Assessing Student Learning at BU:
A Handbook for Academic Departments and Programs
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Assessment Working Group
Bloomsburg University
Spring 2014
The Bloomsburg University Assessment Working Group (AWG), established in October 2012, was charged with developing a Bloomsburg University Assessment Plan and Handbook that communicates the purpose of assessment at the university, program, and course levels; means of assessment at each level; appropriate use and reporting of assessment results; and the assessment cycle/reporting timelines.

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This handbook

This handbook\(^1\) gives readers a common foundation for using assessment to improve student learning at Bloomsburg University (BU). It has four broad aims:

1. to lay out an approach to student learning assessment that is consistent with best practices, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) requirements, and accreditors’ expectations;
2. to guide academic departments (and support units) in creating and executing assessment processes appropriate to their unique situation;
3. to inform readers about existing standards, policies and procedures related to student learning assessment; and
4. to introduce other assessments done at BU, such as those required by government and other organizations.

Three notes about this handbook:

**Its intended audience:** This handbook presumes an audience of academic department faculty. Clearly, student learning happens on all parts of campus, in all of its programs. Future versions will reflect the particular needs of non-academic departments.

**Its incompleteness:** This handbook does not address all of the assessment activities the university does or will be doing, for instance, the Voluntary System of Accountability.

**Its provisional nature:** Given its purpose, this handbook will be revised periodically to include relevant wisdom and experience not currently reflected here.

Introduction

Bloomsburg University has been discussing, and to some extent implementing, outcomes assessment since at least 1986.\(^2\) Many people on campus know a lot about effective assessment,

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\(^1\) The 2012-2013 Assessment Working Group was composed of faculty and administrators invited to the group by the Office of Planning and Assessment, and included: Sheila Dove Jones, Office of Planning and Assessment (co-chair); Cristina Mathews, English (co-chair); William Calhoun, Mathematics, Computer Science, and Statistics; Doreen Jowi, Global and Multicultural Education; Angela La Valley, Communication Studies; Jeff Long, Student Affairs; Steve Markell, Management; Debbie Mucci, Office of Planning and Assessment; Linda Neyer, Library; John Polhill, College of Science and Technology; Pam Smith, Audiology and Speech Pathology; Sharon Solloway, Developmental Instruction; and Caryn Terwilliger, Early Childhood and Adolescent Education. The members of the AWG for 2013-2014 are Patricia Beyer, College of Science and Technology; William Calhoun (co-chair), Math, Computer Science and Statistics; Sheila Dove Jones (co-chair), Office of Planning and Assessment; Doreen Jowi, Communication Studies/Global and Multicultural Education; Angela La Valley, Communication Studies; Jeff Long, Student Affairs; Steve Markell, Management; Debbie Mucci, Office of Planning and Assessment; Linda Neyer, Library; Pamela Smith, Audiology and Speech Pathology; Sharon Solloway, Developmental Instruction; and Caryn Terwilliger, Early Childhood and Adolescent Education.

and can serve as valuable resources. The Teaching and Learning Enhancement (TALE) center offers high-quality guidance about outcomes assessment on its website (http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/). Numerous other universities have created clear, comprehensive handbooks they have posted online. This handbook refers you to such resources for more detail.

If this handbook departs from recent practice at BU, it may be in its emphasis on assessment data being useful and used—to answer the department’s real questions about student learning and to ground department-wide discussion related to improving student learning. Reporting to others about student learning is acknowledged here as necessary, but primarily as a byproduct of a process that serves departments first and most importantly, including everyone involved in student learning. This handbook does not suggest that assessment procedures be reinvented to conform to some new standard. Most departments already have program assessment procedures in place, and this handbook can serve to confirm the validity of those plans, or to suggest how they may be refined or simplified.

Establishing assessment expectations set by the State System and by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, our accrediting body, was not difficult; nor was it particularly difficult to see how those expectations relate to best practices. However, none of these resources provided an example for meshing best practices with BU’s particular requirements for assessment and its specific history. Many of the university assessment handbooks reviewed were vague about specific local procedures, and therefore didn’t give us models. Additionally, we faced the more pressing conundrum of attempting to write a handbook at a time when local expectations around assessment are far from clear and settled.

Thus, we learned what we could about local practices and requirements, and present here a framework that we believe would be workable, would satisfy the requirements of PASSHE and the Middle States Commission, and would leave room for requirements set for some programs by discipline-specific accreditors.

The approach to assessment we propose would require some local changes: some local practices seem to us to make it difficult to move forward with a plan based on best practice and on PASSHE and Middle States Commission expectations. The Assessment Working group developed six recommendations about:

1. modifying several existing local policies, procedures, and practices
2. using structures and approaches at BU to foster the “culture of assessment” that the Middle States Commission expects to see.

These recommendations can be seen on the AWG website, at http://bloomu.edu/assessment-working-group, where an electronic copy of this handbook is also posted.

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3 We relied especially on L. Suskie’s Assessing Student Learning (2009) and B. Walvoord’s Assessment Clear and Simple (2010), and assessment handbooks produced by other schools, particularly UMass Amherst, UA Little Rock, UH Manoa, UT Austin, El Camino College, and ASU.
Why do assessment?

To understand student learning and guide future action
We all do assessment. We want to know that what we are doing as educators works. We want to know that students are learning, and what they are learning. So we do lots of assessment: homework, quizzes, shows of hands, clicker questions, straw polls, hallway discussions about a difficulty students seem to be having. We use this evidence informally to guide what we do next in the classroom. Formal assessment processes serve the same purpose, whether at the student, course, program, or institutional level: they guide future action based on evidence of learning.

Faculty formally and informally assess student learning to manage curriculum, plan instruction and give feedback and grades. At the program, department, and institutional levels the purpose is to improve how well a given program achieves its goals. Since no single instructor, department, program or college provides all of our students’ learning, useful decisions about improving student learning require reliable information, a shared vocabulary, and formal discussion.

Some benefits of assessment are presented on p.35.

Because of external requirements for assessment
It must be acknowledged that external pressure pushes us to formalize assessment. Both PASSHE and educational accrediting bodies are clear that assessment must be done. PASSHE started requiring student learning outcomes assessment in 1986 (see p.58). The Middle States Commission on Higher Education joined other regional accrediting bodies in establishing expectations for assessment, partly in response to federal and other political pressure for “accountability,” not just in higher education, but in public education generally.⁴ BU’s Curriculum Committee and General Education Council both make specific assessment requirements, as do some colleges. Policies on assessment have been made by:

- BU, which requires:
  - specific components for program reviews (see p.64), including a section on “Program Learning Outcomes Assessment” (p.65)
  - a statement of “how it will be assessed that the course meets each of the student learning objectives” on master syllabi (see p.60)
  - reporting of direct evidence of student learning in General Education courses, with data “submitted annually” (see p.61)

- BU’s four colleges, each of which may have particular additional requirements for program reviews: consult with Deans for these guidelines

- BU’s General Education Council (see p.61 and p.50 for the General Education goals), which requires:
  - VALUE-rubric-correlated data on student learning for every section of every

⁴ The Middle States Commission includes assessment in two of its fourteen standards (see p.52): standard seven calls for institutional assessment, and standard fourteen requires assessment of student learning.
course taught as part of the MyCore General Education Program be submitted to Qualtrics (in the 2012-14 pilot years of General Education Assessment)

- data come from every student in each of those courses, except where a plan for sampling has been approved by the Office of Planning and Assessment,
- course syllabi proposed for the General Education program include specific provisions for course assessment (see p.61)
- a timeline for assessing general education goals over a five-year cycle: Goals 1, 2, and 3 in 2014-2015 and again in 2015-2016, Goals 4, 5, and 6 in 2016-2017, and goals 7, 8, 9 and 10 in 2017-2018 (see p.61)

- PASSHE, which requires:
  - assessment of student learning, stating that “System universities shall develop and implement methods for assessing the most important student learning goals or outcomes in several areas” (see p.58)
  - program reviews every five years (see p.63); currently, accredited programs can use their accreditation review as their program review for PASSHE

- accrediting bodies, including the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (see p.52) and discipline-specific accrediting bodies (a list of discipline-specific accreditors of BU programs can be found on p.72)
- The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), which is required of BU by PASSHE (see p.71).

As imposing as this list may seem, it must be considered with an awareness of the latitude we have in designing assessment in ways that serve our own purposes.

The latitude we have—including latitude given by the Middle States Commission

It is important to emphasize, however, that neither the Middle States Commission nor PASSHE dictates how a given institution must structure assessment processes. In fact, the Middle States Commission is particularly emphatic in insisting that assessment processes be useful and sustainable.

Assessment must serve the people who are doing it. It is much more important that assessment at BU be useful for improving student learning than that it follow rigid guidelines, attempt at being overly comprehensive, emphasize the quantity of data over its usefulness, or focus on filing reports rather than using information.

The Middle States Commission articulates guiding principles for designing assessment (see p.53) and offers specific criteria for assessment plans, which it says should be:

1. Useful
2. Cost-effective...Effective assessments are simple rather than elaborate, and they may focus on just a few key goals in each program, unit, and curriculum
3. Reasonably accurate and truthful....may be quantitative and/or qualitative....should
include *direct*...evidence...of student learning

4. Planned [and interrelated across units]

5. Organized, systematized, and sustained

BU has great latitude in establishing a plan that meets these criteria. Given the flexibility available to us, and the real value of understanding student learning and talking about it within departments or units and across campus, it is worth putting in the effort to make evaluating student learning a meaningful effort, one designed by us and responsive to our own needs. It is also good for students, offering another way to assure that our educational efforts are student centered.

In drafting this handbook, we have kept assessment pitfalls in mind, and aimed at emphasizing utility, simplicity, and flexibility. A rubric for evaluating assessment plans (p.48) reflects this approach, offering some criteria for useful assessment plans. That rubric and this handbook as a whole are just a start. Where you find that this handbook is not helpful, please use your good judgment to supplement, both in what you do and in broader university conversations about assessment. This is vital not only because it will make your own assessment efforts more worthwhile, but because discussions about assessment are how this handbook will remain timely, changing as assessment processes at BU evolve.

**Using assessment results fairly, ethically and responsibly**

Two important ethical considerations about assessment:

- providing sufficient protection of student privacy.
- maintaining a focus on student learning rather than evaluation of individual instructors. Assessments of student learning must be carried out in a way that establishes a clear, structural division between student learning assessment and employee evaluation.

These issues are discussed further on p.25. Suskie (2009) enumerates several other important ideas about how to use assessment results appropriately; her ideas are adapted here:  

- Use assessment information to inform decisions, not to dictate them
- Communicate assessment information widely and transparently
- Promote the use of multiple sources of information
- Appreciate the usefulness of both negative and positive results
- Actively involve those with a stake in decisions stemming from the results
- Discourage others from making inappropriate interpretations
- Don’t hold people accountable for things they cannot do
- Don’t use assessment results to evaluate faculty or staff
- Keep faculty, students, and staff informed on how assessment data support decisions.

These principles are consistent with what Middle States and PASSHE require. It is important that we keep these ideas in mind as we develop our own specific plans and begin to make assessment

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more integral to local decision-making.

What is meaningful assessment and how do you start?
The assessment process is simple and familiar:7

The basic steps of the process are the same for the assessment of individual student learning for purposes of assigning grades and shaping instruction in classes, for course-level assessment, departmental or unit assessment, and for university-wide assessment.

As the graphic above indicates, this is a three-part process:

1. **identifying goals/objectives.**
2. **developing and using assessment tools** to evaluate how well you and your students meet those goals during the semester or over the course of their education at BU. Assessment measures are the evidence you are using to gather information on your students’ learning, and include both direct (e.g., exams, papers graded using a rubric, portfolios) and indirect measures of learning (e.g., surveys, exit interviews).8
3. **using the evidence** you have gathered to take action—to improve student learning.

At each stage of the process, discussion begins with a systematic examination of the current situation.

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7 Graphic adapted from University of Massachusetts, Amherst (2001), *Program-based Review and Assessment*, p. 6.
1. ESTABLISHING STUDENT LEARNING GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Student learning objectives (SLOs)
Take an inventory of your student learning goals. Have the goals your program seeks to accomplish been identified and clearly stated? The careful articulation of learning goals is essential, and an inventory of student learning goals may reveal a need to develop a clearer consensus and record of what you are trying to accomplish.

Programs likely already have strategic plans, and some assertions of program-level goals which may focus on what the program will do (rather than what the students will learn). This handbook presumes that departments have articulated these broader statements of intention, and moves directly to consideration of program student learning objectives.

Program SLOs
Program SLOs provide the foundation for assessment of student learning in academic programs. They need to be articulated clearly, as a reference point for both faculty and students.10

9 The term SLO, as well as many other terms, are defined in the glossary, p.74. Included in the glossary is an explanation of why this handbook uses goal and objective interchangeably.

10 This is both best practice in assessment and in accord with the Middle States Commission’s fourth guiding principle of assessment, which asserts that “assessment activities should be focused by clear statements of expected learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competencies” (see p.53).
Articulating program learning objectives is a vital step. Without departmental agreement on overarching learning goals, assessment planning and course SLOs may be developed in haphazard or contradictory ways, and the curriculum will likely lack coherence. Program SLOs are articulated in response to several big questions:

- What learning goals do you have for your program or majors?
- What are your discipline’s core competencies, the ones all of your students need to master?
- What knowledge, skills, and values should the ideal student graduating from your program demonstrate?
- What is it, really, that you want your students to be able to do or to know as a result of completing your program?

Put succinctly, what is your curriculum aiming to achieve?

These are not easy questions, but answers need to be agreed upon by all faculty. This will likely require considerable research, deliberation, and negotiation.

Most departments at BU have stated some version of program SLOs. BU’s Provost from 2005-9 required program SLOs as part of a required outcomes assessment reporting spreadsheet. Furthermore, local requirements for five-year program reviews have included the identification of program learning goals since 2008 (see p.65). Departments will be able to use the learning goals articulated in the most recent program review as a starting point. More recently, in 2010-2011, the Office of Planning and Assessment asked all departments to submit program SLOs to TracDat (along with plans for how each might be measured). These already-articulated program SLOs may be a useful starting place for discussion, or may—if they were drafted through serious departmental discussion—already reflect the department’s current program-level aspirations for student learning.

Program SLOs need to be:

- significant.
- directly related to the discipline and consistent with external standards, if any apply.
- comprehensive, unitary, and realistic.

BU’s TALE Center offers valuable and extensive guidance on many topics, including:

- Course syllabus development: http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/syllabiContent.html


12 Program SLOs were to be articulated after a program had developed a strategic plan and program goals. Program goals likely focused on what the program would do (e.g., hire a diverse faculty), rather than what its students would learn.

13 In some departments, the currently-articulated program SLOs may sound more like general departmental goals, with a focus more on what the program will do or provide than a focus on what students will learn.
• observable and measurable.
• few in number—three to seven meaningful, useful, central objectives.
• consistent with—and contributing to—university goals, as well as those of relevant accrediting bodies or professional organizations. The university’s goals are articulated in the university mission statement, value statement, vision statements, and strategic plan (all of which can be seen at http://bloomu.edu/strategic, or p.49). BU’s ten MyCore goals provide direction for general education (http://www.bloomu.edu/mycore, or p.50).
• consistent with—and contributing to—the department’s own strategic plan.
• stated concisely, beginning with Students will be able to and including an appropriate verb describing what students will be able to do.

SLOs may articulate goals around different kinds of content—knowledge, skills, dispositions, or behaviors, for instance. SLOs will probably answer these questions:
• what do we want our graduates to know? (knowledge)
• what do we want our graduates to be able to do? (skills)
• what do we want our graduates to value? (dispositions/behaviors/attitudes/beliefs)

A program with only knowledge-based SLOs may be one that does not emphasize higher-order learning. Although knowledge and conceptual understanding goals may be the most familiar, goals for thinking skills or for behaviors are as important, if not more so. These are what students are most likely to take with them into the future. Mastering specific content is one of the many ways students develop these skills or behaviors.

Student acquisition of dispositions, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs may be harder to measure directly than skills and knowledge. This does not mean that the program’s student learning objectives should not include such goals—in fact, such goals are often central to a department’s mission. For instance, a history program may consider a commitment to active citizenship as central to its mission, and may include a

SLO examples:

From bundled SLOs to a single SLO:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bundled SLOs:</th>
<th>single SLO:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychology graduates will be lifelong learners who understand psychology concepts and can apply them to design and conduct research studies.</td>
<td>Psychology graduates will be able to design a research study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From learning activity to learning objective:

Students will write about the literature under study is rather limited compared to a broader goal like Students will be able to write analytical essays about literature. Students will likely meet this SLO by “writing about the literature under study,” but the desired outcome is the development of an ability to write analytical essays about any literature.

Put another way, SLOs should focus on the end learning goal, rather than the means of achieving that goal.

More examples are given on p.37.
program student learning objective reflecting this. The department might assess student achievement of this goal through indirect measures of student learning, such as student participation in civic clubs or activities as documented on a co-curricular transcript, or responses on exit or alumni surveys (a footnote on p.16 offers additional suggestions).

The way SLOs are expressed changes the way they are understood and can prompt a conversation about the kinds of learning we want our students to do. It is worth taking time to articulate SLOs effectively. SLOs are not what the faculty will “cover.” For instance, “Faculty will include a unit on leadership styles in at least one of their courses each semester” is not a student learning objective. It may be part of a faculty plan, but it is not a learning objective. Articulating student learning objectives effectively, in ways that give them force, focus, and utility, also requires considerable care. The sidebar on p.9 offers two examples of weaker and more effective SLOs.

- A chart of verbs useful in writing SLOs, p.36, may be helpful.
- Additional examples of student learning objectives, p.37, may be useful.
- Program SLOs for a specific BU program are included in the sample curriculum map on p.39, and may be useful as an example.

**Setting standards for program SLOs**

A discussion of standards as you develop program SLOs will make planning for assessment easier. What quality of work are you expecting to see as evidence students have met the program’s SLOs?14 Establishing standards for the work you, as a department, expect students to be able to produce will be refined through the assessment process (it is considered in more detail on p.19). Setting performance expectations is an iterative process. Standards at the program level may be shaped by the process of defining and using standards at specific assessment points, and vice versa.

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14 L.Suskie (2009) defines ten types of standards, or benchmarks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Question each benchmark can answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local standards</td>
<td>Are our students meeting our own standards?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External standards</td>
<td>Are our students meeting standards set by someone else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal peer benchmark</td>
<td>How do our students compare to peers within our course, program, or college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External peer benchmark</td>
<td>How do our students compare to peers at other colleges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best practices benchmark</td>
<td>How do our students compare to the best of their peers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-added benchmark</td>
<td>Are our students improving?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical trends benchmark</td>
<td>Is our program improving?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths-and-weaknesses benchmark</td>
<td>What are our students’ areas of relative strength and weakness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capability benchmark</td>
<td>Are our students doing as well as they can?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity benchmark</td>
<td>Are we getting the most for our investment?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course SLOs
Course SLOs follow the same guidelines outlined for program SLOs above. Course SLOs should support program SLOs. The articulation of course SLOs is important not only for establishing consensus and consistency among all instructors who teach a course, but also for establishing clearly how the program’s curriculum supports student attainment of the program SLOs. Moreover, user-friendly course SLOs can help convey the relevance of course content to students.

The master course syllabus format (PRP 3233, http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3233) was modified in spring 2011 and fall 2013. Syllabi must now include student learning objectives (see p.60).

Curricular mapping
Having a clear idea of what you want to teach and when you will teach it informs plans for evaluating whether student learning has happened. Once program SLOs and course SLOs have been articulated, it becomes easier to consider the curriculum as a whole. A curriculum map shows where in their progress through the program students are introduced to the program’s central ideas, skills, and habits of mind, where those objectives are reinforced, and where students display their mastery of these objectives.

Curricular mapping is a key step in planning. It helps identify gaps and redundancies in the curriculum that may warrant additions or changes. It also helps in identifying points at which assessment of student learning makes sense.

Mapping learning opportunities using course-level SLOs
After departmental SLOs and course SLOs have been articulated, the department can establish how each required course supports department-level SLOs: where in the required curriculum are students first introduced to a skill or concept; in which courses do they develop their competence; and at what point do they use the skill or concept at the advanced level appropriate to program completers? A grid can make this easier.

A curriculum map worksheet template, p.38, may be useful.

A summary curriculum map
Once a detailed curriculum map has been completed, a one-page summary curriculum map can be generated. An example (p.39) shows what this might look like and why it might be useful.

A sample curriculum map, p.39, may be useful.
2. MEASURING WHETHER THESE GOALS HAVE BEEN MET

Planning for assessment and collecting data
Once learning goals have been established, it becomes possible to pose the questions that drive meaningful assessment:

- How do we know that our students/programs are successful?
- How do we know that they are learning what they need and what our professions value?
- What evidence do we already have?
- Are we using real evidence or simply anecdotes or hunches?
- What evidence do we need to have in order to evaluate our students’ achievement?
- What questions about teaching and learning processes—not just outcomes—do we need to answer?

In answering these questions and coming up with a plan, it is crucial that the goal—improvement of student learning—remain in the forefront, and that the plan you establish be manageable.

- **How**: As simply as possible. Assure that data gathered is worth gathering. Don’t try to assess everything all at once. Minimize busy-work.
- **Why**: Keep the purpose of assessment in mind. The goal of assessment is not data, but informed action. Assessment processes need to investigate real questions.
• **Who**: Determine ownership of the assessment program—and define that ownership as broadly as possible. At a minimum, all relevant educators (all department faculty, or all those who teach a course or provide a particular kind of programming) need to be part of the discussion of results and plans for acting on them. Meaningful assessment requires joint ownership: while a committee may be responsible for some aspect of assessment, all educators are stakeholders and need to be invested in some way in the process. A clear plan and calendar can encourage broad involvement.15

• **Where**: Systematic assessment requires some kind of centralized repository. If the plan, data, and reports are to be useful, they must be accessible: the relevant educators need to know about them. Using existing university resources will be easier than reinventing the wheel. Keep in mind that BU requires that, wherever else assessment reports may be stored, copies of them be added to TracDat.

• **When**: Assessment should be ongoing, with responsibilities and data acquisition throughout the academic year. Departmental discussions of assessment data should happen annually. Particular courses or facets of the program (such as particular program SLOs) may be assessed on a multi-year cycle, systematically. Five-year Program Reviews require a section on “Program and Student Learning Outcomes,” to include a description of “the knowledge and skill outcomes and how they are assessed” (see p.63). Courses approved as part of the General Education program must be assessed according to the General Education assessment plan (see p.3 and 61). The General Education Council currently requires the annual collection of data for every section of every course.

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15 Both PASSHE and the Middle States Commission are clear that assessment should be done by the people directly involved in the programs being assessed. For instance, PASSHE asserts that “Assessment of academic and co-curricular programs should be designed, implemented, and interpreted by the faculty, students, and staff most directly associated with the program. Administrators should provide coordination, support, professional development opportunities, and technical assistance as needed. Each university should establish some mechanism for monitoring the extent and effectiveness of learning outcomes assessment in its educational programs” (see p.58). Middle States and the literature on assessment are also clear in their assertions that everyone involved in a program should be involved in its assessment.

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**Storing assessment plans in TracDat—a BU requirement**

BU requires that TracDat, a password-protected database designed for assessment, be used as one formal repository for assessment plans, data, and reports. Your department may want to use TracDat as your only repository of assessment documents, giving read-only privileges to all faculty and editing privileges to a few assessment leaders. Alternatively, you may want to establish an additional, alternate repository, perhaps on a departmental network folder.

Read-only access for all department members enables the meaningful use of data. A single faculty member will need editing capabilities.

⇒ The TracDat log-in is at: [https://bloomtracdat.passhe.edu/tracdat/](https://bloomtracdat.passhe.edu/tracdat/)

**A note about Qualtrics**

Qualtrics is survey software BU uses to collect some assessment data, including the required assessment data from General Education courses. That data is then entered into TracDat. A fuller explanation of Qualtrics, its relationship to General Education assessment, and its potential use in other assessment efforts can be found at: [http://bloomu.edu/qualtrics](http://bloomu.edu/qualtrics)
approved for General Education credit. Up-to-date expectations for General Education assessment may be found at http://bloomu.edu/mycore-assessment.

- **For whom:** For all departments, the most important audience for assessment is the department itself. For all departments, program reviews have a wider audience: deans, outside reviewers, BU administration, and PASSHE. In some colleges, deans or accrediting bodies are an additional audience for routine evaluations of student learning. The Middle States commission recommends that a university-wide body consider student learning. Such a structure is not (yet) in place at BU.

**What and when to assess**

A chart with guiding questions and tips for developing goals, a curriculum map, and initial thoughts for an assessment plan, p.40, may be helpful.

Each department must have an assessment plan. PASSHE and BU require that each must include assessment of student learning as part of program reviews (see p.62). Departments have considerable flexibility in developing assessment plans. In General Education learning assessment, the General Education policy may determine some aspects of your assessment plan (see p.3).

The Middle States Commission gives guiding principles for assessment (see p.53), one of which is Appropriate Methods: “Assessment should involve the systematic and thorough collection of direct and indirect evidence of student learning, at multiple points in time and in various situations, using a variety of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods that are embedded in courses, programs, and overall institutional processes.”

Meeting all of these criteria may sound daunting, but it is compatible with developing a useful, workable assessment plan. This is important because the Middle States Commission is equally insistent that in meeting these criteria the fundamental goal of improving student learning not be lost: “data gained through assessment should be meaningful,” the Commission explains, and “should be used, first, to enhance student learning” (see p.53).

Planning for a progression of assessment activities can make assessment more valuable. For instance, you might evaluate just one or two course or program SLOs per year. When evidence of student learning related to one SLO may be found conveniently along with evidence related to another, you might evaluate those SLOs at the same time or using the same evidence (for instance, in a

capstone course or field experience in which students demonstrate complex learning). Scheduling your assessment effectively is discussed further on p.21.

Since the goal of evaluating student learning is the improvement of curriculum and instruction, it makes sense to prioritize what you assess.

The Commission emphasizes the quality of assessment tools for improving student learning over the quantity of data, as the quotation above (sidebar, p.14) from its Student Learning Assessment handbook suggests. Deciding how much to assess is discussed further on p.23.

**Developing your assessment plan in ways that involve everyone**

An assessment plan—including local definitions of terms, a description of what good assessment practice for your program would look like, the articulation of student learning outcomes, the selection of assessment measures, and timelines and governing structures for assessment—should be articulated through discussion that includes everyone in your program or department, or all who teach a crucial course (almost definitely including adjuncts). A subcommittee could do preliminary strategizing about an assessment plan—but, again, that subcommittee would need to bring its ideas to the group as a whole.

**Choosing assessment measures**

As mentioned earlier (p.14), the Middle States Commission’s definition of “appropriate methods” for assessment stipulates that assessment include:

- direct and indirect evidence of student learning,
- qualitative and
- quantitative evaluation methods that are
- embedded in courses, programs, and overall institutional processes.

[Outcomes assessment measures are explained well on BU’s TALE website: http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE2_TypesAssessmentMeasures.pdf]
What can you assess?
A key part of deciding what assessment methods to use is knowing what you want to assess. In general, you will look at student learning, student attitudes and perceptions, and/or departmental processes. The table below offers examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning:</th>
<th>Student Attitudes and Perceptions about:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the discipline</td>
<td>Advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(What do students know?)</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Campus facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(What can students do?)</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors or dispositions</td>
<td>Course scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(How do students act &amp; what is</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their attitude?)</td>
<td>Co-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 16                                | Preparation for work or graduate school        | 16

Adapted from UMass Amherst (2001), Program-Based Review and Assessment, p.23. UMass Amherst adapted the table from California State University, Bakersfield (1999), PACT Outcomes Assessment Handbook.

Questions to consider as you plan for evaluating student learning
As you choose assessment measures, keep the purpose of assessment—useful information—in mind:
- What questions do we have about student learning, our instruction, and our curriculum?
- Does or will this evaluation answer the questions we really need to answer?
- What information about student learning might we already have?
- What can logically be assessed given the resources and time available?
- What measures will provide the most useful, time-efficient information?

Use existing data and existing assessment practices
A good assessment plan builds on what is already being done and takes into account the existing culture of assessment. It taps into existing sources of information about student learning and assessment processes educators already participate in.

Therefore, before creating a new assessment plan a department or unit should undertake an “assessment audit” to establish how it is already doing assessment. The TALE center offers useful guidance on performing such an audit.

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16 In “Assessing attitudes, values, dispositions, and habits of mind,” a chapter Assessing Student Learning (2009), L. Suskie provides valuable specific advice in this area. Among her major suggestions:
1. focusing on behaviors
2. using reflective writing
3. phrasing questions about attitudes and values in ways that do not include obviously socially acceptable answers
4. developing effective survey questions for graduates or alumni
5. not holding faculty accountable for teaching traits that cannot be taught or measured (for instance, lifelong curiosity) (pp.183-201)
Inventory existing data collection

Evaluate:

- what data about student achievement are gathered at present, including what may be gathered outside the department (e.g., by career services, the library, academic support services, as part of students’ initial placement process at BU, or by standardized instruments required or recommended by some external body), and including both formative and summative assessments
- whether currently-collected data effectively describe student and/or program achievement of fundamental goals in ways that are meaningful to you
- what currently-collected information lets you logically conclude about student achievement
- whether the information is coming from students at the right point in their progress through the program, or whether you would benefit from information about student learning at other points in their progress through the program
- whether the information you gather would have value for a wider audience or for a wider perspective
- whether the information is required by others
- whether existing data collection can be tweaked to meet assessment needs—for instance, through establishing rubrics that make assignment or exam grades a valid shared measure
- whether systematic formative assessment might complement summative assessment
- what new information you might need to gather
- whether the same assessment tool can be used by multiple educators

Include both direct and indirect measures of student learning

An assessment plan aims at establishing a holistic view of student learning, with a wholehearted focus on the student learning that is most important. At BU, both because it is good practice and because it is a Middle States Commission requirement, assessment must include direct measures of student learning. A direct measure is, as the Middle States Commission puts it, “evidence [that] demonstrates that actual learning has occurred relating to a specific content or skill.” Indirect measures offer evidence of “characteristics associated with learning, but […] only imply that learning has occurred.”

Assessment audits are explained well by BU’s TALE Center: http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE3_AssessmentAudit.pdf

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The lists that follow give examples of direct and indirect measures. It is likely that your department or unit is already gathering some of these things, at least in order to complete five-year reviews or accreditation applications.\textsuperscript{18}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct measures of student learning</th>
<th>Indirect measures of student learning\textsuperscript{19}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Existing academic outcomes that are reliable indicators of student learning, such as:</td>
<td>• Analysis of course syllabi for learning outcomes, active learning, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Assignment grades when based on a common rubric or common scoring criteria</td>
<td>• Transcript analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Exam scores on shared exams or exams following an exam blueprint</td>
<td>• For program assessment, course grades and grade distributions may be considered a valid indirect measure in some circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Feedback from holistic problem-solving exercises, using a shared rubric</td>
<td>• Student participation in research, co-curricular and service learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Portfolios of student work when evaluated using a shared rubric</td>
<td>• Library or other information utilization data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capstone experiences, such as research projects, presentations, theses, exhibitions, oral defenses, and performances, scored using a shared rubric</td>
<td>• Retention and graduation rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supervisor evaluations from clinics, internships, field experiences</td>
<td>• Job placement rates and graduate school admission rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Placement tests, certification tests, licensure exams, board exams, standardized tests chosen by the department/unit</td>
<td>• Student ratings of their knowledge, skills, and reflections on what they have learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Score gains (sometimes referred to as “value added”) between entry and exit on tests or writing samples</td>
<td>• Alumni and employee surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alumni donations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summative measures must be part of course and program assessment: evaluation needs to look at what students are able to do after completing courses or programs. However, established formative assessment measures may also be an important part of getting information about student learning in order to improve it. The difference between formative and summative may be in their timing, with the same tool serving first as a formative and later as a summative assessment. They may also be used as formal pre- and post-test measures that may demonstrate student growth.

**Assessments embedded in courses**

In many cases, assessments embedded in courses as part of instruction are the most efficient way to get

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\textsuperscript{19} This list of direct and indirect assessment measures is adapted from Linda Suskie (2009), *Assessing Student Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), p.21. Her lists are more extensive; so is a gloss of her list presented by the TALE center at [http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE2_TypesAssessmentMeasures.pdf](http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE2_TypesAssessmentMeasures.pdf).
reliable direct information about student learning, and are also favored by the Middle States Commission.

Again, discussion among educators will be necessary, since the use of course-embedded measures requires agreement among all instructors about criteria. Given such agreement, exam or assignment grades can be a valid direct measure of student learning.

Course grades, which reflect more than simply mastery of material or skills, are not a valid direct measure of student achievement of program SLOs. 20

Establishing standards
Standards should be realistic. Expectations should be appropriate for course levels. Samples of student work can be very helpful in setting standards—benchmarks—for establishing what is unacceptably poor work, what is “good enough,” what is the capstone goal. 21 In some cases, specific performance targets can be useful. While it is important to develop benchmarks locally, they should be informed by externally validated standards.

Benchmarking discussions can support specific assessment tools for use with students, including:

- rubrics used to grade assignments
- test blueprints that guide examination preparation and validate exam grades as evidence of student learning
- common assessments, either locally created or standardized

While a discussion of criteria should precede an assessment plan, it may also be necessary to field test the criteria before finalizing assessment instruments. This allows for modifications to assure that the standards are not arbitrary, unrealistic, or too low. A trial run can help in refining the criteria.

Portfolios of student work
Portfolios can be a high-quality holistic measure of student learning. At present at BU, all students who

20 For a more detailed explanation about course grades and program assessment, see the TALE center’s explanation: http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE2_TypesAssessmentMeasures.pdf, p.3-4.

21 In her discussion of benchmarking using samples of student work, L. Suskie (2009) suggests questions that might help set standards once work has been collected:
- Which examples represent exemplary work? Why? Would it be realistic to establish these as the targets we aim for in all students?
- Which examples are unacceptably inadequate? Which would embarrass you if they were graduates of this program or college? Why?
- What kinds of student performance represent minimally acceptable work for a graduate of this program or college?
- How do the exemplary, acceptable, and inadequate examples differ?
(Assessing Student Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), chapter 15 (pp.233-254), p.247)
take Foundations of College Writing—that is, almost every student—establish an e-portfolio. Departments may want to have their majors add to this portfolio, or to have students develop a different portfolio, to require that specified artifacts be added at various points in students’ progress through the major, and to use a portfolio as part of program assessment.

It is important to understand, however, that considerable work is required if portfolios are to be effective in establishing student learning and efficient as a means of assessment (see sidebar).

Reliability and validity
Whether you are using standardized or “homegrown” assessment instruments, it is vital that the appropriateness of the instruments be discussed by the department. Little useful information will come from assessment instruments that are not aligned with the program’s student learning objectives.

Moreover, in analyzing assessment results, the validity and usefulness of the assessment instrument should be reconsidered. If nearly all students answer a question correctly or nearly all students answer it incorrectly, the question may not be the most useful one for determining how instruction can be improved. If the level of student learning as measured by an assessment instrument is at odds with other measures, such as test scores, grades, or the level of preparation observed by faculty in subsequent classes, the assessment instrument may need to be adjusted. This is not to say that all anomalous results should be thrown out. However, the question should be asked whether an anomalous result indicates an unusual aspect of student learning in the class or program, or whether it is due to an invalid assessment instrument. The faculty will need to use their professional judgment in answering this question.

Inter-rater reliability of instruments
Rubrics and test blueprints will have considerably more value if they are not only tested before they are used widely, but if their users are in agreement about scoring. A

Portfolios: some advice
Walvoord (2010) gives suggestions about developing portfolios:

- make portfolio completion very important to students
- provide a setting in which students can be guided to complete and reflect on their work, as in a capstone course and in other required courses
- allow for completion of the portfolio despite differing levels of support from faculty
- embed the portfolio in other systems, such as advising
- engage a few key faculty who can work intensively to support the portfolios

About using portfolios for assessment she suggests:

- carefully train and norm readers [who will need to evaluate using rubrics]
- consider offering stipends to people who take on major roles in supporting or analyzing portfolios
- live with some methodological problems, like lack of student investment, uneven faculty cooperation, and difficulties with inter-rater reliability
- keep working and changing to address problems and improve support
- consider whether in-depth analysis of a subset would be more informative than cursory analysis of many (see p. 14 for relevant comments from the Middle States Commission).
- ensure that readers’ reports are shared and used for action

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22 BU students take Foundations of College Writing (English 101) as a foundational course (with a few exceptions: see p. 72).
23 B. Walvoord (2010), Assessment Clear and Simple (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), p.51-52. She offers two examples of portfolios working effectively: 1. Portfolios, required for graduation for all students, were supported in a capstone seminar; students wrote a reflection; faculty were paid for three weeks in summer to read and score portfolios (p.51). 2. The writing program director followed twenty-five students from their first required writing course through graduation; an adjunct was hired to assist in the study; the twenty-five students were paid to submit all their writing and interviewed annually; reports were shared broadly and followed by campus-wide review of “writing intensive” courses (p.52-53).
shared understanding of what scores mean in practice can be developed through, for instance, departmental discussion of a few samples of student work.

While rubrics help to standardize the scores assigned by different raters, there will always be variation. If the students assessed by one rater seem to be significantly outperforming the students assessed by another rater, it would be advisable to have the same student work assessed by multiple raters. If this reveals important differences in how the work is evaluated, the department should discuss how to standardize the ratings. Greater inter-rater reliability could be achieved by one or more of the following:

- a “norming session” in which a small sample of student work is scored by the group and the scores discussed
- changing the assessment instrument
- clarifying or modifying the criteria or the entire rubric
- departmental discussion leading to greater agreement on how to interpret the rubric.

**Evaluation cycles: two examples**

1. Examine student learning in capstone courses in a first year of assessment. Then, in subsequent years, move backward through the curriculum with the results of that investigation in mind. If evidence suggests that students at the capstone level have a hard time integrating sources to make arguments of their own, where would we expect to see students starting to be able to do that? Does evidence suggest that is happening?

2. Alternatively, you might want to work up the curriculum, following a cohort of students over a several-year process of examining student learning.

**Outside reviewers**

An evaluation of student performance by an outside reviewer may offer a fresh perspective that benefits both you and your students. At BU, for instance, the Theatre program sends videotapes of performances for outside review. In addition to giving information that may improve instruction, and providing students with an outside arbiter of their performance, it can help the program refine its sense of appropriate standards.

Major field tests, required in many programs, offer another form of external review.

**Timing assessment during students’ progress through a curriculum**

The timing of assessment affects its utility, its reliability, and its efficiency. Measuring at multiple points gives a more accurate overall sense of student learning, and which aspects of the curriculum, specifically, are particularly effective or would benefit from reconsideration. Evaluating student learning at multiple points throughout a program is also an accreditation requirement of the Middle States Commission (see p.53, Guiding Principle 5).

Rather than attempting to assess student learning in every course, how can an understanding of the curriculum be used to establish where student mastery of skills, knowledge, and/or dispositions should be evident? What assessment can be made at that point? Having a clear curriculum map can make this process easier (see p.11 for an explanation and p.39 for an example). For instance, if all majors take a particular upper-division course after having completed a series of prerequisites, can student work in the advanced course be useful for assessing student learning in the course(s) that prepared them for it? Some
accrediting bodies require this strategy as part of program assessment.

A template for moving from SLOs to assessment techniques, p.41, is suggested by the Middle States Commission.

Focus your assessment activity
It is worth focusing your evaluation of student learning in areas where your efforts will pay the greatest dividends. Perhaps it makes sense to start with a manageable issue—a small thing that you already know needs changing. Perhaps you want to evaluate learning in an area you are already working to improve, so that the assessment can tell you if your changes are working or how they relate to other aspects of your program.

Planning for assessment—a five-year cycle
Rather than generating data about everything all the time, it makes sense to consider how to focus assessment efforts and coordinate them to support program reviews for accreditation purposes and for PASSHE five-year program review requirements.

Establishing an assessment calendar allows the department to:
• Place assessment activities on the departmental calendar
• Assign responsibility, with clear guidelines for what everyone has to do
• Plan for periodic meetings with updates
• Discuss ramifications of what assessment shows—positive and leading to program change
• Recognize and share in successes in using assessment to improve student learning
• Keep data and reports current

Hypothetical assessment calendars
Two hypothetical calendars, for two very different kinds of departments, are presented beginning on p.42.
How much to assess
Outcomes assessment should be useful and sustainable. Neither PASSHE nor the Middle States Commission on Higher Education expects (or encourages) the collection of data from all students.

An effective assessment plan balances accuracy with feasibility. The rubric for evaluating assessment plans included in this handbook (p.48) emphasizes the importance of this balance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of an Effective Plan</th>
<th>Characteristics of an Ineffective Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ The plan is designed to reliably answer the assessment question(s) being asked:</td>
<td>□ It is not clear yet whether the assessment instruments measure whether a student has achieved a program SLO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o to reveal and convey technically adequate information about student learning in the program,</td>
<td>□ The plan does not include measures taken at multiple points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o with an appropriate focus on culminating knowledge, skills, or dispositions, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o planning for measures at multiple points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ The plan is realistic, practical, diplomatic, and economical.</td>
<td>□ The assessment plan is too complex to be performed with the resources available and/or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ It will not involve a complete “reinvention of the wheel,” but builds on current practice.</td>
<td>□ requires the faculty to completely change the way they teach or practice their discipline, and/or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ May require additional resources, but within reason.</td>
<td>□ will take too much time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessing too many aspects of a program requires a great deal of time and energy and much of the data produced will be of limited value. The Middle States Commission recommends that academic programs identify the most important questions that need to be answered to improve student learning. The plan to collect assessment data should then be targeted toward answering those questions.

Assessment data should be sufficient to provide the information a department or unit needs to improve student learning. Some courses or program objectives may be considered critical or problematic and may need to be assessed frequently. Others may need less frequent assessment.

Sampling
An important means of making assessment manageable is careful sampling. Rather than collecting work from every student, plan to select a representative sample. In establishing this plan, balance the need for accuracy with the need for a manageable dataset that can be analyzed and will yield useful information—that is, balance accuracy and feasibility.

In assessing a large group of students (50 or more), save work and get useful information by collecting data
from a representative sample. The recommended way to ensure that the sample is representative (with high probability) is to choose a simple random sample in which each student has an equal chance of being selected. Some methods for choosing a sample are likely to lead to inaccurate results and should be avoided. Voluntary response samples (e.g., the students who agree to take an optional test) or convenience samples (e.g., the first 20 students to turn in their tests) will often produce non-representative samples and therefore can lead to misleading data.

The sample size should be large enough to give confidence that the sample is representative of the group being studied. One can consult statistical tables to determine the size of a sample required from a population of a given size to achieve a given margin of error. For purposes of routine assessment, however, such guidelines may suggest that a very large sample size is required, one that would be too big to be manageable and larger than would actually be necessary to gain useful information. Unless sophisticated statistical analysis of the results is required for a report, or the results of the outcome assessment are going to be used for a critical or expensive decision, it is probably best not to be overly concerned with issues such as the specific margin of error, although it is important that margins of error be considered.24

For small classes (25 or fewer), it is best to collect data from all students. For larger groups of students, a simple random sample is likely to be representative of the whole group.

In some cases, rather than using a sample to estimate the results for the group, you may simply want to examine or preserve representative samples of student work. For instance, some accrediting bodies ask for examples of excellent, average and poor student work so they can see the range of student performance.

Of additional consideration in choosing sample size is the amount of work required for collection and analysis of the kind of data in question. Collecting and analyzing data from a large number of students through their responses to several multiple choice questions on an exam conforming to a test blueprint is, in many cases, not appreciably more difficult than collecting and analyzing such data from a small number of students. In such a case, it would be preferable to aim for a smaller margin of error, and thus a larger sample size. However, if the data were a set of essays or portfolios, each of which might require more time

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24 **Sample size and margins of error:** The margin of error indicates the size of a 95% confidence interval for that sample size. For example, suppose the students in a large class take a test and a simple random sample of tests is chosen with a sample size large enough for a margin of error of 4%. For 95% of such samples, if the percentage of passing grades in the sample is 80%, then the percentage of passing grades in the class is between 76% and 84%. **But these formulas do not account for other uncertainties:** It should be remembered that statistical margin of error formulas only account for the uncertainty due to sampling, not accounting for other sources of uncertainty, such as variability in scoring the test. This means the margin of error underestimates the amount of uncertainty.
for effective evaluation, the sample size should be calibrated accordingly. How large a sample will faculty realistically be able to assess and discuss? At what point does the time spent outweigh the benefits? The Middle States Commission is clear that assessment plans be realistic and useful: this must be a consideration in determining sample size, and will require the judgment of those made in particular contexts.

Practicality
Assessment should not be the primary task of the vast majority of faculty and staff. Thus, as important as it is that assessment data be meaningful, it is also essential that it be manageable. In choosing measures of assessment, keep in the foreground the central importance of:

- Ease of submission to encourage cooperation
- Ease of compilation
- Ease and practicality of analysis

If the methods are too cumbersome, then the assessment efforts are likely to fail. When selecting methods of assessment, structure your information-gathering so that collection is easy and the resulting data will be relatively straightforward to compile and analyze. For instance, rubrics can help make it easier to use qualitative data, which can otherwise be unwieldy to analyze.

Qualtrics, the survey software currently used in General Education assessment at BU, may be useful for collecting and compiling data on program-level student learning as well. The Office of Planning and Assessment can assist in setting up appropriate data-collection tools with Qualtrics. More information on Qualtrics can be found through a link on the Office of Planning and Assessment website, or at http://bloomu.edu/qualtrics.

Structuring assessment ethically, protecting both students and instructors

Protecting student privacy
It is important that student privacy be respected.

Having samples of student work is extremely valuable for purposes of departmental discussion about outcomes. Particularly in small departments, outcomes assessment may include discussions of particular students, and the topics of student work, as well as their writing style, may identify them.

However, faculty need to make certain that the discussions and reporting of data never include identifying student information. Collecting large sets of heterogeneous and probably aggregated data helps protect student privacy. It is best practice to put procedures in place to assure removal of professor and student names from artifacts.

Use of student work as part of internal assessment does not, in general, require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. However, use of student learning data for research purposes, public distribution, or as the basis for presentations about assessment to non-BU audiences, does require IRB approval. BU’s policy
3990, “Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research,” explains local requirements (http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3990), and the IRB website (http://bloomu.edu/irb) provides specific procedural information.

**Separating assessment of student learning from employee performance evaluation**

Student learning assessment structures must be designed to focus on student learning, not faculty/staff evaluation. They should make it structurally clear that what is being evaluated is student learning across a program, not student learning in a particular course.

This is crucial not only to assure the equitable treatment of faculty/staff, but also to preserve the integrity of the assessment process. If assessment data can be associated with particular faculty, faculty may feel pressure to report assessment data showing outstanding student achievement of learning objectives. This undermines the foundation of outcomes assessment, cornerstones of which are open inquiry into student learning and a shared commitment to its improvement.

It may be difficult to maintain a clear, structural distinction between assessing student learning of a particular content and the person responsible for teaching that particular content, as in cases when a particular faculty member is the only one to teach a particular course. However, assessment plans can be designed in a way that redirects attention to student learning as a shared responsibility. For instance, it may be important to:

- **aggregate data.** Combine data from several sections of courses contributing toward a particular program SLO or General Education goal, or over several semesters of a single course, before analyzing it.
- **use artifacts collected in upper-division courses to assess student learning in a range of previous courses.** Treat artifacts produced in upper-division courses as evidence of the program’s success in meeting program learning objectives, rather than as evidence of the effectiveness of any single course.
- **focus on student learning of skills taught throughout the curriculum more than student learning of information taught in one course.**
- **evaluate student learning of departmental SLOs rather than course-level SLOs.**

Additional suggestions, particularly about appropriate interpretation and use of assessment information, are listed in the introduction, p.5.

The Office of Planning and Assessment assures that assessment information will not be used for individual faculty evaluation. This is consistent with the principles and guidelines outlined in the PASSHE Board of Governors’ policy, which asserts that “Outcomes assessment strategies provide data about student needs, progress, and achievement and about the strengths and weaknesses of educational programs. Findings from outcomes assessment are to be used to improve programs, not to evaluate the performance of individual faculty or staff members; other processes exist for that purpose” (see p.58). It is important that the local promise be kept and the Board of Governors policy be followed. Procedural safeguards like those listed above add another layer of protection.
Evaluating your assessment plan

Your assessment plan should be:

- **clear**: an educated reader (not just faculty, but also students) could understand it
- **appropriate**: designed ethically, legally, and with regard for the welfare of those involved and those affected by the results
- **reasonably accurate**
- **useful**
- **feasible**: realistic, practical, diplomatic, and economical
- **part of departmental dialogue**, which expects to use what assessment shows to guide action

A worksheet for planning and implementing an assessment project, p. 46, may be helpful.

A rubric for evaluating assessment plans, p. 48, may be helpful for thinking about the effectiveness of your plan.
Analyzing assessment data

Data is just data until it has been analyzed in some fashion—and that analysis becomes useful only when people who might learn from it discuss it and consider action in response. This analysis doesn’t have to be cumbersome. It is not dependent on sophisticated statistical skills (see earlier discussion about sampling, how much to assess, and practicality, beginning on p. 23).

A department may well deputize someone or some committee to make an initial analysis of data about student learning. Some guidelines:

- data should be analyzed by different people over time. The whole department will benefit when more of its faculty have engaged in this part of the process of evaluating student learning
- those analyzing need time enough to do their work well (if the data are complex, perhaps not during the semester)
- participants should be recognized for this work.

Particularly if you are using complex data, such as portfolios of student work (see p. 20), those doing the initial analysis have a bigger job and a more active role in analysis. The committee should include several people.

How you summarize your data to prepare for a discussion about it depends on what type of data you have collected.
Percentages, rather than averages, are probably most useful, most of the time, with most kinds of data you will be considering.

- what percentage of students attained each of the levels on a rubric? (ordered data)
- what percentage of students participated in a certain kind of activity? (ordered data)
- what percentage of students responded correctly or incorrectly to a particular multiple choice question? (categorical data)
- how many students are in the major? (categorical data)

Ordered data is numerical data that can be ranked, but it isn’t truly quantitative. For instance, rubrics scores are a form of ordered data, and might be reported like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>score</th>
<th>capstone (4)</th>
<th>milestone 2 (3)</th>
<th>milestone 1 (2)</th>
<th>benchmark (1)</th>
<th>below benchmark (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be tempting to convert these results to a mean/average of these ordered data and report a single number—2.96. This may have some meaning, but is a dangerous path to take since statistical analysis on this mean is dependent on the data being truly quantitative/scaled, which it is not. A potentially more useful (and not misleading) measure might be the median score—or, simply, the percentage scoring at each level.

However, some data are effectively analyzed through averages:

- exam scores on an exam from an test blueprint (scaled data)
- graduation rates (scaled data)
- mean salaries at graduation (scaled data)
- number of credits at graduation (scaled data)

Scaled data can be analyzed statistically more readily than can categorical or ordered data, but we are not recommending statistical analysis as part of the assessment process.

The standards for analysis for assessment data are not the same as they would be for a research study, just as standards for sampling and margin of error are not the same: in examining student learning, we are aiming to get useful data, not perfect data. (If you are interested in presenting or publishing based on assessment data, remember that IRB approval would almost definitely be required: see p.25.)

Questions departments might ask about the data
The following lists of questions are for departments to use in their broad discussions, although individuals and committees may find them useful.

If you designed your assessment in order to investigate questions you actually want to answer (see p.16), your hope is that your data will help you answer those real questions. It may also show you things you weren’t looking for but which have value. Data analysis can also prompt reflection on the program’s goals and standards, its curriculum, and the instruction it provides, as well as on the assessment process itself.25

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The overarching question:
- What do these data suggest we as a department might want to do?

General questions about student learning:
- How does the data answer our questions about student learning?
- Which areas seem to be most challenging for students? Of these, which should we as a department be attempting to improve?
- Does the information show a pattern?
- Does the data indicate areas of strength or weakness in meeting our program’s SLOs (or perhaps in a particular course’s SLOs)?
- Do students demonstrate learning in the areas we value most?
- Is anything surprising in these data? Where is it consistent with perceptions based on experience, and where does it differ?
- What questions do these data suggest we might want to ask next?

Questions about instruction, the curriculum, and program SLOs (and courses and their SLOs) (these questions focus on the dimensions of learning that faculty are able to control):
- How might our curriculum contribute to these results, either positively or negatively? How might the curriculum be changed to increase student learning on what matters most to us?
- How are our teaching practices connected to these results? How can we improve instruction to increase student learning?
- Do we need to do more to give students the skills needed to succeed, either through changes to a course or course sequence or through remediation, external support, or prerequisites?
- Do our program and course SLOs match each other, and do they match what we actually want students to be learning? Are they getting at what’s most central to our program?
- Do we have too many (or too few) learning goals, and are they appropriate?

Questions about standards—about what we mean when we score student performance:
- As a department, do we agree about what good work looks like? About what unacceptable and what exceptional work look like?
- If most results are good (or if most are not good), are we using appropriate standards?
- As a department, do we agree about essential content?

Questions about the assessment process:
- How cumbersome was the assessment process?
- Are the assessment tools well written and well aligned with learning goals?
- If we use rubrics or exam blueprints, are we using them consistently? How might these instruments be revised?
- Did we collect the right information? How useful is the data? How could it be made more useful—or what data would be preferable?
- How valid do we as a department think the data is? If we sampled student work, is this a representative sample?
- Are we assessing students at the appropriate points in their progress through the major?
- Could the data be presented for discussion in more useful ways?
Departmental discussion—essential if analysis is to be meaningful
The questions above may be interesting for an individual or a committee, and can give some preliminary ideas. However, it is the department as a whole that must address what the data about student learning show (or don’t show). The discussion need not be technical or drawn out—but is necessary, and this does require planning.

1. **You need a department meeting to discuss the data.** Keep in mind some logistical considerations associated with preparing for such meetings:
   a. You’ll need to reserve sufficient time, enough to enable and encourage discussion by all participants, not just those presenting data.
   b. The discussion needs to include as many relevant people as possible. How can temporary faculty, for instance, be included in the conversation? If the discussion should include many temporary faculty, or faculty or staff who work off site, does a meeting (or an additional meeting) in the evening make sense?
   c. Chairs may need to build in (additional) common meeting times, with particular consideration of a need for a time when temporary faculty would be available for a discussion.
   d. The meeting should be held at a time in the semester when people are not overwhelmed with other obligations.
   e. A decision must be made about whether to forward the data to the group before the meeting or distribute it at the meeting.

2. **Course faculty or a departmental committee (see questions and their preamble, above) needs to prepare the data in a way that makes it shareable:**
   a. It is important to have a clear understanding of what precisely the data are.
   b. They need to be formatted in a way that makes them easy to apprehend.
   c. A little preliminary analysis might be helpful in deciding how to present the data (see comment above about percentages and averages).
   d. More detailed analysis could be useful if someone or some group is particularly skilled at such analysis or invested in it (but this is not required—or recommended—as standard procedure).
   e. If you are using complex data, such as a portfolio of student work, those doing the initial analysis have a bigger job and a more active role in analysis. Participants may need extra time and compensation for this work, and they should also be recognized for it.

The goal: improving student learning
The goal of assessment is action to improve student learning. Neither BU nor the Middle States Commission is evaluating departments or units based on how many students achieve the established student learning outcomes. That is, in outcomes assessment, good scores are not the goal, gratifying as they might be. Rather, the goal is honest assessment of student learning along with action that will improve student learning, however exceptional that learning might already be. Given what you have established about student learning, what will you do?

Your actions in response to your findings will necessarily be responsive to your own department, discipline, and structures. The way you communicate your findings and your decisions about action will be similarly
shaped by your own context and goals.

**Sharing assessment results with internal and external audiences**

At BU in 2013, policies about sharing what we learn about student learning across campus (or even within departments) are as yet not clearly developed.

Because some sort of sharing—at least within a department—is necessary if the work of collecting, analyzing data, and acting on findings about student learning is to be worthwhile, and because broader sharing may at some point be required and is already required for five year reviews, this handbook offers suggestions for how to communicate evidence of student learning and decisions made in response to this evidence.

**Presenting assessment results effectively**

Currently, BU has no standard format for assessment reports. Reports for all audiences should be clear, accurate, and brief. They should be sincere and impartial. The key piece for almost all audiences is basic: what do the data show about student learning? If this is an audience outside the department or unit, it will also probably want to know what the department plans to do in response to this information.

In spring 2013, the General Education Council asked for a short report commenting on three areas:

1. what you found interesting in the data,
2. what action the department is considering based on the data, and
3. what suggestions departments have about the assessment process.

A basic three- or four-part report structure can serve departments as well. Reports will vary based on their intended audience. Walvoord (2010) suggests topics frequently appearing in assessment reports:

1. a list of departmental learning goals
2. an explanation of what the data are and what they show
3. an explanation of how the department has used the information for action
4. comments about the process, such as the appropriateness of the measures of student learning that were used, the quality of the data, the system for gathering data, the appropriateness of course- or program-SLOs, and any recommendations for changes

*For accreditors and for program review*, an explanation of the measures of student learning used as part of the ongoing system, and an explanation of how, in general, the department uses assessment information to inform action

*For program review, budgeting, strategic planning*, and other such audiences, a discussion of resources required
Tailoring your presentation to specific audiences so that no one’s time is wasted

Consider:

- each audience’s purpose in learning about your assessment results
- what each audience needs to know in order to make informed decisions
- how much—what level of detail—is adequate
- what each audience is likely to understand best,
- the need for accuracy and accessibility in the materials you present:
  - make valid comparisons
  - avoid jargon
  - prepare visual materials with care for accuracy and legibility
  - use statistics sparingly and purposefully; round figures to the nearest whole number
  - match discussions of quantitative results or statistical analysis with your audience’s level of knowledge
- what information your audiences will need in order to understand what you are reporting, including how participants were selected and what measures were used. For instance, you might include phrases like these:
  - papers from all program majors in the XXX-456 capstone course were sampled (scored using a rubric)
  - exam scores from a random sample of program majors in required course XXX-123 were used (blueprinted exam)
  - research projects of all program majors in three randomly-selected sections of XXX-345 were sampled (scored using a rubric)
  - junior-level program majors presented a portfolio of work during annual review week (scored by at least 3 faculty, using a rubric)
- acknowledging credit due to authors of information or instruments that are not your own
- having someone review for understanding before presenting your results to others

Communicating results effectively:

**A variety of modes:** As in teaching, consider a variety of modes, such as narrative explanations, numeric tables, graphics, examples, or oral presentations.

**Consider graphics:** Tables and graphs can be helpful. Prepare them with care (for accuracy and legibility). Use clear headings, labels and titles. Use them as a supplement, not in place of text.

**Medium of communication:** How does your audience prefer to receive information?

- E-mail and attachments
- Handouts
- Department memos
- Presentations at meetings
- Newsletters

Documentation and storage of assessment

Assessment is worthwhile if it is used to improve student learning. Discussions in departments and units are the engines that will drive improvements to student learning based on assessment data.

Records of these discussions and the actions that result from them are an artifact of the assessment process, not its goal. They are, nonetheless, important. The purposes of creating written records of assessment processes, and written assessment reports, are several:
1. to provide an archive that informs future action by the department or unit conducting the assessment, an archive that will persist across changes in personnel and in approach

2. to communicate with others to support evidence-based discussions about student learning at the unit, college, campus, and system levels

3. to provide evidence to supervisory or external bodies (such as accreditors) that student learning is being assessed and assessment information is informing action

4. to provide evidence of a need for support during the budget allocation or strategic planning processes

TracDat for storage of both data and departmental discussion

PASSHE’s spring 2013 proposal emphasizes the use of TracDat, a password-protected database designed for assessment processes, by colleges across the system (see p.70). TracDat is already utilized at BU (see the sidebar on p.13). Departments or units are free to store their assessment data, reports, and other documents wherever else they like, but required assessment reports must be posted in TracDat. If the department develops comfort with TracDat, it may be most efficient to use TracDat as the sole repository.

TracDat, again—documentation of departmental discussions of student learning:

BU (and probably PASSHE as well: see p.70) expects that documentation in TracDat will go beyond data. Documentation of this crucial third step in assessment must also be archived:

- documentation of actions to improve student learning resulting from discussions of assessment results
- documentation of external reporting of results and of actions

Those with TracDat access can log in at: https://bloomtracdat.passhe.edu/tracdat/
Appendix 1: Supporting materials on evaluating student learning

Some benefits of assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of Assessment</th>
<th>WE CAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BECAUSE ASSESSMENT CAN provide information about the knowledge and skills students have as they enter a course . . .</td>
<td>design instruction and skill levels students should have upon finishing a course and better determine the levels of thinking or reasoning appropriate for the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECAUSE ASSESSMENT CAN yield more reliable data about instruction . . .</td>
<td>make reliable decisions about innovations or experimental projects in instruction and support and share successes more easily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECAUSE ASSESSMENT CAN make available richer data about the effects of the curriculum or teaching methods or co-curricular activities. . .</td>
<td>engage in more productive conversations about the status of student achievement and make better decisions about how it might be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECAUSE ASSESSMENT CAN yield more reliable data about how well a program works . . .</td>
<td>make reliable decisions about innovations or experimental projects in programming and share successes more easily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECAUSE ASSESSMENT CAN offer a larger view of student needs and accomplishments . . .</td>
<td>identify directions for future development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECAUSE ASSESSMENT CAN offer a way of discussing the educational whole . . .</td>
<td>share responsibility for improving student learning, rather than simply blaming ourselves or simply blaming others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECAUSE ASSESSMENT CAN provide evidence that what the university does makes a difference in student learning . . .</td>
<td>enjoy greater satisfaction in our work as educators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Some action verbs of potential use in writing learning goals (SLOs)

Verbs may apply to more than one category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and conceptual understanding</th>
<th>Thinking and other skills</th>
<th>Attitudes, dispositions, psychomotor skills, and habits of mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(skills lower on Bloom’s taxonomy)</td>
<td>(skills higher on Bloom’s taxonomy)</td>
<td>(skills not addressed by Bloom’s taxonomy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Knowledge
Define, describe, draw, identify, label, locate, memorize, name, recite, recognize, select, state, write

#### Comprehension
Abstract, categorize, change, clarify, classify, compare, conclude, confirm, construct models, contrast, defend, distinguishing, exemplify, explain, express, extend, extrapolate, generalize, illustrate, infer, instantiate, interpolate, interpret, map, match, paraphrase, predict, relate, represent, restate, transform, translate, paraphrase, summarize

#### Application
Apply, adapt, alter, change, choose, classify, collect, discover, dramatize, draw, execute, implement, interpret, make, model, modify, paint, prepare, produce, perform, rearrange, report, revise, show, vary

#### Analysis
Analyze, categorize, classify, compare, construct, contrast, deconstruct, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, find coherence, focus, infer, integrate, investigate, organize, outline, parse, point out, research, select, separate, structure, subdivide, survey, take apart

#### Synthesis and creativity
Add to, arrange, build, combine, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, generate, hypothesize, initiate, invent, make, organize, originate, plan, produce, role-play

#### Evaluation, problem-solving, and decision-making
Apprise, assess, check, compare, consider, coordinate, critique, critique, detect, determine, evaluate, judge, monitor, recommend, relate, solve, summarize, test, weigh

#### Receive phenomena
Ask, choose, describe, detect, differentiate, distinguish, follow, give, hold, identify, isolate, locate, name, point to, relate, select, erect, reply, use

#### Respond to phenomena
Answer, assemble, assist, aid, calibrate, comply, conform, construct, discuss, dismantle, fasten, fix, greet, grind, heat, help, label, manipulate, measure, mend, mix, organize, perform, practice, present, read, recite, report, select, sketch, tell, write

#### Organize
Adhere, alter, arrange, combine, compare, complete, defend, explain, formulate, generalize, identify, integrate, modify, order, organize, prepare, relate, synthesize

#### Value, internalize values
Act, complete, demonstrate, differentiate, discriminate, display, explain, follow, form, influence, initiate, invite, join, justify, listen, modify, perform, practice, propose, qualify, question, read, report, revise, select, serve, share, solve, study, verify, work
**The VALUE rubrics** (the ones required for evaluation of BU’s general education program) offer language for goals around skills, knowledge, and attitudes and may be useful in articulating SLOs. Fifteen VALUE rubrics are available:

- Written communication
- Oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Critical thinking
- Inquiry and analysis
- Reading
- Problem solving
- Creative thinking
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning
- Civic engagement
- Integrative learning
- Foundations for lifelong learning
- Teamwork

The rubrics can be accessed from AAC&U ([http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/](http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/)). A compendium of VALUE rubrics, including local modifications to some rubric elements, is posted on the S: drive (see [http://www.bloomu.edu/generaleducation/rubrics](http://www.bloomu.edu/generaleducation/rubrics)).

**Student Learning Objectives: Additional examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>More effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will...</td>
<td>Students will be able to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be able to demonstrate information literacy skills. <em>(problem: vague)</em></td>
<td>support a written argument with relevant information from scholarly sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appreciate the value of diverse approaches to psychological inquiry. <em>(problem: vague)</em></td>
<td>state the foundational assumptions and dominant criticisms of two distinct approaches to psychology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>report on lab experiments using standard format. <em>(problem: purpose unclear; is a learning activity)</em></td>
<td>design an experiment to test a chemical hypothesis or theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have effective interpersonal and leadership skills. <em>(problem: vague and hard to measure)</em></td>
<td>compare several leadership styles and predict their effectiveness in a particular case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participate in mock trials. <em>(problem: is a teaching method)</em></td>
<td>construct an argument about a current issue in criminal justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be introduced to a range of historiographical interpretations. <em>(problem: is a learning activity)</em></td>
<td>critique historical interpretations in order to judge which are most plausible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write a research paper on Romantic literature. <em>(problem: too specific; is a learning activity)</em></td>
<td>present original interpretations of literary works in the context of existing research on those works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a major role in a student production. <em>(problem: is a learning activity)</em></td>
<td>use voice, movement, and understanding of dramatic character and situation to elicit desired audience reaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make sound management recommendations. <em>(problem: is a learning activity)</em></td>
<td>defend management recommendations using accurate support in from graphic displays of data, spreadsheet, and financial analyses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

## Curriculum map template: learning opportunities for program SLOs

- **B** = Concept/Theory/Skill is Introduced at the “Beginning Level” in assignments, tests, or classwork (this work is assessed)
- **I** = Concept/Theory/Skill is Applied at an “Intermediate Level” in assignments, tests, or classwork (this work is assessed)
- **A** = Concept/Theory/Skill is Applied, Analyzed, or Critiqued at an “Advanced Level” in assignments, tests, or classwork (this work is assessed)

*Beginning, intermediate, and advanced are one way of describing student achievement.*

**Other departments may use terms like introduced, reinforced, and assessed.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course SLOs</th>
<th>Program SLO 1:</th>
<th>Program SLO 2:</th>
<th>Program SLO 3:</th>
<th>Program SLO 4:</th>
<th>Program SLO 5:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum map: An example

Program SLOs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Presentation Skills</td>
<td>Students will apply knowledge of presentation skills to present effectively in multiple forms and contexts, including but not limited to, oral, written, visual, and digital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Theory, Research, &amp; Practice</td>
<td>Students will integrate theory, research, and practice to analyze, interpret, and critically evaluate communication in a variety of contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Students will exhibit social responsibility through recognition and application of concepts related to diversity, civic engagement, citizenship, and ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Leadership</td>
<td>Students will implement leadership knowledge and skills to work effectively in situations requiring collaboration and decision-making abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Human Relational Interaction</td>
<td>Students will display the communication skills necessary to engage in competent human relational interaction in multiple contexts. Skill areas include but are not limited to conflict management, interpersonal interaction, nonverbal communication, and listening.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Curriculum map identifying learning opportunities supporting student attainment of the SLOs:

Note that curriculum maps serve both as guides and as diagnostic tools, identifying gaps and redundancies in the current curriculum.

By the time students complete the major, they will have taken courses offering instruction at preparatory and advanced levels of all SLOs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Studies – Interpersonal Communication Track (example courses)</th>
<th>Required Courses</th>
<th>Elective Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CS 103: Public Speaking</td>
<td>CS 104: Intercultural Communication</td>
<td>CS 497: Internship in Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 1: Presentation Skills</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 2: Theory, Research &amp; Practice</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 3: Social Responsibility</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 4: Leadership</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 5: Human Relational Interaction</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B = Concept/Theory/Skill is Introduced at the “Beginning Level”
I = Concept/Theory/Skill is Applied at an “Intermediate Level”
A = Concept/Theory/Skill is Applied, Analyzed, or Critiqued at an “Advanced Level”
- = Not Applicable
A reminder: this handbook does not discuss program-level strategic planning and broad goal-setting.

### Elements of an Assessment Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Tips &amp; Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• In broad terms, what will students in the program know, value, and be able to do upon graduation?</td>
<td>• The initial development of the program goals and learning objectives (SLOs) may take your program one full year (see p.7). But once established, these statements will not frequently change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Given the program goals, what should students be able to demonstrate, represent, or produce? <em>These are your program SLOs.</em></td>
<td>• Rely on verbs to describe what the students should be able to do, not what the faculty members will “cover” (see p.36).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where will the program SLOs be published? How will students learn of them (and all faculty be reminded of them)?</td>
<td>• 3-7 specific, assessable objectives are sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What activities, projects, courses, etc., will the students be exposed to that will help them achieve the learning outcomes?</td>
<td>• Make it public: advertise SLOs; remind students in courses; regularly discuss at faculty meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When do students have opportunities to practice or reinforce what they’ve learned?</td>
<td>• Create a curriculum map (see p.11). Discuss it in a department meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where in the curriculum (or external activity) do students showcase their achievement?</td>
<td><strong>For instance, you might first assess the SLO for which the department has the most data already available (e.g., writing, because students already write reports in a required course and a rubric to evaluate already exists; see p.16) or a SLO associated with a perceived problem (see p.21).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which SLO (or pair of SLOs) will be tackled first? second? and so forth.</td>
<td>• A program may assess 1-2 program outcomes per year (but plan to have all objectives assessed (directly or indirectly) at least once during one 5-year program-review cycle) (see p.22).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When will each SLO be assessed? Does any need extra attention?</td>
<td>• Divide the workload: have different teams (2-4 faculty members) responsible for taking the lead in each assessment activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Which 2-4 faculty members are best equipped to take the lead role in the assessment of each SLO? (Or, which faculty members are most interested in each outcome and could take the lead?)</td>
<td><strong>Adapted from U Hawaii Manoa.</strong> (2013). <em>Basic Steps of Program Assessment.</em> “Create a Department/Program Assessment Plan.” Retrieved April 29, 2013, from <a href="http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/plan.htm">http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/plan.htm</a>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Middle States Commission’s *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources* offers the following template (p.91; slightly modified here) as a support for defining SLOs and appropriate assessment techniques to go with them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Program SLOs: what do students know or what can they do after completing the program?</th>
<th>B. How and where (in what courses, experiences) do students learn this?</th>
<th>C. What information or evidence is there that students are learning this?</th>
<th>D. How has this information been used to help students learn better?</th>
<th>E. What additional evidence is needed to understand how well students are learning this?</th>
<th>F. What possible new and improved assessment tools or techniques might we use?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothetical assessment calendars
Both of these calendars are designed with a particular kind of department in mind, and many other measures of student learning, and many other schedules, would work.

The first hypothetical calendar is for a department that:
  - is not accredited, and therefore submits the PASSHE-required 5-year review, and is not responsible to assessment guidelines established by an accrediting body.
  - offers courses earning GEPS toward General Education goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7.

It is based on the following requirements, assumptions, interpretations, and patterns:
General Education assessment:
  - reflects the General Education goal assessment cycle. This cycle is articulated in GEC operating procedures (see p.61), and plans for providing data and reports in support of the GEC’s particular assessment focus in the subsequent year. (This is a change from the practice during the general education pilot years.)
  - plans for two semesters of General Education SLO data collection prior to their analysis
Assessing student learning in the major:
  - direct measures: assess student learning in the major through direct measures of student learning in particular courses, not in all courses. The plan relies on a portfolio for this purpose.
  - indirect measures: assess student learning in the major through the indirect measures of annual exit surveys and surveys of alumni every five years.
  - assessment activity focuses on a limited number of program SLOs each year. One program SLO, a particularly important one, is assessed twice during the cycle; the rest are assessed once.
  - ideally, the assessment of program SLOs would be coordinated to overlap with relevant General Education goal assessments. For instance, a program writing SLO would be investigated during the same year the General Education Council needs a report on General Education Goal 1.
  - uses portfolios to meet the Middle States Commission’s requirement that assessment of student learning occur “at multiple points in time and in various situations” (see p.53 on the Middle States Commission, and p.19 on portfolios).
Timing:
  - fall semesters: analysis of assessment data relevant to the major.
  - spring semesters: analysis of General Education assessment data.
  - two semesters for program-level strategic discussions instead of routine data analysis.
  - reflects current reporting PASSHE deadlines five-year academic program reviews (see p.68).

Summer programs or course offerings:
  - does not reflect data collection in summer courses or internships. Summer offerings may be part of the assessment cycle, however.
## First hypothetical departmental assessment 5-year calendar, assuming moderate external requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Fall—start</th>
<th>Fall—end</th>
<th>Spring—start</th>
<th>Spring—end</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YEAR ONE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Consider 5-year review feedback</td>
<td>- Discuss goals &amp; objectives</td>
<td>- finalize goals &amp; objectives</td>
<td>- match to current curriculum</td>
<td>- refine assessment &amp; 4-year plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATA COLLECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
<td>- portfolios</td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
<td>- portfolios</td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- gen ed goals 1,2 &amp; 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REPORTING/USE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GEC: Goals 7-10</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YEAR TWO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- syllabus/curric review/revision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATA COLLECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
<td>- portfolios</td>
<td>- gen ed goals 1,2 &amp; 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- program SLOs #1+2</td>
<td></td>
<td>- gen ed goals 1,2 &amp; 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REPORTING/USE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GEC: MS self-study</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- program SLOs #1+2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YEAR THREE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATA COLLECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
<td>- portfolios</td>
<td>- gen ed goals 1,2 &amp; 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- program SLOs #1+3</td>
<td></td>
<td>gen ed goals 1,2 &amp; 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REPORTING/USE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GEC: Goals 1,2 &amp; 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- program SLOs #1+3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YEAR FOUR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PREPARATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- curriculum review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATA COLLECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
<td>- portfolios</td>
<td>- gen ed goal 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- program SLOs #4+5</td>
<td></td>
<td>gen ed goal 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REPORTING/USE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GEC: Goals 1,2 &amp; 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- program SLOs #4+5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YEAR FIVE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SYNTHESIS: 5-YEAR REVIEW</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- request data + draft self-study</td>
<td></td>
<td>drafting; choose evaluators</td>
<td></td>
<td>- 1/5: self-study due - evaluators visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATA COLLECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
<td>- portfolios</td>
<td>- gen ed goal 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>- exit surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- self study</td>
<td>- self study</td>
<td>- gen ed goal 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REPORTING/USE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GEC: Goals 4,5 &amp; 6</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>- self-study to dept.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GEC report: Goal 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second hypothetical assessment calendar:
The hypothetical assessment calendar that follows is designed with a particular kind of department in mind, and many other measures of student learning, and many other schedules, would work. Again, this hypothetical department is one that:
- is accredited
- offers one course earning GEPs toward General Education goals 5 and 6.

It is based on the following requirements, assumptions, interpretations, and patterns.

General Education assessment:
- **reflects the General Education goal assessment cycle.** This cycle articulated in GEC operating procedures (see p.61), and plans for providing data and reports in support of the GEC’s particular assessment focus in the subsequent year. [This change from current practice is one of the AWG’s recommendations.]
- **plans for three semesters of General Education SLO data collection prior to their analysis.** This allows aggregation across multiple sections and, ideally, from sections taught by more than one instructor.

Accreditation:
- **an annual report to an accrediting body,** due in August.
- **feedback from the accrediting body in fall,** making recommendations about both student learning and data demonstrating learning.
- **a full reaccreditation review every 8-10 years** (not reflected here).

Assessing student learning in the major:
- **direct measures:** assess student learning in the major through direct measures including portfolios, a standardized test (a national exam required degree-earners), quizzes testing acquisition of knowledge and skills (K/S) required by the accrediting body, and feedback on student performance from clinical preceptors.
- **indirect measures:** assess student learning in the major through indirect measures including several surveys (clinical satisfaction, exit, alumni, employer), completion rates, and graduate school application data.

Timing:
- **assessment activities follow the same cycle every year, varying only when General Education data collection, analysis, or reporting is required, or during full accreditation review** (not reflected here).
- **summer:** the annual accreditation report is completed.
- **fall:** the department discusses, analyzes, and makes decisions based on assessment data and accreditation body feedback.
- **rest of the academic year:** data collection is the focus of assessment activity most of the time.
- **spring, once every five years:** General Education data is analyzed.
Second hypothetical departmental assessment 5-year calendar, assuming moderate external requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>FALL—START</th>
<th>FALL—END</th>
<th>SPRING—START</th>
<th>SPRING—END</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| PREPARATION | - finalize action plan  
- committee recs for program goal refinements | - finalize program goals  
- refine procedures and processes | - program goals integrated into action plan  
- assign responsibilities | - K/S standard rwv  
- National exam pass rates  
- Completion rates  
- Employer survey  
- Alumni surveys | |
| DATA COLLECTION | - clinic satisfctn srvys  
- K/S standard rwv  
- K/S quiz | - exit surveys  
- preceptor surveys  
- grad applicant data  
- clinic satisfctn srvys  
- K/S standard rwv  
- portfolios | to TracDat:  
- accred. fdbck  
- dept. discussion/ response | to accreditor:  
- annual report  
- TracDat:  
- compiled data  
- annual report | |
| ANALYSIS | dept discussion:  
- annual review rpt  
- accreditation fdbck  
- action plan and program goals | - compile data  
- draft annual report | |
| REPORTING/USE | GEC: Goals 7-10 | to TracDat:  
- accred. fdbck  
- dept. discussion/ response | |

| YEAR TWO | |
|-----------| |
| Identical to year one. | |

| YEAR THREE | |
|-----------| |
| Identical to year one, but with the addition of Gen Ed data collection. | |
| PREPARATION | - finalize action plan  
- committee recs for program goal refinements | - finalize program goals  
- refine procedures and processes | - program goals integrated into action plan  
- assign responsibilities | - K/S standard rwv  
- National exam pass rates  
- Completion rates  
- Employer survey  
- Alumni surveys | |
| DATA COLLECTION | - clinic satisfctn srvys  
- K/S standard rwv  
- K/S quiz | - exit surveys  
- preceptor surveys  
- grad applicant data  
- clinic satisfctn srvys  
- K/S standard rwv  
- portfolios | - gen ed goals 5&6 | to accreditor:  
- annual report  
- TracDat:  
- compiled data  
- annual report | |
| ANALYSIS | dept discussion:  
- annual review rpt  
- accreditation feedback  
- action plan and program goals | - compile data  
- draft annual report | |
| REPORTING/USE | GEC: Goals 1,2&3 | to TracDat:  
- accred. fdbck  
- dept. discussion/ response | |

| YEAR FOUR | |
|-----------| |
| Identical to year one, but with the addition of Gen Ed data analysis and reporting. | |
| PREPARATION | - finalize action plan  
- committee recs for program goal refinements | - finalize program goals  
- refine procedures and processes | - program goals integrated into action plan  
- assign responsibilities | - K/S standard rwv  
- National exam pass rates  
- Completion rates  
- Employer survey  
- Alumni surveys | |
| DATA COLLECTION | - clinic satisfctn srvys  
- K/S standard rwv  
- K/S quiz | - exit surveys  
- preceptor surveys  
- grad applicant data  
- clinic satisfctn srvys  
- K/S standard rwv  
- portfolios | - gen ed goals 5&6 | |
| ANALYSIS | dept discussion:  
- annual review rpt  
- accreditation feedback  
- action plan and program goals | - compile data  
- draft annual report | - gen ed goals 5&6 | |
| REPORTING/USE | GEC: Goals 1,2&3 | to TracDat:  
- accred. fdbck  
- dept. discussion/ response | - GEC report: Goals 5&6 | |

| YEAR FIVE | |
|-----------| |
| Identical to year one. | |
Worksheet: planning and implementing an assessment project

This template\(^\text{29}\) may be useful after the department/program has articulated program SLOs. Like the preceding template, it maps out a path from SLO and learning opportunities to assessment. This template can help a program create a document that explains how an assessment project will be carried out and what will be done with the results.

Basic departmental information, contact people, and date

OUTCOME(S) BEING ASSESSED:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Assessment question(s) and/or goal(s) of assessment activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given the outcome(s) being assessed, what does the program want to find out (see p.16)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a question(s) that is meaningful to faculty members or intended users.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Intended uses for the assessment results and primary users of the assessment results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. List the intended uses for the assessment results such as the specific actions that might be taken if the criteria for success are not met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. List the primary users of the assessment results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Distribution and discussion of results (see p.31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List who is responsible for distributing results and who will receive results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State how the distribution of data will take place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State how and when discussion of results will take place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Complete the following grid, adding rows for each method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Outcome assessed and/or assessment question</th>
<th>2. Method(s) to collect evidence</th>
<th>3. Method to analyze/evaluate*</th>
<th>4. Timeline &amp; status</th>
<th>5. Lead team members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief description of what will be collected, how, and by whom. (Enter one method per row; add rows as needed.)</td>
<td>Brief description of how the evidence will be analyzed or evaluated and by whom. (When applicable, include scoring criteria or rubric.)</td>
<td>List the semester/dates when the evidence will be collected and evaluated.</td>
<td>List the name(s) of those who will oversee collecting, analyzing, reporting, and using results.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Examples of methods to analyze or evaluate evidence: apply a rubric, score a multiple-choice test, external evaluation by national testing agency, analyze interview transcripts, summarize survey responses (see p.15).
6. **Program size and sampling technique**
State the number of students in the program or the number who graduate each year.
Describe the sampling technique to be used (most programs will sample instead of collecting and evaluating evidence from every student; see p.23).

7. **Other important information**

**Critique your assessment project plan**
If the plan is a good one, you should answer “yes” to these questions (which appear in rubric form on p.48):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Clarity:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Are the SLOs and assessment plan clear?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Could an educated reader (e.g., a student) understand what the expected student learning outcome is and how it will be evaluated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Propriety:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Is the plan designed to be conducted ethically, legally, and with regard for the welfare of those involved and those affected by the results?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Are provisions for the aggregation of data included, if indicated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Accuracy:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Is the plan designed to reliably answer the assessment question(s) being asked?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Will it reveal and convey technically adequate information about student learning in the program?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Does it focus appropriately on culminating knowledge, skills, or dispositions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Does it plan for measuring learning at multiple points?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Utility:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Will the data resulting from this plan will be useful to the intended users as they work to improve student learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Feasibility:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Is the plan realistic, practical, diplomatic, and economical?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Does it build on current practice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ If it requires additional resources, are they reasonable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Dialogue:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Does the plan articulate how the program will discuss data and its implications?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Does it encourage joint decision-making in light of what the data may shows?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rubric: evaluating your assessment plan
This rubric\textsuperscript{30} may be helpful for thinking about the effectiveness of your plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of an Effective Plan</th>
<th>Characteristics of an Ineffective Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The SLOs and assessment plan are clear: an educated reader (e.g., a student) could understand o what the expected student objective is and o how it will be evaluated.</td>
<td>☐ The SLOs and assessment plan do not seem complete enough to evaluate their clarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Propriety</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The plan is designed to be conducted ethically, legally, and with regard for the welfare of those involved and those affected by the results. ☐ Provisions for the aggregation of data, when indicated, are included.</td>
<td>☐ The plan does not protect student privacy, ☐ is designed in such a way as to encourage or allow a focus on individual instructors or courses rather than program-wide student learning, ☐ or is in some other way ethically or legally problematic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The plan is designed to reliably answer the assessment question(s) being asked: o to reveal and convey technically adequate information about student learning in the program, o with an appropriate focus on culminating knowledge, skills, or dispositions, and o planning for measures at multiple points.</td>
<td>☐ It is not clear yet whether the assessment instruments measure whether a student has achieved a program SLO. ☐ The plan does not include measures taken at multiple points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Utility</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The data resulting from this plan will be useful to the intended users as they work to improve student learning.</td>
<td>☐ The resulting data from the assessment will be of limited use to faculty in improving student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feasibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The plan is realistic, practical, diplomatic, and economical. ☐ It will not involve a complete “reinvention of the wheel,” but builds on current practice. ☐ May require additional resources, but within reason.</td>
<td>☐ The assessment plan is too complex to be performed with the resources available and/or ☐ requires the faculty to completely change the way they teach or practice their discipline, and/or ☐ will take too much time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The plan provides for the discussion of data and its implications, and joint decision-making in light of what it shows.</td>
<td>☐ The assessment includes little provision for dialogue among all relevant faculty/staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2: BU’s guiding assertions about goals and principles

Disclaimer: Priorities change. The quotations here come from the most current available documents as of fall 2013. It would be wise to confirm current goals. In most cases in this section, hyperlinks to relevant websites will make this confirmation relatively simple.

Mission Statement

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania is an inclusive comprehensive public university that prepares students for personal and professional success in an increasingly complex global environment.


Value Statement

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania students, faculty and staff value:

- Collaboration
- Community
- Critical thinking
- Diversity
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Knowledge
- Opportunity
- Personal and professional growth
- Respect


Vision Statements

Bloomsburg University aspires to:

- be a premier public comprehensive university, recognized as a center of thinking, learning and academic excellence
- anticipate and address the changing needs of the Commonwealth
- be a diverse community that produces positive change.
- provide resources to maximize opportunities for success
- be a good steward of our resources and the environment
- develop individuals to be contributing citizens


Bloomsburg University Strategic Issues and Directions

1. Enhancing academic excellence

Enhancing academic excellence is fundamental to achieving the university vision. Academic excellence creates personal and professional success for all learners. It is pivotal in recruiting and retaining talented and diverse students and personnel.

To enhance academic excellence, Bloomsburg University will:

- Create a learning environment for personal and professional success in a diverse and rapidly changing world.
- Provide professional development and scholarship opportunities for all university personnel.
- Integrate diversity in the learning environment.
- Implement and monitor a systematic process of assessment.
2. Achieving excellence while ensuring fiscal sustainability

As a public institution historically dependent on tuition and state appropriations, Bloomsburg University strives to maintain fiscal responsibility and enhance academic excellence. New sources of funding must be identified and developed while being good stewards of existing resources.

To achieve excellence while ensuring fiscal sustainability, Bloomsburg University will:

- Identify, examine, align and allocate resources to meet institutional priorities.
- Coordinate efforts to identify and develop new resources in accord with university strategic priorities.

3. Designing an enrollment vision in terms of demand, program mix, capacity

Bloomsburg University must respond to the demands of a rapidly changing job market and shifting demographics. Bloomsburg must develop academic and co-curricular programs that support student retention, graduation and personal and career success. Facilities, services and personnel must align with student needs.

To design an enrollment vision, Bloomsburg University will:

- Assess enrollment trends and projections in terms of capacity, student demographics, target populations and demand.
- Develop a realistic, dynamic, budget-sensitive, comprehensive enrollment management plan that supports student access and success.
- Implement and monitor a comprehensive enrollment plan relative to academic excellence, market demands and financial resources.

4. Fostering and developing a strong sense of community

Building a strong sense of community involves stakeholders from all areas of Bloomsburg University, including groups that have been traditionally underrepresented. A strong sense of community enhances commitment among members, mutual support of stakeholders, higher morale, a global perspective and diversity of members.

To foster and develop a strong sense of community, Bloomsburg University will:

- Communicate effectively among all stakeholders.
- Promote a diverse community that accepts and supports cultural and social differences.
- Encourage globalism and environmental awareness and responsibility.
- Improve town/gown relations.
- Increase student engagement with the university and community.
- Strengthen connection with alumni.


General Education Goals and recommended VALUE rubrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Linkages with Proposed Goals for General Education and AACU Rubrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Education Student Learning Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Communicate effectively in writing, oral presentation, and visual argument</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Find, evaluate, and ethically use information using appropriate technology</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Apply critical analysis, quantitative reasoning and problem solving skills</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 4. Analyze the implications of diversity among human groups, their histories, cultures and the plurality of human experiences | • Inquiry and Analysis  
• Critical Thinking  
• Intercultural Knowledge and Competence  
• Ethical Reasoning  
• Integrative Learning |
|---|---|
| 5. Demonstrate knowledge of natural sciences principles, concepts and methods | • Inquiry and Analysis  
• Critical Thinking  
• Quantitative Literacy  
• Problem Solving  
• Ethical Reasoning  
| Integrative Learning |
| 6. Demonstrate knowledge of social sciences principles, concepts and methods | • Inquiry and Analysis  
• Critical Thinking  
• Quantitative Literacy  
| Problem Solving  
• Ethical Reasoning  
| Integrative Learning |
| 7. Analyze and evaluate artistic and literary contributions of diverse cultures across time | • Inquiry and Analysis  
• Critical Thinking  
• Creative Thinking  
| Reading  
• Problem Solving  
| Integrative Learning |
| 8. Demonstrate basic communication skills in a second language | • Written Communication  
• Oral Communication  
| |
| 9. Participate in physical activity and evaluate the consequences of health decisions | • Critical Thinking  
• Teamwork  
• Problem Solving  
| Ethical Reasoning  
| Foundations, Skills for Lifelong Learning |
| 10. Exhibit responsible citizenship | • Teamwork  
• Civic Engagement  
• Intercultural Knowledge and Competence  
| Ethical Reasoning  
| Foundations, Skills for Lifelong Learning  
| Integrative Learning |


**Appendix 3: Standards and policies with implications for assessment**

**Disclaimer**: Policies and expectations change. The quotations here come from the most current available documents as of spring 2013. It would be wise to confirm current policies and expectations.

**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**Middle States Commission on Higher Education: accreditation standards for assessment**

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education accredits Bloomsburg. The consequences of losing accreditation are serious. For instance, if we are not accredited our students cannot receive federal student loans or scholarship; BU graduates may be denied admission to graduate school; and departments may not be accredited. Assessment pervades the Middle States Commission’s standards, appearing most directly in standards 7 and 14:

**Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**
The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

**Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**
Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education: 14 standards for accreditation

**Institutional Context**

**Standard 1: Mission and Goals**
The institution’s mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates who the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution’s stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are used to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

**Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**
An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

**Standard 3: Institutional Resources**
The human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution’s mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution’s mission, the effective and efficient use of the institution’s resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

**Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**
The institution’s system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resources development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

**Standard 5: Administration**
The institution’s administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution’s organization and governance.

**Standard 6: Integrity**
In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

**Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**
The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

**Educational Effectiveness**

**Standard 8: Student Admission and Retention**
The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its
mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students’ educational goals.

**Standard 9: Student Support Services**
The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students.

**Standard 10: Faculty**
The institution’s instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

**Standard 11: Educational Offerings**
The institution’s educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

**Standard 12: General Education**
The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

**Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**
The institution’s programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

**Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**
Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education, guiding principles for assessment

**Guiding Principle 1: Existing Culture**
Begin by acknowledging the existence of assessment throughout the institution in order to ensure that the assessment plan is grounded in the institutional culture.

**Guiding Principle 2: Realistic Plan with Appropriate Investment of Resources**
Plans for assessment at the program, school, and institutional levels should be realistic and supported by the appropriate investment of institutional resources.

**Guiding Principle 3: Involvement of Faculty and Students**
Academic leadership is necessary in order to gain the support of faculty members, staff, administrators, and students across the institution.

**Guiding Principle 4: Clear Goals**
Assessment activities should be focused by clear statements of expected learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competencies).

**Guiding Principle 5: Appropriate Methods**
Assessment should involve the systematic and thorough collection of direct and indirect evidence of student learning, at multiple points in time and in various situations, using a variety of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods that are embedded in courses, programs, and overall institutional processes.

**Guiding Principle 6: Useful Data**

Data gained through assessment should be meaningful. They should be used, first, to enhance student learning at the institutional, program, and course levels; second, in institutional planning and resources allocation; and third, to evaluate periodically the assessment process itself for its comprehensiveness and efficacy.

The guiding principles are intended to help institutions answer the following general questions:

- What should our students learn?
- What are our institutional strengths and challenges for improvement?
- How are we currently organized for evaluating learning?
- Which activities have we conducted to define and evaluate all of our institutional goals, with special emphasis on goals for student learning?
- What existing evidence do we have regarding student learning and achievement, and what have we learned from that evidence?
- What actions will we take to build on our strengths and address our weaknesses regarding student learning?


**BU’s 2008 Assessment and Evaluation Task Force Recommendations**

Developed by the AETF’s Departmental Assessment of Student Learning Subcommittee. Selected passages.

Departmental Assessment of Student Learning, a Subcommittee of the Assessment and Evaluation Task Force (the Subcommittee) encourages discussion throughout the University community on how to make assessment of student learning (ASL) a more meaningful and permanent feature of academic and non-academic departments. After careful consideration and discussion, the Subcommittee is convinced that ASL can provide valuable information on teaching effectiveness, and can improve student learning. However, its use on campus appears to be uneven and, in some cases, viewed as an imposition. In order for ASL to be assimilated into the University culture, it should

1. originate from faculty;
2. provide meaningful data, that may or may not be easily quantifiable;
3. be overseen by a committee; and
4. be supported by a University resource that is centrally located, and staffed with a Director of Assessment of Student Learning.

Specifically, the Subcommittee proposes the following: the Omnibus Form be amended [to include a

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31 The AETF was convened by Provost Jim Mackin in 2005, who invited nominations from each department for a representative to serve on the committee. The AETF as a whole was chaired by Assistant Dean of Liberal Arts Jim Brown, and was divided into four subcommittees. The departmental assessment subcommittee was comprised of: Lisa Stallbaumer-Beishline (History; chairperson), Diane Angelo (Audiology and Speech Pathology), Janet Bodenman (Communication Studies), Kevin Bowman (Economics), Mary Ann Cegielsky (Nursing), Michael Coffta (Library), Laura Davis (Legal Studies), John Morgan (Chemistry), Terry Riley (English), Cynthia Venn (Geography and Geosciences).
provision for the assessment of student learning] (Proposal 1); that ASL Plans and Reports remain distinct from Strategic Plans (Proposal 2); the University create an ASL Advisory Committee (Proposal 3); each college create a fully operational and active ASL Committee (Proposal 4); and the University create and staff a position for a Director of Assessment of Student Learning (Proposal 5). The proposals are detailed below.

Departmental Assessment of Student Learning, a Subcommittee of the Assessment and Evaluation Task Force. (January 24, 2008). “Recommendations for assessment of student learning.” Memorandum to President Soltz; Provost Mackin; Asst VP of Academic Affairs Jonathan Lincoln; Deans Ermatinger, Marande, Mark, Martin; Assistant Dean James Brown; Members of BUCC; Members of Meet and Discuss; and Chair of University Forum.


BU’s 2009 Self Study in preparation for the Middle States Commission’s site visit
Sections relevant to assessment of student learning. The procedures given here are out of date, but reflect what a thirteen-member committee found when it studied current assessment practices in 2009.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Institutional Assessment and Assessment of Student Learning
...The coordination of institutional assessment and strategic planning is assigned to the Office of Academic Affairs. However, the Office of Institutional Research, which reports to the Office of Academic Affairs, serves as the primary repository of institutional data. It is responsible for the collection, analysis and distribution of much of the data used in administrative planning and decision-making.

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is currently responsible for coordinating the assessment of student learning at the University. He is assisted by the Associate Dean of Liberal Arts who coordinates most of the university-wide surveys and tests that are conducted as part of the University’s assessment program.

...Because the University has an inefficient support mechanism for its assessment activities, this self-study recommends that the University should create an Office of Outcomes Assessment and an elected Outcomes Assessment Committee.

CHAPTER FIVE: Institutional Assessment and Assessment of Student Learning
Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning
Analysis
The University is committed to a culture of institutional assessment on campus. The institution’s goals are clearly articulated and processes to achieve those goals have been documented. The results are assessed annually to ensure that the planning process is: useful; cost-effective; accurate and truthful; and organized, systematized and sustained.

Although less evolved than institutional assessment, assessment of student learning has become a part of the culture of the academic departments and the library during the last decade. Most of the recent changes to the academic program at the University can be traced to recommendations resulting from student assessment activities.

Strategic Planning and Assessment Cycle
The University follows a prescribed planning and assessment process. The key elements of the process
are:

- **June:** The University’s SAP results for the academic year just ended are submitted to the Office of the Chancellor at PASSHE.
- **August:** The University’s Strategic Plan and SAP results for the year just ended are reviewed by the President’s Advisory Council and the Council of Trustees.
- **September:** The SAP and University Strategic Plan results are reported to the University Forum and the Planning and Budget Committee. The results are placed on the university web-site. Final budget decisions for the current academic year are reported to the Planning and Budget Committee.
- **October:** The vice presidents’ “responses to the Five-Year Reviews” are presented to the Planning and Budget Committee and the President’s Advisory Council.
- **November:** Evaluations of unit strategic plans for the next academic year are made by the Planning and Budget Committee.
- **April:** Individual Departmental Action Plans for new expenditures are presented to the Planning and Budget Committee. The action plans are then prioritized and recommended to the president.

Guided by the Vision 2010 statement and the various long range planning documents compiled by the University, each year, members of the senior management review the goals and objectives included in the strategic plan. Then, each academic and administrative department is responsible for reviewing their plan to accomplish the goals and objectives that fall within its area of responsibility.


### Middle States Commission’s 2009 recommendations to BU about assessment

#### Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**

...Although a culture of assessment fully exists at the level of institutional review, it is not well developed at the level of student learning assessment. Among the college, both direct and indirect assessment activities are expected, with results reviewed annually by an Outcomes Assessment Committee. However, the results are often reported in narrative form with little supporting quantitative data. Thus, the information is more anecdotal in nature. Although assessment plans are required and there appears to be a standard form for planning and reporting, a simplified template for all to follow may give more consistency to reporting and data collection. Further, the evidence shows that the existence of assessment activities, such as capstone experiences and portfolios, is inconsistent; not all academic departments or programs engage in assessment activities beyond classroom or course assignments. Also, in many courses, student learning outcomes are not linked to the course or learning objectives. The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Center (TALE) is addressing this issue through faculty development activities in assessment.

Despite the weakness in its structure and consistency, student learning assessment does connect to overall institutional assessment through unit strategic and action plans, which are reviewed annually by the Deans and the Provost and encouraged by performance incentives from PASSHE.

**Recommendation:**

That the institution proceed with self-study recommendations 4 and 5 and create an Office of
Outcomes Assessment (or Institutional Effectiveness) and an elected Outcomes Assessment (or student learning assessment) Committee.

**Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**

**Summary of Evidence and Findings**
...Evidence demonstrates that assessment of student learning is occurring, albeit not as evolved as assessment of institutional effectiveness. As a part of unit strategic planning, departments and programs are required to include learning assessment. Results are reported annually (more qualitatively than quantitatively) and reviewed by the Deans and the Provost.

A report of a departmental assessment subcommittee with recommendations for assessment of student learning included the recommendation that assessment of student learning be supported by a University resources that is centrally located, and staffed with a Director of Assessment of Student Learning.

**Recommendation (affirmed relative to commentary for Standard 7):**
That the University appoint a Director of Assessment of Student Learning to centralize and consolidate these assessment activities.

Evaluation Team Representing the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. “Report to the Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students of Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. Prepared after study of the institution’s self-study report and a visit to the campus on April 5-8, 2009.”


**BU’s 2011 Follow-Up report to the Middle States Commission**
...because the President considered the creation of an Office of Outcomes Assessment a major priority, in May 2009, he established the Office of Planning and Assessment (OPA) and appointed Dr. Sheila Dove Jones, the existing Director of the TALE (Teaching and Learning Enhancement) Center as the Interim Director...

The current mission of the OPA is to achieve the following outcomes:
- Development and implementation of university assessment and program review processes that meet various accountability expectations and regional accreditation requirements.
- Implementation of a valid university-wide assessment system of general education student learning outcomes and university effectiveness.
- Provision of assistance to the four colleges and academic departments to identify appropriate indicators and evaluation measures of assessing student learning.
- Development and utilization of appropriate student information databases for assessment purposes.
- Development and provision of workshops on assessment for general faculty and administrators.
- Documentation of university strategic plan goals and outcomes, student learning outcomes and other assessment results using technology.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the assessment program to make recommendations for improvement through consultation with deans, faculty, and academic administrators.
- Development and monitoring of the budget for university-wide assessment activities.

The administration has made a commitment to provide sufficient financial resources to enable the OPA to operate as an autonomous unit.
Policies, Rules, and Procedures Document 3612: General Education Requirement...requires that: The General Education Council, in collaboration with the Director of the Office of Planning and Assessment, determines the effectiveness of the General Education program and makes recommendations. In order to facilitate the review of all assessment activities at the university, in spring 2010, the Director of OPA oversaw installation of the TracDat software system...In spring 2010, the Director of OPA set up a series of required training sessions for all department chairs and secretaries which enabled them to learn how to use the TracDat system...During the next several months many of the academic departments began using the system to store their assessment instruments and results. For the first time in the history of Bloomsburg University, the Director of OPA can track all reported assessment activity at the University. Once the new general education curriculum is fully implemented, all assessment results mandated by the general education Policies, Rules, and Procedures Document 3612...will be stored in the TracDat system and standardized reports will be available.

PASSHE and BU policies on assessing student learning

Disclaimer: Policies and expectations change. The quotations here come from the most current available documents as of fall 2013. It would be wise to confirm current policies and expectations. In most cases in this section, hyperlinks to relevant websites will make this confirmation relatively simple.

PASSHE Policy on assessing student learning outcomes

C. Requirements
1. System universities shall develop and implement methods for assessing the most important student learning goals or outcomes in the following areas:
   - Basic Skills or Developmental Programs
   - General Education
   - Undergraduate Academic Majors
   - Academic Minors (where no major is present)
   - Graduate Programs
   - Co-Curricular Programs (with student development goals)
   Assessment findings should be systematically analyzed and used as a basis for making changes in curriculum, instruction, advising, or other aspects of an educational program in order to strengthen student learning and development.

2. Although outcomes assessment must be an ongoing, cumulative process, reporting (for System-level purposes) normally will occur in conjunction with the five-year review program cycle, in accord with Board Policy 1986-04-A. Summaries of individual program reviews submitted to the Division of Academic and Student Affairs should list strategies that have been employed during the past five years to assess learning outcomes for that program and note changes that have been or will be implemented as a result of assessment findings.

3. Proposals for new academic programs should include the major student learning outcomes that the program expects to produce, along with some indication of how faculty plan to assess student achievement of those outcomes.
**D. Principles and Guidelines**

1. **Assessment of academic and co-curricular programs** should be designed, implemented, and interpreted by the faculty, students, and staff most directly associated with the program. Administrators should provide coordination, support, professional development opportunities, and technical assistance as needed. Each university should establish some mechanism for monitoring the extent and effectiveness of learning outcomes assessment in its educational programs. External reviews of the assessment process should be included, as appropriate.

2. Outcomes assessment strategies provide data about student needs, progress, and achievement and about the strengths and weaknesses of educational programs. Findings from outcomes assessment are to be used to improve programs, not to evaluate the performance of individual faculty or staff members; other processes exist for that purpose.

3. Students must be informed early of the university’s commitment to assessment and of their obligation to participate in assessment activities. Findings from formative assessments at the beginning and during the course of their studies and from course-embedded assessments should be shared with students to assist them in understanding and working toward learning goals. The university may require students to participate in most assessment activities, but, ultimately, the goal is to establish a “culture of assessment,” in which both faculty and students regard outcomes assessment as a critical part of teaching and learning.

4. Given the multifaceted, cumulative nature of learning, assessment is most effective when multiple strategies are employed. “Indicators,” including what students and alumni say on surveys or in interviews, as well as many other kinds of data, provide indirect evidence of student learning and of program strengths and weaknesses. Measures of student performance—comprehensive examinations, problem-solving exercises, demonstrations, observations of student behavior, research projects, analysis of student work through portfolios, for example—more directly assess students’ learning in relation to particular program goals. Indicator data are often more easily obtained and can be very useful, but direct measures of student learning also must be developed for and integrated into each educational program.

5. Direct assessments of student learning generally are linked to particular learning goals or desired outcomes in terms of acquisition of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values. Such goals need not be regarded as unchangeable; rather, they are likely to evolve and change as increasing amounts of data become available on actual learning outcomes and on the expectations of employers, graduate programs, and, indeed, students themselves. To be most effective, assessment should focus on learning outcomes that are regarded as important by the faculty, staff, and the students involved.

6. Although extra time for planning and professional development may be required when assessment is initiated, both formative (including classroom assessment) and summative assessment strategies must be incorporated into the regular instructional and scholarly activities of an academic department or other unit; development and testing of new assessment strategies and analysis of assessment findings and their implications for continuous improvement are essential scholarly activities, for which faculty most involved should be recognized and rewarded.
7. Given the differences in programs for student preparation and in assessment strategies used within and across universities, assessment findings cannot be used for comparative purposes; however, the quality, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness of a department’s or an institution’s overall assessment program in promoting improvement are important indicators of organizational performance.

E. Implementation
Implementation of the expectations enunciated in this policy already is under way at State System universities. Summaries of assessment activities undertaken by individual academic and student affairs units are to be submitted, along with the summary of the unit’s five-year program review, to the Division of Academic and Student Affairs by the annual July 31 deadline.

In addition, university presidents should submit general plans for assessing the outcomes of basic skills programs, General Education, co-curricular programs, and graduate programs, along with a description of the institution’s mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the overall outcomes assessment effort, by a deadline to be assigned by the chancellor. The vice chancellor for academic and student affairs will report progress to the Board of Governors in January of 1998 and will issue written summaries periodically of how assessment is being used to continuously improve State System educational programs.

http://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG_Policies/Policy%201997-01.pdf

BU course proposals—SLOs and Course Assessment
Policy: Portions of the Master Syllabus policy relevant to assessment:

Glossary of Terms:
Program Goals — the general ends towards which effort is directed, what you want to have happen; they are not necessarily measurable or assessable directly. Programs have goals.

Student Learning Objectives — because the goals are not necessarily themselves assessable and measurable, we set objectives which are proxies for the goals. Objectives are stated in a way such that they are directly measurable or assessable. Courses have student learning objectives.

Expected Outcomes – the actual results of the course. They cannot be specified in advance. The outcomes are used to determine how well the objectives have been met.

11. Student Learning Objectives: State objectives in a way such that they are directly measurable or assessable. In list form, state what knowledge, skills, applications, creative endeavors, etc., the successful student, upon completion of this course, should be able to demonstrate. Individual instructors may add to Student Learning Objectives, but the intent here is that the Student Learning Objectives in this Master Course Syllabus should apply to all sections of the course.

14. Course Assessment: State how it will be assessed that the course meets each of the student learning objectives. Course development is an evolutionary process and the course assessments will assist the department in changing the course to meet the outcomes and/or changing the outcomes so that the course better reflects the goals of the program.

BU PRP 3233: Required Format for Master Course Syllabi (fall 2013).
http://www.bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3233

BU General Education assessment
The General Education Council, in “Guidelines for General Education Proposals.” adds further
requirements to section 14 for courses being proposed as additions to the General Education program:

**14. Course Assessment:** In addition to other information required in this section, also include the department’s plan (including frequency) for assessment of the course’s contribution to the General Education Goal(s) specified, and a statement acknowledging that assessment data in an appropriate form will be shared with the Office of Planning and Assessment as requested for use in University-wide General Education assessment.

BU General Education Council, Guidelines for General Education Proposals (October 2011, revised October 2012):

**Policy: General Education assessment requirement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All courses and co-curricular learning experiences submitted for General Education consideration must have appropriate direct measurement instruments to assess Student Learning Objectives. Direct evidence of student learning is tangible, visible, self-explanatory, and compelling evidence of exactly what students have and have not learned, when compared to the Student Learning Objectives.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Departments and divisions must use assessments that can be aligned with one or more elements of the VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) developed by the Association of American College and Universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Departments and divisions have the flexibility to select elements from the different VALUE rubrics or add elements to reflect unique student learning objectives. Departments and divisions may change the content of the rubric elements to reflect their individual disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Direct evidence of student performance can take many forms and must be documented using consistent instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All assessment data must be collected and reviewed by the appropriate academic departments. Data must be submitted annually to the Office of Planning and Assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The General Education Council, in collaboration with the Director of the Office of Planning and Assessment, determines the effectiveness of the General Education program and makes recommendations.</td>
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BU PRP 3612: General Education Requirements:
http://www.bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3612

**Relevant General Education Council bylaws**

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<th>• The GEC, in consultation with departments, will recommend targets for the Goals for General Education Student Learning Outcomes as revealed by assessments and inform the University of those targets. The GEC will use BUCC approved targets to determine whether the Goals for Student Learning Outcomes of General Education are being achieved and report that determination to the University.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The GEC will receive assessment data concerning all aspects General Education and work with Departments and Colleges to use that data to improve General Education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BU General Education Council Bylaws (approved by BUCC & Provost spring 2011):

**Relevant General Education Council operating procedures:**

| Annually, starting in the fall of 2011, the Director of Planning and Assessment will provide the council with assessment data relevant to the goals of the General Education Program on the previous |
academic year. The council will review the data in relation to established targets. The council will investigate areas of concern and make appropriate recommendations to the BUCC. Results and recommendations of the review will be communicated to the relevant departments and programs as soon as possible.

Starting in 2014, within every five year period, the council will conduct a detailed review of the Goals of the General Education Student Learning Outcomes to determine the appropriateness of the goals, the assessments, the targets, and the courses and co-curricular learning experiences related to each goal. In particular, the council will review master course syllabi of general education courses and other documents to ensure they have been reviewed and updated within the last five years. When appropriate, the council will make recommendations to the BUCC, the college or colleges, departments, or others as appropriate. The Director of Planning and Assessment will provide the council with assessment and other data for the review. The initial schedule for this review is as follows:

- Academic Year 2014-2015: goals 1, 2, & 3
- Academic Year 2015-2016: goals 1, 2, & 3
- Academic Year 2016-2017: goals 4, 5 & 6
- Academic Year 2017-2018: goals 7, 8, 9 & 10
- Academic Year 2018-2019: work with Middle States Self Study Steering Committee

The chair will report the results of the annual review of the program and the detailed review of the learning outcomes to the University community including a formal report of the results to the BUCC, the Forum and others as requested.

BU General Education Council Operating Procedures (approved by BUCC & Provost spring 2011):

PASSHE and BU Program Review requirements

Disclaimer: Policies and expectations change. The quotations here come from the most current available documents as of fall 2013. It would be wise to confirm current policies and expectations. In most cases in this section, hyperlinks to relevant websites will make this confirmation relatively simple.

PASSHE program review guidelines: overview

B. Guidelines for Program Review
1. Cycle. All university programs not subject to specialized accreditation shall be evaluated at least once every five years; when deemed necessary, the university president may require a shorter review interval for given programs. At least once every 10 years, each program not subject to specialized accreditation shall be reviewed by an appropriate external evaluator.

2. Types of Reviews. The full review is for programs not subject to specialized accreditation and requires external consultation. The president or designee may designate a program subject to specialized accreditation for a full program review. The modified review is for programs subject to specialized accreditation. The modified review must include the accreditor’s recommendations/suggestions and rejoinder, when appropriate.

3. Process. Each University shall have guidelines and procedures for program review including
timelines that provide for ample lead time for programs to be reviewed in any given year and a schedule for responding to review findings and recommendations.

4. Criteria for Full Review of Academic and Academic- and Student- Support Programs. The Office of the Chancellor shall, in consultation with State System Universities, establish and review criteria for the academic and academic- and student-support program reviews.

Program review guidelines: administrative procedures

PASSHE Academic Program review: administrative procedure

3. Criteria for Full Review of Academic Programs
A self-study shall be conducted for all academic programs scheduled for review. Reviews of academic programs shall include analyses of data pertaining to the following criteria:
A. *Goals set during last review and progress in meeting those goals
B. *Mission centrality
C. *Environmental scan (covering topics such as changing student characteristics, impact of technology on services, evolving student expectations, and federal and state statutes as well as policies and legal decisions affecting programs, continuing need for the program and currency of curriculum)
D. *Demand
   a. *Enrollment trends
   b. Student credit-hour generation
   c. Course enrollments
E. *Program Organization
   a. Structure—Include collaborations if appropriate.
   b. *Faculty credentials and diversity
   c. *Student diversity
   d. *Resources—Include items such as: staffing levels, facilities, and budget, or actual costs
   e. *Library and other learning resources
   f. *Academic policies, standards, and grading practices
F. Program and Student Learning Outcomes
   a. *Faculty achievements (e.g., grants, presentations, publications, awards)
   b. *Student achievements (e.g., awards, presentations, publications, research)
   c. *Program outcomes—include, as appropriate, items such as: Test scores, retention data, 4- and 6-year graduation rates, graduate and professional school acceptance rates, employment rates, employer assessments, and economic or community development.
   d. *Student Learning Outcomes—describe the knowledge and skill outcomes and how they are assessed.
G. Unique/special program features
H. *Post-review implementation plan—Faculty/staff in each program must develop an implementation plan for continuous enhancement by building upon strengths and addressing challenges. The implementation plan, which must also include goals and action items to be accomplished by the next review period, will become final only after it has been approved by the
president or designee.

Other categories of information may be added at the University’s discretion. The Office of the Chancellor, in consultation with State System universities, shall establish and review criteria for the academic program reviews.

* Required items.

**B. Evaluation**

1. **Internal Evaluators**: Committees appointed or designated to review self-study documents and make recommendations about the program in question should include at least two people not directly responsible for the program; these may include faculty or administrators from other units, students, and/or alumni.

**External Evaluators**: External review of existing academic, and academic- and student-support programs is a standard practice in higher education. The purpose of external review is to garner additional perspectives on program strengths and weaknesses from individuals in the field or a closely related field who are affiliated with other institutions. Except under special circumstances, external evaluations are to be from outside the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

**C. Reporting**

1. The president or designee shall keep the council of trustees apprised of program reviews and their outcomes.

2. **By August 15**, each University president or designee shall submit to the State System Office of Academic and Student Affairs a Program Review Summary Form for each program review completed during the year. For an accreditation review, however, a report shall be submitted by 30 days after the receipt of an external accreditation report. Such summaries should include the major findings and recommendations emanating from the review and note the planned timetable for implementing the recommendations. In specific instances, follow-up reports or information may be requested.

The Office of Academic and Student Affairs will develop an appropriate procedure and timeline for periodic reporting to the Board of Governors.

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**BU Academic Program review guidelines**

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**Guidelines for Program Review**

These guidelines are intended to provide a template for academic department self studies. They only apply to those departments and programs that are required to participate in five year reviews. Programs that are accredited by recognized professional accreditation agencies are not required to participate in five year reviews.

**Departmental Organization**

1. Assess the functionality of the overall structure of the department and identify areas with potential for improvement. This analysis should include the following:
   - Number of faculty
   - Basic department requirements for hiring, tenure, and promotion
• Department’s role within the college
• Departmental academic policies
• Achievement of departmental goals and objectives
• Departmental cooperation/interaction/collaboration with external entities such as other University departments, State System Universities, and external groups
• Appropriateness of staffing

2. Identify goals set during the last program review and the progress accomplished in meeting those goals.

3. Prepare an environmental scan including but not limited to the following topics:
   • Changing student characteristics
   • Impact of technology
   • State and federal statutes and other decisions affecting the program
   • Continuing need for the program
   • Currency of curriculum

Faculty

1. Assess faculty diversity including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, expertise, experience, relevant credentials and background.

2. Identify faculty achievements.

3. Evaluate the level of research/scholarly productivity within the department, including but not limited to the following items:
   • Publications of refereed scholarly articles, monographs, books, or presentations of original works
   • Papers presented at professional societies
   • Participation in juried, invitational or other shows
   • Offices held in professional organizations
   • Editorships of professional publications
   • Professional awards and honors
   • Applications for grants and grant acquisitions

4. Discuss the appropriateness of the areas of expertise represented in the department.

5. Discuss/describe faculty evaluation processes and procedures.

Program Learning Outcomes Assessment

1. Identify and assess learning goals and outcome assessment processes. Attach relevant documents such as assessment instruments, scoring rubrics, and summary outcome results.

2. Identify and assess the extent to which outcomes analyses are used to improve programs.

3. Include a summary of the Outcomes Assessment Plan from the Department Plan.

Professional Accreditation

Assess future accreditation plans for the department, including resource needs.

Curriculum

1. Identify and evaluate the adequacy of program degree completion requirements for departmental majors, minors, and career concentrations (as applicable) in terms of semester hours,
prerequisites, area distributions, and any special requirements such as competency tests. 

[Accrediting bodies may require review and/or revision of course syllabi as part of the program review process.]

2. Identify and discuss the participation of other groups such as advisory boards, students, and alumni in developing departmental curricula.

**Instruction**

1. Identify and discuss creative/innovative teaching strategies developed within the department.
2. Evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of program course offerings in terms of required and elective courses, prerequisites, and course descriptions. [Accrediting bodies may require review and/or revision of course syllabi as part of the program review process.]
3. Identify methods of instruction used including the use of technology. Attach Technology Infusion chart.
4. Identify and evaluate the extent to which evaluation of instruction, including peer observations, chair observations, and student evaluations related to instruction, is used to improve the delivery of the curriculum.

**Program Statistics**

Identify program demand, enrollment trends, student credit-hour generation, average course enrollments, and cost per student using information supplied by the Office of Institutional Research.

**Students**

1. Identify student achievements such as awards, presentations and publications.
2. Assess program outcomes via appropriate means such as the following:
   - Test scores from standardized testing administered to a sampling or population of program students
   - Retention data
   - Four-and-six-year graduation rates
   - Graduate/professional school placements
   - Employment rates
   - Employer assessments
3. Identify student recruitment and retention strategies utilized by the department.
4. Discuss student diversity including gender, ethnicity, special needs, or other factors. Assess the department’s effectiveness in serving students with special needs. Assess the department’s effectiveness in serving students who are members of historically underrepresented populations.
5. Discuss student recognition activities undertaken by the department.
6. Identify and discuss student satisfaction, including methods of assessment, summary outcomes, and actions taken in response to student satisfaction feedback.
7. Identify and discuss student involvement in departmental activities such as the following:
   - Program development
   - Policy and procedure development
   - Search and screen activities
8. Discuss the process of departmental academic advising and assess its effectiveness.
9. Discuss career advisement activities undertaken by the department.
10. Discuss career opportunities and internship opportunities undertaken by the department.

**Service**

1. Evaluate the department’s service activities, including but not limited to the following:
   - Faculty committee assignments
   - Faculty professional service activities
   - Faculty participation in local and regional community activities
   - Participation of the department in service to the college and University

2. Identify and evaluate student service activities that are carried out under the auspices of the department.

**Resources**

Evaluate the adequacy of resources, including the following:

- Annual budget
- Physical facilities
- Human (staff and faculty
- Library and other learning resources
- Computer and other educational technologies

**Strategic Planning**

Evaluate the planning process in the department and attach a summary of the Department Strategic Plan).

**External Reviewer Recommendations**

Provide a detailed response to each of the external reviewer recommendations from the previous Five Year Review.

2. There will be one reviewer from outside the SSHE for each BU program review. A department may also wish to add another reviewer from within the SSHE if approved by the appropriate Dean and the Provost.

3. Selection process for reviewers: The department should submit to the Dean at least three names for each review. These persons should be contacted by the department to determine willingness to serve and to obtain curriculum vitae. Once willingness to serve is established and curriculum vitae are received, the Dean of the college will select the person to be asked (in consultation with the Assistant Vice President & Dean for Graduate Studies and Research if a graduate program is involved).

4. The honorarium and other expenses to be paid are not to be discussed with the prospective reviewer by anyone other than the appropriate Dean or his/her designee.

5. In determining the qualifications for a suggested reviewer, the department needs to consider both the credentials of that individual and the institution(s) with which the individual is/has been associated. Keep in mind that we aspire not only to maintain our image of excellence, but to improve that image.

6. Arrangements for the reviewer’s visit (lodging, meals, and travel) are to be made by the Office of the Dean of the College.

When a reviewer is identified, the name, address, social security number, amount of honorarium and
expenses, and a brief outline of what is expected of the reviewer while on campus are to be provided to Sherri Valencik, Executive Assistant to the Provost, in Carver Hall. This information must be supplied at least four weeks prior to a reviewer’s visit. Contracts will not be issued and reviewers will not be paid if the four-week time period is not met. Honorarium and travel expenses will be paid to the reviewer upon receipt of the final report.

TIMETABLE:
March 1 (previous year Spring semester): Department selects self-study committee which must include at least two individual(s) from outside the unit being reviewed (i.e. faculty or administrators from other departments or college and, perhaps, a student to review the standard format material) and requests data from the Office of Institutional Research & Information Management, and Andruss Library.

April 1 to August 30 (previous year Spring semester): Department self-study committee plans the self-study to be conducted in the Fall and collects additional data and information.

September 1: Office of Institutional Research & Information Management provides data to the requesting department.

September through December: Department completes its self-study including the incorporation of institutional data. The format shall be standard for all departments and the required institutional data will be supplied by and in concert with the Office of Institutional Research & Information Management.

October 1 - December 31: The Office of the Dean of the College should make and finalize arrangements for reviewer’s visit including contracts for honorarium (with report deadline), travel, housing, etc., working through the Office of the Provost & VPAA for encumbrance of funds.

Late December - January 5: Self-study from the department is forwarded to the Dean, Provost, and Assistant Vice President & Dean of Graduate Studies & Research (if a graduate program is included in the review), and to the reviewer(s). In any event, the Dean and the Provost & VPAA shall receive the self-study by January 5th.

January 15 - March 15: Reviewer’s visit takes place. Minimally, those interviewed shall include the department, the College Dean, the Assistant Vice President & Dean for Graduate Studies & Research (if applicable), the Dean of Library Services, and the Provost & VPAA. The President shall be included if his/her calendar permits. Other interviews can be arranged as required.

By April 1: Report from reviewer(s) due. This report is to be sent separately to the department, the College Dean, the Assistant Vice President & Dean for Graduate Studies & Research (if applicable), the Provost, and the President. At the discretion of the President, the report may be shared with the SSHE Office of Academic Affairs and the Council of Trustees.

April 1 - May 9 (by the close of the Spring semester): The Dean and the Provost & VPAA will schedule a meeting with the department to discuss the reviewer’s findings. The Assistant Vice President & Dean for Graduate Studies & Research will be included if appropriate.

June 1: Within two weeks after the department meeting, but no later than June 1, there will be preparation of the report for the Board of Governors—a summary of each program review will be submitted to the Dean who will forward it to the Provost & VPAA. The Provost’s Office will submit the Summary Form from Academic Affairs via electronic mail to SSHE.
PASSHE Academic and Student Support program review: procedure

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<tr>
<td>A self-study shall be conducted for all academic- and student-support programs or services scheduled for review. At minimum, the following academic- and student-support programs shall be reviewed: library, student life, enrollment services (e.g., admissions, bursar, registrar), public safety, judicial affairs, financial aid, counseling, athletics, residence life, career services, academic support services, and disability services. Reviews of academic- and student-support programs shall include analyses of data pertaining to the following criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. *Goals set during last review and progress in meeting those goals</td>
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<td>B. *Mission centrality</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. *Environmental scan (covering topics such as changing student characteristics, impact of technology on services, evolving student expectations, and federal and state statutes as well as policies and legal decisions affecting services)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. *Demand</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. *Number of students served</td>
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<td>b. *Characteristics of clientele served, when appropriate</td>
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<td>c. Relationship to mandates and/or system requirements, when appropriate</td>
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<td>E. *Program Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Structure—Emphasis on how structure facilitates attainment of goals and objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. *Cooperation/interaction/collaboration with other University departments, with other State System Universities, and with appropriate external groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. *Faculty/staff credentials and diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. *Student-employee diversity</td>
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<td>e. *Resources—Analysis of the following: Use of technology, when appropriate; Appropriateness of staffing to university and program goals; Fiscal, human physical and other resources as appropriate facilities and equipment</td>
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<td>F. *Currency of departmental policies (development/revisions, reasons, impact, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Accreditation/approval, when appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>H. Program and Student Learning Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Faculty/staff achievements</td>
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<td>b. *Creative/innovative strategies</td>
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<td>c. *Student engagement/leadership/involvement in program development, policy development, employment searches, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. *Student learning outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. *Student satisfaction (e.g., Noel-Levitz, ACT, CIRP, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. *Effectiveness in serving minorities and other underrepresented groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. *Effectiveness in serving special-needs students, when appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Unique/special program features</td>
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<td>J. *Post-review implementation plan—Faculty/staff in each program must develop an implementation plan for continuous enhancement by building upon strengths and addressing challenges. The implementation plan, which must also include goals and action items to be accomplished by the next review period, will become final only after it has been approved by the president or designee.</td>
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Other categories of information may be added at the University’s discretion. The Office of the Chancellor, in consultation with State System universities, shall establish and review criteria for the academic- and
student-support programs reviews.

*Required items

B. Evaluation

**Internal Evaluators:** Committees appointed or designated to review self-study documents and make recommendations about the program in question should include at least two people not directly responsible for the program; these may include faculty or administrators from other units, students, and/or alumni.

**External Evaluators:** External review of existing academic, and academic- and student-support programs is a standard practice in higher education. The purpose of external review is to garner additional perspectives on program strengths and weaknesses from individuals in the field or a closely related field who are affiliated with other institutions. Except under special circumstances, external evaluations are to be from outside the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.


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**PASSHE SPRING 2013 PROPOSAL for program review reporting changes**

In spring 2013, PASSHE’s office of Academic and Student Affairs made a presentation to PASSHE school administrators suggesting changes to the five-year review process. These changes are not final. TracDat would play an infrastructural role in these changes, which in fact were presented by NuVentive, the company who sells TracDat, rather than PASSHE personnel. The changes proposed are primarily around transparency and reporting. Specifically, the proposal is to using TracDat SharePoint Option (which it refers to as TSO) to keep data current and share it more fully.

This proposal could make it easier for departments to obtain the data required for five-year reviews. It could also make it easier to submit the reviews.

The proposal does more than simply change reporting mechanisms. Two areas are particularly relevant to this handbook’s focus. First, the proposal mandates greater transparency. Second, while the majority of the data listed here as required for program review is consistent with existing five-year review requirements, requirements for evidence of assessment and assessment-based decision-making would be new.


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**APSCUF-STATE SYSTEM 2013 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT (CBA)**

The CBA does not consider assessment directly. It articulates faculty obligations in Article 4. Perhaps of relevance to the BUCC as it considers policies around assessment may be Article 31, Part E, which stipulates that administration’s rejections of BUCC’s recommended curricular actions must be justified in writing.
Appendix 4: VSA, College Portrait, and university-wide standardized tests

The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) is a national initiative intended to standardize information about higher education institutions to enable prospective students to make informed choices based on comparable information. Institutions provide standard data on things like tuition, fees, enrollment, and graduation rates, but also include information about student achievement as measured by one of a few standardized instruments permitted for this purpose. The information appears in an institution’s “College Portrait.”

Participation in the VSA is not voluntary for BU: all PASSHE schools are obliged to participate. Two standardized instruments, the National Survey of Student Engagement and the ETS Proficiency Profile (Abbreviated Form) are used to generate data about student learning and the student experience at BU.

PASSHE requires that College Portraits appear on PASSHE school websites in readily-accessible locations. Links to BU’s college portrait (http://www.collegeportraits.org/PA/BU) appear in several places on the BU website, including in the footer of each page and on the student consumer information page (http://bloomu.edu/hea/student_consumer).

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

PASSHE has chosen the National Survey of Student Engagement as an indirect measure of student learning experiences for purposes of, among other things, reporting to the VSA. The NSSE asks students about a range of extracurricular, residential, and academic college experiences.

Currently, the Office of Planning and Assessment recruits first year students and seniors to take the survey, offering incentives and relying on good will. It was given to at least some BU students in 2006 and 2008, before it was required by PASSHE, and since 2010 has been given during spring semesters. The NSSE is taken online.

Educational Testing Service (ETS) Proficiency Profile

The ETS Proficiency Profile is a test of students’ college level skills. Bloomsburg University has chosen the ETS Proficiency Profile as a direct measure of student learning. The ETS Proficiency Profile has been in use at BU since 2007, and is now being used as an indicator of student learning for the VSA, where it is presented as the required “value added” measure of student learning, answering the question, How do BU seniors do on the test, compared to BU first year students? The VSA requires that student learning measures be updated every three years; however, BU has decided to administer the Proficiency Profile and update results annually.

The ETS Proficiency Profile (Abbreviated Form) is currently required of first year students, who take the test in a controlled setting on campus; it takes about 40 minutes to complete. The ETS Proficiency Profile (Abbreviated Form) is not currently required of seniors. Currently, the Office of Planning and Assessment recruits seniors to take it. Seniors take the test online. In the 2011-12 academic year, 2,071
first year students and 194 seniors took the ETS Proficiency Profile.

BU uses the abbreviated form of the ETS Proficiency Profile, which means that the results are not reported for, and cannot be used for, gaining information about individual students for purposes such as course placement. The results are reported in aggregate form, and characterizations of student proficiency based on the test are characterizations of the cohort of students.

Placement tests—ACCUPLACER, language placement, and English 101 credit by exam

**ACCUPLACER**
The ACCUPLACER test is used assist in determining students' readiness for college level work and thus in scheduling for developmental courses, if necessary. The tests are given on campus to all first year and international students before they begin classes, often during orientation sessions in the summer. The test usually takes an hour and a half to two hours to complete, although students are allowed three hours. ACCUPLACER tests in reading (comprehension and sentence skills), writing (an essay scored by computer), and math (Elementary Algebra and College Level Math). ACCUPLACER testing is administered by the Office of Planning and Assessment.

**Language placement tests**
Language placement testing is administered by the Office of Planning and Assessment. The test has been developed locally. In addition to determining appropriate placement in language courses, qualifying scores on the tests earn students two GEPs for General Education Goal 8, “Demonstrate communication skills in a second language.” The test also serves as a placement tool for language courses.

**English 101: credit by exam**
Students with high SAT scores are invited to take a multi-phase portfolio writing exam to earn three college credits for (and also place out of) English 101: Foundations of College Writing. The English Department creates and administers the exam. In 2012, about 500 students were invited to take the exam, about 100 completed it, and about 70 earned credit for Foundations of College Writing.

**Appendix 5: Discipline-specific accrediting bodies for BU programs**
As of fall 2013. This table does not include current accreditation status or indicate degrees given. Most of the websites allow searches for accredited institutions. They also generally provide details on accrediting requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Accrediting body/bodies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSBo)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.aacsb.edu/">http://www.aacsb.edu/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Art/Art History</td>
<td>National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD)</td>
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<td>Audiology and Speech Language Pathology</td>
<td>Council on Academic Accreditation in American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (CAA/ASHA)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.asha.org/academic/accreditation/">http://www.asha.org/academic/accreditation/</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)</td>
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<td>Field</td>
<td>Accreditation Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Education</td>
<td>Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSBD)</td>
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<td>National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Note that NCATE is in the process of changing its name to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>American Chemical Society (ACS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer and Information Systems</td>
<td>Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSBD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.abet.org/">http://www.abet.org/</a></td>
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<td>(in moratorium, Spring 2013)</td>
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<td>Education of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing</td>
<td>Council on the Education of the Deaf (CED)</td>
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<td>(Exceptionality Programs)</td>
<td><a href="http://councilondeafed.org/">http://councilondeafed.org/</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.education.state.pa.us">http://www.education.state.pa.us</a></td>
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<td>Electrical and Electronic Engineering</td>
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<td>Exercise Science and Athletics</td>
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<td>Finance and Legal Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)</td>
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<td><a href="http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/">http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.aacn.nche.edu/ccne-accreditation">http://www.aacn.nche.edu/ccne-accreditation</a></td>
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<td>Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA)</td>
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<td><a href="http://home.coa.us.com/">http://home.coa.us.com/</a></td>
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<td>Sociology, Social Work and Criminal</td>
<td>Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)</td>
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<td>Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Education (College of Education)</td>
<td>National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.ncate.org/">http://www.ncate.org/</a></td>
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<td>Note that NCATE is in the process of changing its name to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)</td>
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<td>Theatre Arts</td>
<td>National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST)</td>
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<td><a href="http://nast.arts-accredit.org/">http://nast.arts-accredit.org/</a></td>
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GLOSSARY

ACCUPLACER—standardized placement test; a College Board product (see p.72)

benchmarking—the process of establishing shared standards (or benchmarks). This may be done with reference to local standards and local examples of student work, but should be informed by external standards. (See p.19.)

BUCC—Bloomsburg University Curriculum Committee. Elected BU committee that approves changes to the curriculum, including all course proposals. (See http://bloomu.edu/bucc.)

CBA—collective bargaining agreement. In this context, it refers to Union-PASSHE contracts, different for different unions. APSCUF (Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculty) is the faculty union. (For the APSCUF contract, see http://www.apscuf.com/members/contract.)

curricular mapping—the process of creating a synoptic view of the curriculum, documenting curricular opportunities that enable students to reach the program’s learning goals. A curricular map shows where students are introduced to the program’s central ideas, skills, and habits of mind, where those objectives are reinforced, and where students display their mastery of these objectives. (See p.11.)

direct and indirect measures of student learning—1. direct measure of student learning: a measure of student learning based directly on tangible, specific evidence seen in students’ actual performance. Direct measures include exams, papers, systematic observations of relevant student behavior, reports from internship supervisors, and standardized test scores. 2. indirect measure of student learning: a measure of student learning based upon data presumed to correlate with student learning but not directly indicative of it. Indirect measures include course grades, student or alumni ratings of their course knowledge or learning experience, and job placement rates. (See p.17 and http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE2_TypesAssessmentMeasures.pdf.)

ETS Proficiency Profile—standardized test of college preparedness; an Educational Testing Service product. (See p.71.)

formative and summative assessment—1. formative assessment: data gathered on student learning during the instructional process. It helps an instructor or program identify areas of weakness and strength and to modify instruction accordingly. Any assessment can be formative if its purpose is to improve student learning as instruction continues. 2. summative assessment—data gathered on student learning at the end of a course or program as a basis for judging student knowledge and skills. Any assessment can be summative if its purpose is to evaluate student learning and instruction after instruction has occurred. (See p.18.)

GEC—General Education Council. Elected BU committee that oversees the general education (MyCore) program at BU. Courses approved for GEPs have been approved by the GEC. The GEC is also responsible for planning assessment of the general education program. (See p.61 and http://bloomu.edu/general_education/council.)

GEPs—General Education Points. Starting fall 2012 at BU, students’ attainment of the ten general education goals (see p.50) is measured not in credit hours, but in GEPs. A single n-credit course may carry as many as n GEPs, perhaps toward more than one general education goal. In addition to taking two foundations courses (an approved foundational math course and Foundations of College Writing), students must accumulate 40 GEPs across multiple departments; different numbers of GEPs are required for different goals (see http://www.bloomu.edu/mycore/requirements). Courses carrying GEPs have been approved by the General Education Council (as well as the BUCC).

goals, objectives—the terms goals and objectives are used differently in different contexts (including different books about assessment). This document uses both, interchangeably, and does not adjudicate disputes over the terms, deferring instead to local use, and inviting its readers not to get bogged down in discussions of terminology. (See p.7, and detailed guidance on establishing goals from TALE at http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE1_ArticulateGoals_.pdf.)

Middle States Commission on Higher Education – the accrediting body approved by the US Secretary of Education.
for higher education institutions in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and Washington D.C. It is “a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that is dedicated to quality assurance and improvement through accreditation via peer evaluation” (msche.org). Often referred to on campus simply as “Middle States.” (See www.msche.org: BU’s accreditation process through the MSCHE is documented at http://bloomu.edu/middlestates.)

MyCore—name given to BU’s current General Education program, partly to distinguish it from the preceding General Education program. MyCore took effect summer 2012. (See http://www.bloomu.edu/mycore).

NSSE—National Survey of Student Engagement. Standardized survey of student experiences. A companion test is the FSSE (Faculty Survey of Student Engagement). Initial funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts; housed at Indiana University Bloomington. Usually pronounced nessee. (See p.71 and http://nsse.iub.edu/.)


PLO—program-level outcomes. This handbook does not refer to program-level outcomes, though program goals are mentioned (see p.9). The term appears in TracDat, where it is a category referring to a program’s strategic goals and measures—often objective—of attainment of those goals. Much of the data required in five-year reviews address PLOs.

PRP—policies, rules and procedures. The written guidelines regulating faculty and administration actions at BU, found at http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures. Policy: “A policy is defined as a long-term commitment of the university to a particular pattern of activity or practice.” Rules and procedures: “Rules and procedures are ordinarily based on existing policies. However, whenever a rule or procedure is not clearly based on an existing policy it must be presented as a PRP and made part of the codified web page.” PRPs are developed, revised, and reviewed through various mechanisms, using procedure established by the president’s office, but must, at a minimum, be approved by Forum and the President (see PRP 0101, about issuing PRPs: http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/0101).

Qualtrics—proprietary software for which BU has a site license; a survey tool developed by the Qualtrics Corporation and currently used by the Office of Planning and Assessment for collecting data on the General Education program. It can be used for other survey purposes, including other assessment processes. (See http://bloomu.edu/qualtrics).

rubric—a scoring guide used to standardize appraisals of student work by identifying a limited number of criteria and providing for each criterion explicit statements about the expected qualities of performance at each point on a scale or rank in an ordered scoring system (for example, capstone, milestone 2, milestone 1, benchmark, below benchmark). (See p.19 and detailed guidance on rubrics from TALE at http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE5_Rubrics.pdf.)

SLO—student learning objective. By some definitions, outcomes are the concrete manifestation of objectives having been met: if our goals are met, we will see it in outcomes; by this definition, SLO stands for student learning objective; this is the definition used in this handbook. But frequently, the terms objective and outcome are used interchangeably (as are goal and objective). Thus, SLO may refer to student learning objectives or student learning outcomes, depending on local usage. This handbook defers to local usage, and invites its readers not to get bogged down in discussions of terminology. (See p.7, and detailed guidance on establishing goals from TALE at http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE1_ArticulateGoals_.pdf.)

TALE Center—Teaching and Learning Enhancement Center. BU’s support for effective teaching. Offers training sessions, faculty learning communities, and other professional development to improve teaching and learning.

test blueprinting—the process of establishing a clear, shared plan for what student learning objectives an objective test will measure; “an outline of the test that lists the learning goals that students are to
demonstrate” (Suskie) or “the process of linking tests to learning goals” (Walvoord and Anderson). 32 (See p.19 and, particularly, materials from the TALE center:  
http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/OAE4_TestBlueprinting.pdf.)

TracDat / TSO—TracDat: proprietary software for which PASSHE has a site license; a database package tailored to assessment processes in higher education; developed and sold by the Nuventive Corporation. Required for storage and reporting of assessment information at BU. (See p.13, http://bloomu.edu/mycore-tracdat, and http://nuventive.com/products/tracdat.) TSO: In Spring 2013, PASSHE put forward proposals for expanded use of TracDat at the system level, and refer to it as TracDat SharePoint Option (TSO). (See p.70 and http://nuventive.com/products/tso/.)

unit—in this document, the term unit is used to refer to BU’s organizational divisions, and sub-groups within them. Thus, in this document an academic department is a unit; so are University Police, Community Activities, Academic Advisement, and Communications. (Diagrams of BU’s governance structure, with detailed maps of its four divisions: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administration and Finance, and Advancement, may be seen at http://bloomu.edu/documents/president/UniversityOrgChart.pdf.)

VALUE rubrics/ LEAP rubrics—rubrics designed to measure student learning through shared criteria for what constitutes “benchmark” through “capstone” learning in undergraduate education. Part of an effort to meet pressures to provide evidence of student learning—hence, VALUE: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education. The rubrics have been promoted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The rubrics are not discipline-specific, but instead assess learning in the 15 domains that constitute the “essential learning outcomes” for undergraduate education identified by the AAC&U’s LEAP (Liberal Education and America’s Promise) campaign; they are sometimes referred to as LEAP rubrics. Bloomsburg University adopted the VALUE rubrics as the required measurement of student learning in the general education program (MyCore) launched in fall 2012. (See p.50, p.37, and http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/).


RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT ASSESSMENT

Print resources

Online resources
.pdf format:
http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/program_based.pdf

web-based resources:
http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/outcomesAssessment.html
http://ualr.edu/assessment/index.php/home/program-review/
University of Hawaii, Manoa. Assessment Office. *Assessment How-To.* “Index of How-To Materials.”