previous academic year;
* A **plan** (sometimes called an “action plan”) of assessment activities for the next academic year, including which program outcome(s) will be assessed, how/where they will be assessed, and by whom. The assessment plan should be informed by feedback on the previous report by peer reviewers and the Director of Academic Excellence and Assessment.
* Both the report and the plan should be informed by **evidence** of assessment activities conducted during the previous academic year. In most cases, it is best to include the relevant evidence in the report and also reference it in the plan.

The assessment **report** (for the previous academic year), the **evidence** reported, and the assessment **plan** (for the next academic year) can all be included in a single document, which is referred to simply as the “report” in the following guidelines. Some parts of the report will contain updated information every year, while the information in other parts may be unchanged for several years. Assessment reports in any stage of completion can be sent to the Director of Academic Excellence and Assessment, [Lou Slimak](mailto:louis.slimak@mail.wvu.edu), or the Assistant Director of Assessment and Quality Assurance, [Robynn Shannon](mailto:robynn.shannon@mail.wvu.edu), for comment, critique, development, and assistance.

* For most programs, it is helpful to include a **comprehensive curriculum map** with the assessment report, annotated to show where the current report fits into the overall program curriculum.

Detailed guidelines for compiling each of the components described above are provided below. The Assessment Office also has copies of *Assessment Clear and Simple* (Walvoord) available as an additional resource; please contact [Lou Slimak](mailto:louis.slimak@mail.wvu.edu) or [Robynn Shannon](mailto:robynn.shannon@mail.wvu.edu) if you would like a copy. Other resources, including a glossary, list of verbs for learning outcomes, and a curriculum map template, are available on the [WVU assessment website](https://undergraduate.wvu.edu/assessment).

For a program that is just getting started with assessment, the first tasks will be to:

1. Review and update, as necessary, the program *mission statement*;
2. Develop program *learning outcomes*;
3. Identify program *goals*;
4. Produce a *comprehensive curriculum map*; and
5. Develop a *five-year assessment plan* overview of which learning outcomes will be assessed each year (based on the Board of Governors review cycle, so the initial plan may be for less than five years). Each outcome should be assessed at least once during the five-year cycle. It is recommended that no more than two program learning outcomes be assessed in a single academic year.

Once these four components have been developed, they are not likely to change much from year to year; they will only need to be reviewed annually, with changes made as needed (mostly only if/when the program curriculum is revised).

Other program-level assessment practices, however, are conducted on an annual basis (some of these overlap and can be combined in the report):

1. Description of assessment measures for program learning outcomes assessed *that year* and documentation of results;
2. Description of assessment measures for program goals assessed *that year* and documentation of results;
3. A meeting to discuss assessment results, draw conclusions, and develop recommendations;
4. Response to feedback from Associate Dean, Peer Reviewer(s), and Assessment Director;
5. Detailed outline of assessment plan for *next* academic year, including the program learning outcomes that will be assessed and assessment measures that will be used.

## MISSION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLAN

Assessment of student learning should reflect the nature of the program and the learning that occurs therein. It is helpful for reviewers *and for programs* to design and connect their assessment practices and results with the mission in mind as well as any long-term strategic planning. These kinds of documents also provide a framework from which to evaluate the alignment of program learning outcomes and program goals with what the program aims to achieve.

## PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student learning outcomes describe what students will know (knowledge), be able to do (skills), or be like (dispositions) by the end of a course or academic program.

*These should match what is published in the Catalog. You may update your Catalog learning outcomes via CIM through a shortened workflow.*

Outcomes are often linked to one of three learning domains: cognitive, affective, or psychomotor. Recommendations for writing learning outcomes (course- or program-level) include:

1. *Learning outcomes should be* ***clear and measurable.***
2. *Learning outcomes should be* ***appropriate*** *to the degree level (undergraduate, graduate, certificate, etc.). Course-level learning outcomes should be appropriate to the level of learning within the program.*
3. *Learning outcomes should be* ***aligned*** *with learning activities and assessments. A comprehensive curriculum map is the simplest tool to assure this.*
4. *Learning outcomes should be* ***achievable****, both in the scope of individual outcomes and in the number of objectives or outcomes set. The University Assessment Council recommends between four to six student learning outcomes per program unless otherwise required by a specialized accrediting body.*
5. *Learning outcomes should be written from the learner’s perspective, using* ***action verbs****.*

All outcomes should be consistent across locations of delivery (campuses and sites) and across modalities (face-to-face, hybrid, online, etc.). Additional [guidelines for writing learning outcomes](https://tlcommons.wvu.edu/resources/pow) are provided by the WVU Teaching and Learning Commons. Once program learning outcomes have been identified, they should require only occasional revision, but they should be reviewed annually, prior to preparing the assessment plan for the next academic year.

PROGRAM GOALS

Program goals are distinct from student learning outcomes for the program and may be related to other aspects of the program such as recruitment, retention, and placement; outreach and service; curriculum; research and publication; licensure and certification; or alumni engagement and fundraising. They should support the program’s mission and strategic plan. Program goals are *not* required to be assessed on a cycle corresponding to the Board of Governors review cycle. Descriptions of measures and results from assessment of program goals may be included in the annual report as they are collected and analyzed.

## LONG-TERM ASSESSMENT CYCLE

The long-term assessment cycle is summarized in a five-year overview listing which learning outcomes will be assessed each year. Ideally, each outcome should be assessed at least once during the five-year cycle but this is ideal, not required. Unless required by an accrediting body, it is recommended that no more than two program learning outcomes be assessed in a single academic year. Once established, the long-term assessment cycle may not change much from year to year. It should, however, be reviewed annually and adjustments or revisions made as necessary.

A comprehensive curriculum map is a useful tool for both planning and describing the long-term assessment cycle and is therefore an important component of an assessment report. It is also invaluable for tying assessment results back to the program’s curriculum and the delivery of the learning outcomes across the program’s courses and other learning opportunities. All program faculty should contribute to its creation. Once produced, reviewing and updating annually, as necessary, should take very little time, unless the program curriculum has been substantially revised. Programs are encouraged to contact [Lou Slimak](mailto:louis.slimak@mail.wvu.edu) or [Robynn Shannon](mailto:robynn.shannon@mail.wvu.edu) for assistance with creating a comprehensive curriculum map.

## CURRENT ASSESSMENT CYCLE

All components of the current assessment cycle will be updated annually, reflecting program assessment activities for the previous academic year and describing plans for the next academic year.

### PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES, MEASURES, AND RESULTS

For each program learning outcome assessed in the academic year being reported, indicate the course(s) (or other learning opportunity/opportunities) in which it was assessed and the position(s) or person(s) responsible for the assessment; this information should be taken directly from the previous year’s action plan. Describe the measure(s) used; upload assignment prompt(s), exam or survey question(s), and/or rubric(s) as appropriate. While both **direct** measures (taken from student artifacts that demonstrate learning, typically from course assignments and projects) and **indirect** measures (such as surveys) may be used, there should be **at least one direct measure** for each program learning outcome. Briefly describe results and upload data file and/or examples of student artifacts. To make it easier to analyze results from different measures separately, use one block per ***measure***; you may have more than one block per *outcome*, if you used multiple measures per outcome.

## PROGRAM GOALS, MEASURES, AND RESULTS

As with program learning outcomes, the measure(s) and results for any program goal(s) assessed during the academic year should be described. Direct and/or indirect measures may be used, as appropriate to the goal. Upload any relevant supporting documentation of measures and results.

ACTION PLAN

The purpose of an action plan is to provide a narrative summary of the year’s assessment cycle, focusing particularly on the results and analysis of the assessments, any actions that have already been taken based on those results, and a review of previous actions taken. In simplest terms, the action plan describes what the program has done (in terms of assessment), what it learned, and what it will do as a result.

**The ultimate goal of assessment is program improvement; the action plan is therefore the single most important part of the assessment report.** Overall reflections and recommendations related to the program should be documented, in addition to outcome-specific analysis and suggestions. Response to feedback from the Associate Dean, peer reviewer(s), and the Assessment Director should also be included.

The following questions may be useful for guiding discussion of assessment results and possible action steps. It is not an exhaustive list of all possible topics that may be of relevance to a program’s discussion of assessment, nor is it intended to be a minimum set of requirements for every report to include.

Curriculum-related: Given the results, should we . . .

* Change how courses are taught or the assignments used?
* Revise course content?
* Revise the program or course learning outcomes?
* Modify frequency or schedule of course offerings?
* Revise or enforce prerequisites?
* Revise the course sequence?
* Add or delete course(s)?

Resource-related: Given the results, should we . . .

* Hire or re-assign faculty and/or staff?
* Increase classroom space?
* Train faculty and/or staff?

Academic processes: Given the results, should we . . .

* Improve how we use technology?
* Revise advising standards or processes?
* Revise admission criteria?

Assessment planning or practices: Given the results, should we . . .

* Change the criteria for success? Modify our expectations?
* Revise data-collection or data-evaluation methods?
* Revise measurement approaches?
* Change or develop other planning tools?
* Collect and analyze additional data?
* Have previous actions been completed? If not, where are they in terms of progress?
* What were the results of previous actions? Are further actions necessary?
* Is recognition for success necessary?
* Is accountability for incompletion necessary?

Be sure to distribute the report as widely as possible in multiple formats (e.g., oral and written). Consider holding a meeting to discuss the final report, posting on any available website, highlighting key findings in social media, and celebrating successes publicly. Aside from formal reporting, the idea of the assessment report is to communicate to faculty and staff how assessment is improving the department, program, and institution. It is also a method of creating transparency in administrative decisions and for documenting shared governance and consensus.