

# LEARNING GUIDE: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment



Benedictine University®

December 4, 2015

Authored by: Assessment Task Force, Benedictine University



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Competitive. Excellence.

SECTION  
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SECTION  
104-106

Most Valuable  
Player Award  
Benedictine University  
Soccer  
2022



## OVERVIEW

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Benedictine University's assessment system is used to produce data that informs actions designed to improve student learning across the University. The system is based on a structure put in place by the University Assessment Task Force in 2015-2016 (predecessor to the University Assessment Committee), which delineates the reporting entities and the flow of information between these entities and the programs being assessed. This structure is found in this *Learning Guide: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment*.

## PURPOSE OF THE LEARNING GUIDE

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The Learning Guide is used by the University Assessment Committee, members of the College Assessment Panels, and Program Assessors from units and programs across the University. It provides information regarding the make-up of each group and the responsibilities of persons charged with **assessment**: whom they report to and who reports to them with assessment requests and results. The Guide sets out both suggested and required schedules for assessment, explains the reasons for assessment, outlines the goals of assessment at the University, and provides suggested assessment methods and a glossary of key terms used by University assessment personnel.

## INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

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Benedictine University dedicates itself to the education of undergraduate and graduate students from diverse ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds. As an academic community committed to liberal arts and professional education, distinguished and guided by its Roman Catholic tradition and Benedictine heritage, the university prepares its students for a lifetime as active, informed and responsible citizens and leaders in the world community.



## BENEDICTINE UNIVERSITY'S UNIVERSITY-WIDE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. **Disciplinary Competence and Skills:** Demonstrate coherent and deep understanding of the content, methodology and practice of at least one discipline, recognize interconnections with other disciplines, and integrate disciplinary knowledge with other disciplines. Demonstrate ability to maintain currency in the field and adaptability to changes in the discipline.
2. **Critical and Creative Thinking Skills:** Apply analytical thought, evaluate arguments and identify key assumptions and implications, recognize bias, analyze arguments from various perspectives, construct coherent arguments, and demonstrate adaptable and creative use of reasoning, logic, and evidence.
3. **Communication Skills:** Communicate effectively orally, in writing, and via a variety of media; tailor message to a variety of audiences.
4. **Information Fluency:** Find, evaluate, interpret, create and disseminate information involving a range of media including print, electronic, oral, aural, and visual, and synthesize and apply information effectively, ethically, and legally. Use current technology effectively to support creative activities and problem-solving.
5. **Analytical Skills:** Interpret and analyze qualitative observations and quantitative data to support valid explanations, models, and/or conclusions.
6. **Global Awareness and Cultural Competence:** Demonstrate understanding of global society, cultural diversity, mutual relationships, the interdependence of and need for solidarity between peoples and nations, and recognize and effectively negotiate cultural boundaries and communicate across cultures.
7. **Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility:** Participate in civic and community affairs, practice ethical and moral decision-making, understand the Catholic principle of "common good" as more than the sum of individual preferences, know oneself as a member of the human family with responsibilities in society, and contribute to the work of social justice.
8. **Stewardship:** Practice the Catholic and Benedictine value of stewardship of time, talent and resources for personal well-being, the common good of local and/or global communities, and for the natural environment.
9. **Personal Development:** Work independently, take initiative, and follow projects through to completion. Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills when working in a group. Demonstrate personal responsibility, engage in creative expression, engage in spiritual expression and the practice of Benedictine values; pursue life-long intellectual growth and development in the Catholic intellectual tradition, and strive for a life lived in balance.

Approved by Faculty Assembly on 22 April 2015.

## WHY OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT?

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Overwhelmingly, a focus on accountability and integrity is the aim of **outcomes assessment** in higher education; this shift of importance gives central focus to an institution's ability to demonstrate continuous improvements as related to student learning. Assessment in post-secondary education is the necessary foundation for building a culture of assessment. Within this culture, a college or university demonstrates its commitment to evidence as aligned with the impact on student learning and the institutional mission.

The principal purpose of learning outcomes assessment is to provide indicators of student learning as it is occurring at multiple levels: institutional, program level, and at the course level. At each level documentation must be available as to what students know and are able to do at the completion of their years spent in higher education. Are graduates prepared to demonstrate technical or professional competence as evidenced by the outcomes for all academic programs?

Assessment results measure an institution's attainment of intended outcomes, and interpretation of assessment results enables an institution to identify patterns of achievement or the lack thereof related to student learning. Less than desirable assessments results spark innovative teaching, revisions of the delivery of curriculum and services, new approaches to pedagogies and advising, and opportunities to enhance learning.

Increasingly, accrediting agencies demand quality assurance from institutions of higher education. Therefore, they expect those institutions to have an assessment plan that is more than anecdotal but systematic and ongoing, providing evidence for measuring the assessment of student learning across all academic programs.





## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT**

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The University finds the American Association for Higher Education's "9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessment of Student Learning" congruent with multiple practices employed by programs and units across the University to support student success and our overall mission.

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.





## UNIVERSITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

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The University **assessment structure** consists of three levels 1) the University Assessment Committee (UAC), 2) College Assessment Panels and the General Education Curriculum Committee Assessment Panel and, (3) Program Assessors from each program or unit across the University.

### University Assessment Committee

The University Assessment Committee coordinates the assessment of student learning outcomes University-wide and reports on assessment results by 1) initiating University-wide assessment cycles, 2) summarizing results and actions taken in response to those results, and 3) reporting to the University community as appropriate.

The University Assessment Committee consists of a faculty representative from each College (Business, Science, Liberal Arts, and Education and Health Services), a library representative, the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, the Chair of the General Education Curriculum Committee, the Vice-President of Institutional Research, the Assistant Provost for University Academic Assessment, the Vice-President and/or Associate Dean of Student Life, and representatives from other non-academic programs. Student senators will be invited to attend meetings of this committee as appropriate.

### College Assessment Panel

The College Assessment Panel consists of the Dean and Department chair/Program directors of that college, including those from the National Moser Center for Adult Learning (NMCAL) and the Mesa campus, and reviews the assessment results and responses to the results from each program within the college. The Panel then summarizes the results and responses from the Program Assessors and reports them to the University Assessment Committee.

### General Education Curriculum Committee Assessment Panel

The General Education Curriculum Committee's Assessment Panel oversees the regular assessment of the General Education curriculum, including **co-curricular** components, and in the process collects necessary data from programs and co-curricular units that contribute to the general requirements for degree-seeking undergraduates and reports the results of their assessment to the University Assessment Committee.

### Program Assessors

Program Assessors are representatives from each University program or unit who are charged with regular assessment of and response to the assessment of selected student learning outcomes. They may select these student learning outcomes themselves, or act on a request to assess particular learning outcomes from the College Assessment Panel, the General Education Curriculum.

## UNIVERSITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

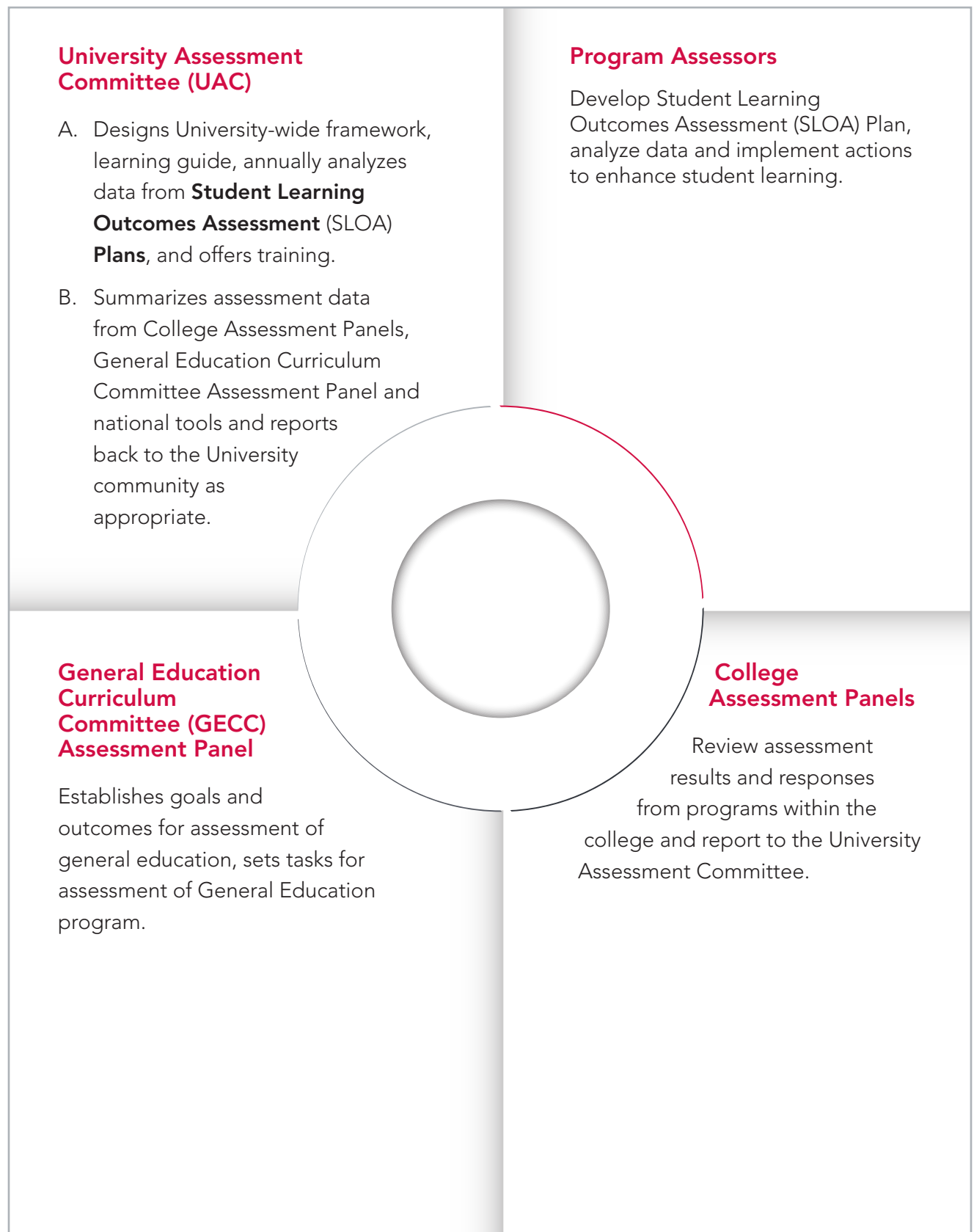
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Committee Assessment Panel and/or the University Assessment Committee. Full-time and adjunct faculty and staff may be involved in assessment of learning outcomes.

Program Assessors will select the assessment methods and tools that fit their particular programs and determine the schedule of assessment of the selected learning outcomes for their program. They are also responsible for reviewing assessment results and determining appropriate actions in response to them. Program Assessors report their results and actions to the College Assessment Panel, the General Education Curriculum Committee Assessment Panel and/or the University Assessment Committee as appropriate.



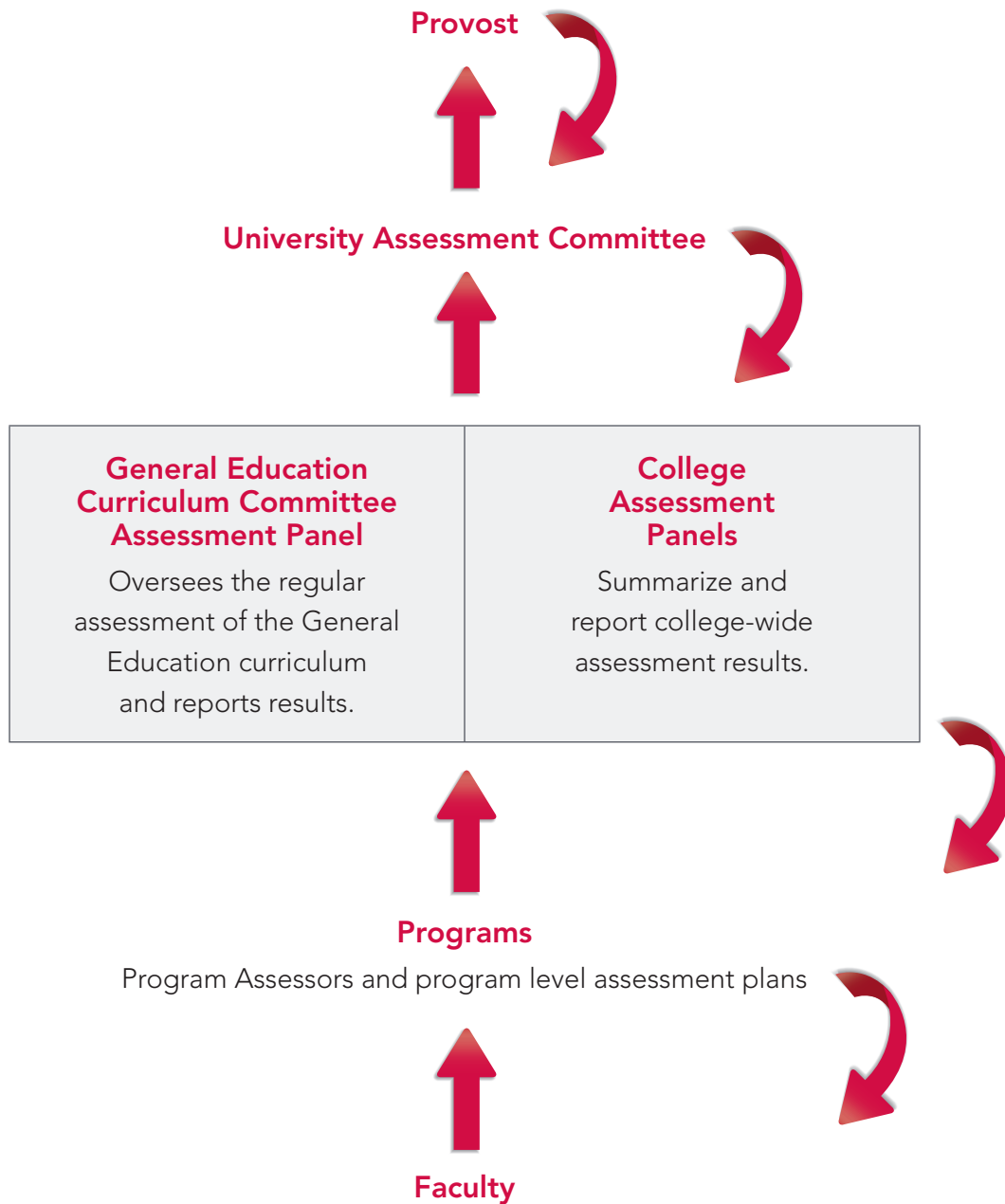
## UNIVERSITY-LEVEL ASSESSMENT CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE





## UNIVERSITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

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## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN: FACULTY INVOLVEMENT

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Throughout the University, all members—staff, faculty, and students—are fully invested and involved to varying degrees in the assessment process. However, the cornerstone of outcomes assessment is the faculty because they are responsible for the planning and the implementation of a program's assessment plan. The information generated through the assessment process is valuable to all members of the University as they work toward improving their programs. The data gathered will provide the evidence necessary to guide effective decision making in many areas including changes in programs, pedagogy, support services, policy, and procedure, as well as structural reorganization.

### The faculty are responsible for:

- Setting and establishing student learning outcomes and expected levels of achievement
- Selecting the methods and measurement tools used to evaluate student learning
- Determining how the results will be used
- Identifying changes needed to improve student learning and monitoring the impact of those changes
- Implementing curricular and/or programmatic changes based on data generated
- Promoting discussion and reflection among colleagues and the University community

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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1. A culture of assessment is embraced by the administration, faculty, and staff who view assessment as a collective responsibility.
2. Assessment planning is grounded in the University mission, values, and the strategic plan.
3. The nine University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes serve as a framework for ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills needed for the work force.
4. Undergraduate and graduate programs develop their program missions, goals, and student learning outcomes in accordance with the University mission.
5. Assessment plans and educational activities are incorporated at the University, college, and program levels.
6. Learning outcomes assessment is the framework for guiding the assessment process across the University. Educational activities are linked to student learning outcomes. Data is analyzed and interpreted. Results are used to inform practice and improve student learning.
7. Results of learning outcomes assessment are shared on a regular basis with the University community as appropriate.

# STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN: COMPONENTS

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## Structure

Establishing and maintaining the effectiveness of an outcomes assessment plan requires equal attention to all phases. The development and construction of each of **the six phases** (below) within a student learning outcomes assessment plan are equally as important as the **evidence**/data gathered to demonstrate the overall success of the students. Components of an outcomes assessment plan are designed by faculty for the purposes of establishing and measuring **student learning outcomes**. Faculty members are further responsible for evaluating whether the outcomes for their respective program, degree or certification are being achieved.

This Learning Guide articulates a systematic approach for gathering, analyzing, and using evidence from various areas within a program to measure student learning. This is accomplished by developing an understanding and expectations of what graduates should know and be able to do.

## Phases





## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN: SAMPLE PROCESS

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1. Review **program/unit mission** and **program/unit student learning outcomes** from current **Three-Year Action Plan**.
2. Determine which program/unit student learning outcomes align with University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes (**curriculum mapping**).
3. Determine expected level of student achievement.
4. Determine specific assessment measures and tools.
5. Develop a plan for how results will be collected, analyzed, interpreted, and shared.
6. Establish timeline for implementing assessment plan.
7. Implement assessment plan and make revisions as appropriate.
8. Share findings (assessment data and analysis) with the College Assessment Panel.



# STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN: SAMPLE PROCESS

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## Plan Outline

Note: Phases indicated below correspond to those described on page 12.

### I. Cover page

- a. The Outcomes Assessment Plan
- b. Name of the program/unit
- c. Academic degree(s) offered

### 1. Introduction (Phases 1 and 2)

- a. State the process used to develop the outcomes assessment plan.
- b. State the mission of the academic program/unit.
- c. State the purpose of the program: whom it serves – campus and community, its direction and overall goals.

### 2. Clearly define 3-5 student learning outcomes for this assessment period (Phase 3)

- a. What should students know and be able to do?
- b. What is the expected level of student achievement?

### 3. Identify both direct and indirect measures (Phase 4)

- a. Identify both direct and indirect methods used for measuring student achievement.  
**All outcomes must be assessed using both direct and indirect measures.**
- b. Explain what form, when and where the assessment will take place, and at what levels (e.g., freshman year, sophomore and junior years).

### 4. Methods for analyzing the data and results (Phase 5)

- a. Clearly define the process for evaluating the data and using the results.
- b. What does the data mean? How will the results be used? How will the information be used to improve curriculum, instruction, and student learning?

### 5. Timetable

- a. What is the timetable for implementation of improvements?

### 6. Summarizing and reporting evidence (Phase 6)

- a. How will assessment results be communicated to the University community as appropriate?

## REPORTING RESULTS

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### *Year End Reports (YERs)*

Each Year End Report includes summary of the program's/unit's assessment activities and results addressing the following questions:

1. What were students expected to know and be able to do?
2. Did students meet the program's/unit's expectations? Explain why or why not.
3. Provide an explanation of the results at each level: freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior level.
4. Discuss any unexpected results.
5. What program changes are indicated? If none, describe why changes were not needed.
6. How and when will necessary changes be implemented?
7. How and with whom were the assessment results shared?







# APPENDIX

# STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: MEASURES, TOOLS, & TECHNIQUES

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## A Taxonomy of Potential Assessment Outcomes

### 1. STUDENT RETENTION

- Persistence to *course* completion
- Persistence to completion of *first semester/quarter*
- Persistence to completion of *first year*
- Total number of *courses or units/credits* completed
- Persistence to *program* completion
- Persistence to *degree or certificate* completion
- *Time taken* to complete degree or certificate.

### 2. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE/ACHIEVEMENT

- *Course content knowledge*
- Course-related *academic skills* (e.g., writing; critical thinking)
- Total number or percentage of students in *good academic standing* (vs. academic probation or dismissal) during first term or first year
- Total number or percentage of courses *passed* during first term or year
- Total number or percentage of courses *completed with a grade of "C" or higher*
- *Cumulative GPA* at end of first term, or first year, or at graduation
- Performance on *professional certification/licensing exams* (e.g., teaching, nursing)
- *Transfer Rate*: percentage of students who expect to transfer to 4-year institutions and actually do; & percentage of students who do not initially expect to transfer but do).
- *Transfer "Readiness"*: academic performance at 4-year institutions after transfer.
- Graduate/Professional School "Readiness": academic performance at graduate or professional schools after completion of the baccalaureate degree.





### 3. ATTITUDINAL OUTCOMES

- Student *satisfaction*—with course, program, or institution
- Student *attitude toward the subject matter*
- Student *attitude change* with respect to a course issue or topic (e.g., diversity)
- Students' *educational aspirations*
- *Alumni satisfaction*—with course program, or institution

### 4. BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

- *Re-enrollment* in subsequent courses within the discipline or program
- Students' *use of campus resources & support services*
- Students' *social integration into the college community* (e.g., reported frequency of interaction with peers &/or faculty outside the classroom)

### 5. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

- Leadership, Citizenship, etc.



# STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: MEASURES, TOOLS, & TECHNIQUES

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## A Taxonomy of Potential Assessment Outcomes

### 6. VOCATIONAL OUTCOMES

- Job/Careerplacement
- Job/Careersuccess (e.g., employer ratings of graduates' career readiness & job performance)

## Levels of Knowledge and Key Terms

### Blooms Taxonomy Levels of Educational Objectives

#### Cognitive

1. **Knowledge (represents lowest level of learning)**

Ability to observe and remember previously learned information; knowledge of specific facts, terms, concepts, principles, ideas, events, places, etc.; mastery of subject material.

2. **Comprehension (represents lowest level of understanding)**

Ability to understand information and grasp material; translating knowledge from one form to another; interpreting, comparing, and contrasting material; predicting consequences and future trends.

3. **Application (represents higher level of understanding)**

Ability to use information, learned material, methods, concepts, theories, principles, laws and theories in new situations; problem solving using required knowledge or skills.

4. **Analysis (represents a higher intellectual level)**

Ability to break down material and recognition of organization structure; identification of components and relationships between components; recognition of patterns and hidden meanings.

5. **Synthesis (represents a higher intellectual level)**

Ability to combine parts or apply prior skills and knowledge to produce a new whole; integrate ideas into a solution; generalize from given facts; propose a plan of action; formulate new classification methods.

6. **Evaluation (represents highest cognitive level)**

Ability to judge and assess the value of theories and presentations, based on their value, logic or adequacy, for a given purpose; compare and make choices based on reasoned argument; verify the value of evidence; recognize subjectivity.

(Adopted from Selim, Pet-Armacost, Albert and Krist, 2006)

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: MEASURES, TOOLS, & TECHNIQUES

### Cognitive Key Words

<b>Knowledge</b>	Arrange, define, describe, duplicate, enumerate, identify, indicate, know, label, list, match, memorize, name, reads, recall, recognize, record, relate, repeat, reproduce, select, state, view, underline
<b>Comprehension</b>	Classify, cite, convert, defend, describe, discuss, distinguish, estimate, explain, express, generalize, give examples, identify, indicate, infer, locate, paraphrase, predict, recognize, report, restate, review, rewrite, select, suggest, summarize, tell, trace, translate, understand
<b>Application</b>	Act, administer, apply, articulate, assess, change, chart, choose, collect, compute, construct, contribute, control, demonstrate, determine, develop, discover, dramatize, employ, establish, extend, give examples, illustrate, implement, include, inform, instruct, interpret, investigate, manipulate, operate, organize, participate, practice, predict, prepare, preserve, produce, project, provide, relate, report, schedule, shop, show, sketch, solve, teach, transfer, translate, use, utilize, write
<b>Analysis</b>	Analyze, appraise, breaks down, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, correlate, criticize, debate, determine, diagram, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, focus, identify, illustrate, infer, inspect, inventory, limit, outline, point out, prioritize, question, recognize, relate, select, separate, subdivide, solve, test
<b>Synthesis</b>	Adapt, anticipate, arrange, assemble, categorize, collaborate, collect, combine, communicate, compile, compose, construct, create, design, devise, develop, explain, express, facilitate, formulate, generate, incorporate, individualize, initiate, integrate, intervene, manage, model, modify, negotiate, organize, perform, plan, prepare, produce, propose, rearrange, reconstruct, reinforce, relate, reorganize, revise, set up, structure, substitute, validate, write
<b>Evaluation</b>	Appraise, argue, assess, attach, chose, compare, conclude, contrast, criticize, critique, decide, defend, enumerate, estimate, evaluate, grade, interpret, judge, justify, measure, predict, rate, reframe, revise, score, select, support, value

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: MEASURES, TOOLS, & TECHNIQUES

### Affective Key Words

<b>Receiving</b>	Ask, choose, describe, follow, give, hold, identify, locate, name, point to , reply, select, sit erect, use
<b>Responding</b>	Answer, assist, compile, conform, discuss, greet, help, label, perform, practice, present, read, recite, report, select, tell, write
<b>Valuing</b>	Complete, describe, differentiate, explain, follow, form, initiate, invite, join, justify, propose, read report, select, share, study, work
<b>Organization</b>	Adhere, alter, arrange, combine, compare complete, defend, explain, generalize, identify, integrate, modify, order, organize, prepare, relate, synthesize
<b>Characterization by Value</b>	Act, discriminate, display, influence, listen, modify, perform, practice, propose, qualify, question, revise, serve, solve, use, verify

### Skills Key Words

<b>Perception</b>	Choose, describe, detect, differentiate, distinguish, identify, isolate, relate, select separate
<b>Set</b>	Begin, display, explain, move, proceed, react, respond, show, start, volunteer
<b>Guided Response</b>	Assemble, build, calibrate, construct, dismantle, display, dissect, fasten, fix, grind, heat, manipulate, measure, mend, mix, organize, sketch, work
<b>Mechanism</b>	Assemble, build, calibrate, construct, dismantle, display, dissect, fasten, fix, grind, heat, manipulate, measure, mend, mix, organize, sketch, work
<b>Complex Over Response</b>	Assemble, build, calibrate, construct, dismantle, display, dissect, fasten, fix, grind, heat, manipulate, measure, mend, mix, organize, sketch, work
<b>Adaptation</b>	Adapt, alter, change, rearrange, reorganize, revise, vary
<b>Origination</b>	Arrange, combine, compose, construct, design, originate

Adopted from Robert Armacost, Julia Pet-Armacost, Paula Krist, (2006) Developing Program Assessment Plans, AIR Annual Forum.



# STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: MEASURES, TOOLS, & TECHNIQUES

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## Curriculum Mapping

Curriculum mapping is the process by which a program or unit creates a clear visual image or diagram of the relationships between its curriculum, its overall goals for its students, and the ways it evaluates student learning. This process begins with the program faculty determining the overall relationship between *institutional-level* and *program-level learning outcomes* (or *program goals* for non-degree awarding programs and units), and then proceeds to “map” these program-level elements to specific program courses and requirements. The program-level outcomes/goals should represent the “top level” of desired student achievement for successful completion of the program. This example of Program-Level Goals is drawn from the Inquiry General Education Program (non-degree awarding):

### **Inquiry Curriculum Essential Student Learning Goal 3: Information Fluency:**

- a. Navigate different information formats and media technologies to find pertinent information.
- b. Evaluate sources of information critically to conduct responsible research.
- c. Become an active, informed, and creative user of established and emerging technologies.

Program-level Outcomes should inform *program objectives*. However, if program development began with objectives, these can be restated as Student Learning Outcomes for successful completion of a degree-awarding program.

### **English Language and Literature Program Objective 5:**

Provide opportunities and skills for research in traditional and electronic media.

Restated as a *program-level outcome* for the English Language and Literature Major (a degree-awarding program):

### **5. Demonstrate the ability to perform research using both traditional and electronic media.**

- a. Locate research materials from both traditional and electronic media
- b. Evaluate and summarize research materials from both traditional and electronic media
- c. Select and use appropriate research materials in support of original critical and analytical arguments
- d. Select and use appropriate research materials in support of an original formal senior thesis paper

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: MEASURES, TOOLS, & TECHNIQUES

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### Curriculum Mapping

Once the program-level outcomes are established, these can be related ("mapped") to specific course-level learning outcomes delivered by curriculum components at the appropriate point in the student's career (i.e. introductory, intermediate, advanced, capstone/completion, etc.). The lower levels are **formative assessments** at the program level, although at the course level they are **summative** (they result in a final evaluation or grade). Capstone-level or completion assessments are summative at the program level.

#### 5. Demonstrate the ability to perform research using both traditional and electronic media.

- a. Locate research materials from both traditional and electronic media (**introductory level course for majors**)
- b. Evaluate and summarize research materials from both traditional and electronic media (**intermediate level courses for majors**)
- c. Select and use appropriate research materials in support of original critical and analytical arguments (**advanced level courses for majors**)
- d. Select and use appropriate research materials in support of an original formal senior thesis paper (**Capstone course or other summative program-level assessment**)

Every program goal that is supported by the curriculum should be represented by assessable learning outcomes that are embedded in specific courses, experiences, or competencies. If the mapping process reveals gaps – that is, areas of desired student learning that do not seem adequately covered by the curriculum – the program faculty can use this as an opportunity for program development.

This philosophy assumes that effective course design involves careful consideration of the desired results – the measurable learning outcomes – of instruction. Sometimes this process is referred to as "reverse" or "backward" design, because the process starts with the faculty imagining the end results of instruction: what will students be able to do or produce as the result of their learning experience? How does that result support student learning goals and outcomes of the program and the institution? The content of "reverse design" curricula is structured by the faculty's imagining successful student learning, rather than by traditional boundaries of disciplines or texts, and the courses build upon each other to construct that student success. One way to imagine this process is "Design Backward/Deliver Forward": the design process starts with outcomes at the institutional level and ends with outcomes that structure class assignments or activities, while the teaching and learning process starts at the class level and leads up to students' attainment of institutional and program learning goals (see for example the University of Connecticut's examples and diagram at <http://assessment.uconn.edu/primer/mapping1.html>).

The process of mapping usually starts with a meeting at which *program-level student learning outcomes* are developed or reviewed by the program faculty as a group. These outcomes reflect what students will know and be able to do when they have successfully completed the entire program. Where needed, program-level outcomes are broken down into developmental *sub-outcomes*, that is, levels of student development towards successful attainment of a particular outcome, from beginner to successful completion. Finally, the faculty should look at the entire curriculum to determine which courses or other *program-level measures* address these outcomes and sub-outcomes. If any outcomes or sub-outcomes or sub-goals are missing from the resulting map, or need enhancement, the program faculty has identified a development opportunity.

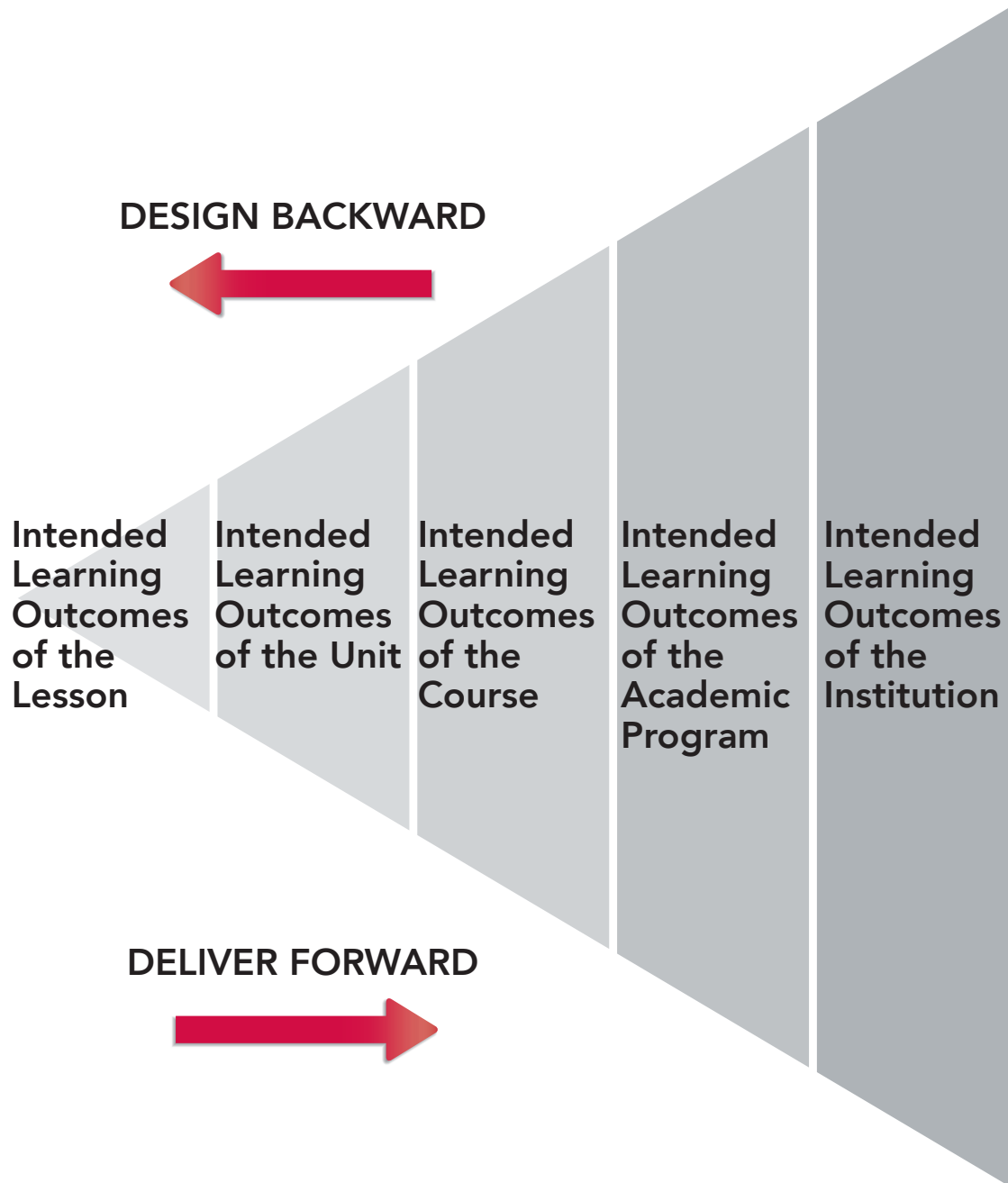
Here is a simple example of complete longitudinal (developmental) mapping across a course sequence, showing the sub-goals mapped to the Inquiry General Education Curriculum with projected levels at which sub-goals are attained:

### **Inquiry Essential Student Learning Goal 3, Information Fluency**

Course	Sub-Goal 3a	Sub-Goal 3b	Sub-Goal 3c
WRIT 102	X (Foundational)	X (Foundational)	X (Foundational)
IDS 201-204	X (Intermediate)	X (Intermediate)	X (Intermediate)
IDS 301-304	X (Advanced)	X (Advanced)	Not mapped
Writing Intensive Course in major	X (Proficient)	X (Proficient)	X (Proficient)

Once the map is complete, instructional and evaluative course content can be designed to assess student competency at the appropriate level. This course content usually includes *Course Objectives*, which describes areas of coverage and instructional intent. For assessment purposes the course must also include *Course-level Student Learning Outcomes*. These outcomes should use language that describes measurable behaviors or products, such as “analyze,” “demonstrate,” “correctly identify,” or “create” (see Measures, Tools, and Techniques). Finally, the course will include assignments, activities, or other *direct measures* of student learning.

The mapping process also informs the creation of grading *rubrics* based in course outcomes. When effectively-created rubrics are used to evaluate student performance on specific activities and assignments, both students and teachers will have an enhanced understanding of the relationship between course components, as well as of the basis for grading and evaluation.



Source: University of Connecticut



## GRADING AND ASSESSMENT DISTINCTIONS

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### Q1. What is the difference between grading and assessment?

A1. Both are forms of evaluation, and the word “assessment” is sometimes used for both. However, **grades** are used to measure individual student progress, and are issued to students for assignments and as summation of achievement (final grades). Individual grades are protected information and cannot be publicly released to anyone but the student, a school official (advisor, for example), or a person (parent) or institution (graduate school) with whom the student has agreed in writing to share that information.

**Assessment** tends to involve aggregate data, for example, the whole set of grades for an assignment, a class, etc. It does not identify individual students by name. Assessment data is not shared with students, but is used by instructors, programs, and administrators to measure overall student progress in whole courses or programs. Programs can also use external non-graded measures for assessment (for example, how many majors in a program perform well on a national standardized test or professional exam).

### Q2. What are *formative* and *summative* modes of evaluation?

All forms of evaluation can be used summatively (as a measure of achievement at a single point, for example the end of a class) or formatively (to shape further development, as with a graded draft of a paper, or with student evaluation comments that are shared with an instructor).

Students tend to focus on the summative aspect of grading (“what is my final grade?”), and this is what will appear on a traditional college transcript for an individual student. However, recent Scholarship of Teaching and Learning shows that formative grading helps students understand expectations as they progress.

Assessment is meant to provide information that allows instructors and programs to improve, so its primary goal is formative. Summative program assessment is involved when programs undergo accreditation or approval processes. Summative use of assessment data may also occur when faculty members are reviewed for promotion, but this process is (and should be) distinct from program assessment, which does not identify or review individual faculty.

### Q3. Why are faculty evaluation and program assessment kept separate?

A3. They are kept separate because they have different goals. **Faculty evaluation** is meant to allow individual faculty to develop as scholars and to improve their delivery of existing courses and programs. Like student grades, faculty evaluation data is protected information. **Program assessment** is designed to allow institutional-level evaluation and development, and is reported in a form that can be shared with more groups, internal and external.

### Q4. If grading and assessment are different, how do grades provide information about programs?

A4. There are two ways to link individual student performance to program assessment. One is to determine which activities or assignments are most relevant to overall student success. This can be accomplished through key experiences, for example a capstone (a senior research experience) or a summative assignment (a senior thesis). The other is to isolate aspects of assignments that contribute to students' meeting broader program goals. This is done by creating a system of objectives and outcomes, often linked to detailed grading rubrics. For example, one key objective (**Program Learning Objective**) of a program might be to promote critical thinking. A course **outcome (Course Learning Outcome)** would be "the student will demonstrate critical thinking by successfully writing an analysis of the argument of a published article in her field of study." The resulting paper would be graded using a **rubric** that spelled out what the instructor or program had defined as necessary elements in critical argumentation (for example, correct use of sources).



## SPECIALIZED ACCREDITATION AND STUDENT LEARNING

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### Accreditation and Memberships

Benedictine University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission.

Professional accrediting agencies for various programs include the Commission of Collegiate Nursing Education, The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the Council on Education for Public Health, and the Organizational Development Institute. The University's Bachelor of Science degree program in Chemistry is approved by the American Chemical Society.

The University is a member of the American Council on Education, Council for Independent Colleges, Association of Governing Boards, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, National Catholic Education Association, Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities, North Central Association, College Entrance Examination Board, National Association of College and University Business Officers, Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, Associated Colleges of Illinois, Associated Colleges of the Chicago Area, Illinois Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Illinois Association for Teacher Education in Private Colleges, Illinois Council on Continuing Higher Education, National Collegiate Athletic Association, National League for Nursing, Illinois Association of College Admissions Counselors, National Association of College Admissions Counselors, Association for Gerontology in Higher Education, and the Institute of International Education Inc.

Benedictine University is registered as a private institution with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education pursuant to sections 136A.61 to 136A.71. Registration is not an endorsement of the institution. Credits earned at the institution may not transfer to all other institutions. Benedictine University has been granted regular degree and vocational licenses by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education to offer programs in Arizona.

Benedictine University is authorized by the Washington Student Achievement Council and meets the requirements and minimum educational standards established for degree - granting institutions under the Degree - Granting Institutions Act. This authorization is subject to periodic review and authorizes Benedictine University to offer field placement components for specific degree programs. The Council may be contacted for a list of currently authorized programs. Authorization by the Council does not carry with it an endorsement by the Council of the institution or its programs.

Any person desiring information about the requirements of the act or the applicability of those requirements to the institution may contact the Council at P.O. Box 43430, Olympia, WA 98504-3430.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: MYTHS

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### Myths about Assessment at Benedictine University

**Myth:** Assessment is a necessary evil. Also: Assessment is something we have to do for HLC or other Accreditation Agencies outside our college.

**Truth:** Assessment ought to be something that we do to enhance student learning. Program enhancement, not HLC, ought to be the driving force behind our efforts. The assessment plan is designed to highlight what faculty feel are the most important characteristics for a graduate from Benedictine University to possess, as they relate to the professional field.

**Myth:** Grades are great indicators of student learning.

**Truth:** Throughout time, grades have been an indicator of students' success within a class. They provide a great mechanism for improving teaching and learning. Unfortunately, they do not fully express the content of what a student has learned within a major nor are they directly correlated with the learning outcomes of a program/major.

**Myth:** Student course evaluations are a great tool for measuring students' success and satisfaction with a program. They are a clear indicator of student learning.

**Truth:** Course evaluations are an excellent tool for measuring effective teaching and learning. As an indirect measure, they focus on gauging student's perceptions. They are not clear indicators of measuring actual learning gained throughout a program. Equally, they are extremely useful when combined with other tools to measure learning.

**Myth:** Assessment is an event to get over with and then move on!

**Truth:** Assessment is an ongoing process. It takes months to develop, test and polish — however, many of the activities required to execute outcomes assessment are activities that you're either already doing or you should be doing.

**Myth:** Assessment is another academic fad and if Benedictine University waits long enough, it will also fade into the past.

**Truth:** The outcomes assessment movement has been a serious one since 1985. Its momentum is growing, not waning. All higher education accreditation agencies across the country now include the assessment of learning outcomes as one of their priorities.



**Myth: Assessment is a demanding set of activities – we don't have the resources or time.**

**Truth:** Most activities involved in student learning outcomes assessment are a natural process of effective teaching and learning. In most cases, the program is informally gauging students' success. Equally, outcomes assessment is a normal process of effective teaching and learning. Naturally, it is the next step towards moving the university forward and providing accountability to the mission. There is no dispute that effective program assessment will take both time and effort. However, a well-developed assessment plan will result in a more efficient and effective assessment process.

**Myth: Assessment requires the program/units to assess every outcome and every student every year. All learning outcomes have to be assessed every year.**

**Truth:** Within an assessment plan, a program/unit should systematically plan a cycle for capturing and reviewing data; typically, a three year period. Depending on the results, a department may elect to continue assessing a particular outcome over a longer period of time, while also verifying other outcomes as stated in the assessment plan. Not all outcomes or students within the program/unit must be assessed each year.

**Myth: Our program is accredited or certified by a discipline-specific agency. We do not need to be concerned with outcomes assessment.**

**Truth:** The Higher Learning Commission expects all programs, both graduate and undergraduate, to each have an outcomes assessment plan, with direct and indirect measures focused on learning outcomes. Overwhelmingly, most **accrediting agencies, or agencies who offer certification, expect a program/major to assess student learning.**

**Myth: Assessment results will be used to evaluate the performance of faculty**

**Truth:** Successful program assessment depends on faculty awareness, participation, and ownership. Assessment results should not be used to evaluate faculty performance. The results are to be used to improve programs. The assessments are internal instruments that are responded to by the program's faculty, not by the university's administration.

**Myth: Assessment takes away time from students**

**Truth:** The time and effort involved in conducting an assessment should not be viewed as a "waste of time" since the purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. Programs have the freedom and capacity to make the assessment process meaningful to the program, the faculty, and the students.

**Myth: Doesn't assessment interfere with the academic freedom of faculty?**

**Truth:** The assessment process is to be developed, implemented, and utilized by the faculty. Faculty are responsible for determining the standards for what a graduate is expected to know, do, and value. Faculty are also responsible for determining what changes in the curriculum and the program need to be made in order to improve student learning.

**Myth: Assessment is measurement of the trivial.**

**Truth:** This may not always be a myth, but it should be. It's true that much of that which is crucial to our discipline is also that which is most difficult to measure. Thus, assessment plans often end up measuring that which is easily measured rather than that which is most important. You can steer a course between easily measured trivialities and impossible to measure profundities by choosing measures for which program implications exist. Ask what could be done differently if the results come back in a certain way and if it would be worth doing. This may not always produce the most profound measures, but it always produces measures that are not trivial.

**Myth: Assessment should prove that our program is successful.**

**Truth:** If your assessment shows 100% success 100% of the time, it's useless for program enhancement. Assessment should provide information that allows you to improve your program. This is a key difference between program assessment and some of the other professional accreditations we have. The program assessment goal is not showing that you have enough books or enough faculty or enough credit hours (we have other measures for that); the goal is improve your program.

**Myth: Assessment is another one of those top-down initiatives with no faculty input.**

**Truth:** This is a fully faculty-driven process. Faculty decide what the students should know; faculty decide how and when they should learn it; faculty assess the degree of learning; faculty implement changes based on their assessment. Administration is largely "out of the loop" on this one, and rightly so.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Achievement Test** – An instrument that typically uses sets of items designed to measure a domain of learning tasks and is administered under specified conditions (e.g., time limits, open or closed book).

**Action Verbs** – used for developing Learning Outcomes. They can be used for various levels of learning ranging from knowledge through comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis to evaluation. Concrete verbs such as “define,” “apply,” or “analyze” are more helpful for assessment than verbs such as “be exposed to,” “understand,” “know,” “be familiar with.”

**Affective Key Words** – In Student Learning Outcomes, verb forms that indicate the attitudinal behavior to be developed and assessed.

**Aggregate Assessment Data** – Summative data that has been collected and combined from multiple assignments, classes, or programs. Details that identify individual students, faculty, or in some cases programs is typically masked or stripped out.

**Alternate Forms** – Two or more forms of a test or assessment that are designed to measure the same abilities (also called equivalent or parallel forms).

**Alternative Assessment** – An assessment procedure that provides an alternative to paper-and-pencil testing

**Authentic Assessment** – An assessment procedure that emphasizes the use of tasks and contextual settings that reflect the professions or activities most closely related to the course or program .

**Assessment (Outcomes Assessment)** – A systematic and on-going process of collecting, interpreting, and acting on information relating to outcomes developed to support teaching and learning as informed by the institution’s mission and purpose. It answers the questions: (1) What we are trying to do? (2) How well are we doing it? And (3) How can we improve what we are doing?

**Assessment Guidelines** – describe structure and processes used for assessment at the University. They include systems for communication and accountability as established by the University Assessment Task Force.

**Assessment Instrument** – A tool used to measure assessment of learning, either directly or indirectly.

**Assessment Loop** – The assessment loop opens at the start of the assessment process and closes when we use the results of our assessments to improve what we do in the future.

**Assessment Measures** – see Direct and Indirect Measures

**Assessment Structure** – The administrative and operational processes and stakeholders involved in assessment at a given institution.

**Bloom’s Taxonomy** – Is a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning and development. The six levels were developed in 1956, Benjamin Bloom. The six levels of cognitive domain range from simple tasks of memorization to defining and recalling facts and information. Progressively, the upper levels require more complex levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

**Check List** – A list of dimensions of a performance or product that is simply checked present or absent.

**Content Standard** – A broad educational goals that indicates what a student should know and be able to do in a subject area.

**Course Objectives** – These syllabus components state what a specific course is designed to accomplish in terms of its disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) knowledge base; provide a foundation in the basic principles and boundaries of disciplines, or instruction in how disciplines solve problems or use and create information, or education about the history and context of disciplines. This can also reflect “content” material to be covered in the course. Course Objectives typically apply to all sections of a given course and are developed collaboratively by faculty and programs. In the case of Mode of Inquiry courses, some of these Objectives should represent how a given program or department interprets the Inquiry SLGs to which the course is mapped.

**Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes** – These syllabus components describe what students are able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills and values upon completion of a particular University course. In the case of Mode of Inquiry courses, at least some Student-Learning Outcomes should represent how a given program or department interprets the Inquiry SLGs to which the course is mapped.

**Co-Curricular** – A program requirement that is not in itself a traditional class; may be a class component or a stand-alone experience or activity

**Cognitive Key Words** – In Student Learning Outcomes, verb forms that indicate the intellectual behavior to be developed and assessed

**Criteria** – A set of guidelines used in judging a performance, a written or oral assignment, or an assessment instrument

**Curriculum Mapping** – The process by which a given program aligns its Student Learning Outcomes to University-Level SLOs and then determines which courses can address these Outcomes. If the SLOs are developmental then they may be mapped to the program at multiple learning levels.

**Direct Measures** – Assessment instruments that measure student learning outcomes directly (in contrast to **Indirect Measures**). Examples include capstone experiences, certification, performance on licensure or professional exams, entrance (pre) and exit (post) tests (both course- and program-specific), embedded assessment, essay questions (blindly scored by multiple faculty), external evaluations of internship performance, externally reviewed exhibits and performances, internal and external juried review of comprehensive projects or performances, portfolios, required research projects (multiple reviewers), and comprehensive (written and oral) exit tests and examinations.

**Embedded Assessment** – An assessment process that involves using the regular work that students produce in their classes as the material that is assessed or evaluated. Student work may be a final research paper, a set of questions “embedded” in a final exam, a lab project, or anything that the professor would regularly use to evaluate the students in the class.

**Evidence** – Artifacts or data presented in support of claims regarding program success or need for improvement.

**Faculty Evaluation** – A process by which the professional performance of an individual faculty member is assessed, summatively or formatively. Governed by terms of employment and not an aspect of program assessment

**Formative Assessment** – An assessment whose primary purpose is to suggest areas for development or improvement

**Goals** – See **Student Learning Goals**.

**Grades** – A measure of student learning assessment and reporting according to a clearly-stated scale (letter or numerical) and taking into consideration individual elements of student performance, the nature of which is known to the student prior to evaluation. Grades can be formative, summative, or both.

**Holistic Scoring** – The assignment of a score based on an overall impression of a performance or product rather than a consideration of individual elements. The overall judgment is typically guided by description of the various levels of performance or scoring rubrics.

**Indirect Measures** – Alumni surveys, course enrollments and profiles, employer surveys, exit interviews of graduates and focus groups, grade distributions, job placement data, length of time to degree (years/hours to completion), retention, persistence, graduation, and transfer rates of students, SAT/ACT scores, students surveys

**Information Fluency** – Information fluency includes the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information from various print and electronic sources understands the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

**Information Literacy** – (Also called *information fluency*) Information Literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.

**Learning Outcomes** – See **Student Learning Outcomes**

**Mission** – A clear description of the purpose of the unit as aligned with the mission and vision of the University.

**Outcomes Assessment** – See **Assessment**

**Outcomes Assessment Levels** – Assessment of student learning as informed by the overall development of the student proceeding towards completion of a program of study. In a program, mapping SLOs to course levels allows for longitudinal assessment (progress over time).

**Outcomes Assessment Plan** – See **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan**

**Performance Assessment** – A procedure that requires individuals to perform task and the process or product of the performance is judged using pre-specified criteria.

**Performance Standard** – The level of performance to be achieved by students

**Portfolio Assessment** – A preplanned collections of samples of student work, assessment results, and other data that represent the student's accomplishments. It is viewed by some as a basic type of performance assessment and by others as merely a convenient method for accumulating evidence of student performance.

**Program/Unit Goals** – Typically these are broader statements contained in the department's strategic plan, including both teaching/learning development and departmental projects. Goals are not summatively assessed but inform assessable development. In the Inquiry General Education Curriculum, Student Learning Goals are used to generate assessable SLOs, but the program itself has no summative assessment.



**Program/Unit Learning Objectives** – Statements in a program’s strategic plan that indicate the overall disciplinary content and skills that the program is designed to support (i.e. “Produce accomplished and ethical practitioners”)

**Program/Unit Learning Outcomes** – Describe what students are able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills and values upon completion of a particular University program

**Program/Unit Mission** – A statement of how the academic program or co-curricular unit adds value to the University

**Program Review** – A periodic review of academic and unit programs and processes performed for accreditation purposes

**Qualitative Evidence** – Evidence that is not numerical. In the case of accreditation, this may include examples of student work, case studies, results of focus groups, records of discussions, and reflections by faculty.

**Quantitative Evidence** – Evidence that can be analyzed numerically. In the case of accreditation, this includes such things as numerical measures of student success in specific courses, survey results and graduation rates.

**Rubric** – A set of scoring guidelines that describe the characteristics of different levels of performance used in scoring or judging a student product or performance. It includes both **Analytic** and **Holistic** scoring rubrics. In a **Holistic** scoring rubric, a single score is assigned on the basis of an overall impression of the assignment being scored. An **Analytic** scoring rubric requires a separate score for each of a number of aspects of the assignment.

**Skills-Key Words** – In Student Learning Outcomes, verb forms that indicate the disciplinary techniques and abilities to be developed and assessed.

**Standard** – An established norm. The level of performance to be achieved by students is called a **Performance Standard** and a broad educational goal that indicates what a student should know in a subject area is called a **Content Standard**.

**Student Learning Outcomes** – Statements describing what students are expected to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills, and values upon completion of an assignment or activity, a course, a span of several courses, or a program. . SLOs reflect the things students will be able to do once the course is successfully completed (i.e. answer certain questions using skills acquired, perform research, demonstrate knowledge of the subject). They should reflect the desired result of students’ work within the context of the course and its objectives. All verbs in

this category should describe student skills that can be evaluated, such as “demonstrate” or “create” or “argue” or “calculate” or “solve.” Student Learning Outcomes may function at the class level (that is they may vary by course section or instructor) and be developed by individual course authors, or they may be uniform across all sections of a course, depending on program philosophy.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans** –

The component of a given program’s strategic planning process that articulated the priorities and time frame for the program’s assessment of its courses and requirements in terms of their relationship to overall program goals, objectives, and outcomes.

**Student Learning Goals** – Consist of specific statements of teaching intention, i.e., specific areas that the teacher intends to cover in a block of learning. For example, one of the objectives of a module could be that “students would understand the impacts and effects of behaviors and lifestyles on both the local and global environments”. (In some contexts, goals are also referred to as objectives). *In the Benedictine University General Education program, student learning goals are equivalent to student learning outcomes in this glossary (of Benedictine University Assessment).*

**Summative Assessment** – In assessment of the final product or concluding activity/ deliverable of an assignment, course, or program. Some examples include final grades, program completion audits, professional exams or benchmark requirements, or evaluation of a capstone course or experience.

**Task or Assignment** – An assessment exercise that requires student to demonstrate a knowledge, skill, or combination of attributes, by means of a performance or product.

**Three Year Action Plans** – Prepared by all departments, programs and units throughout the University to report their assessment data on an annual basis to the Office of Institutional Research. These plans link department/ program/unit goals to AQIP categories and strategic plans.

#### **University-Level Student Learning Outcomes** –

Describe what students are able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills and value upon completion of their degree at the University.

**Year-End Report** – Outlines how the department, program or unit performed towards its efforts of accomplishing stated goals.







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