



# **INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: HANDBOOK FOR DEVELOPING PLANS AND REPORTS**

**Prepared by**

Department of Outcomes Assessment and Quality Management

Cleopatra Allen, Director

Devonye Brown, Assessment Coordinator

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## WHAT IS INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS?

Institutional effectiveness is about the quality of the organization. How well is the institution doing what it says it is going to do?

So what is quality? I think a lot of people define it as excellence: a quality college does an excellent job at whatever it does. Easy, right? Too easy. Under this simplistic definition, a quality college might be one that is doing things excellently, but not the right things: offering courses that no one wants to take, constructing beautiful, energy-efficient buildings that are not designed in ways that help students learn, graduating students but without the skills and competencies that employers need.

*Quality, then, is not just a matter of doing things excellently but doing the right things excellently.* A quality college is not just excellent per se, but excellent in fulfilling its responsibilities:

1. Meeting stakeholder needs, especially its students' needs.
2. Keeping its promises by achieving its mission and goals.
3. Ensuring the institution's health and well-being, and deploying resources effectively, prudently, and efficiently. (This is stewardship.)
4. Serving the public good.
5. Demonstrating the institution's quality and effectiveness in fulfilling these responsibilities. (This is accountability.)

Fundamental to institutional effectiveness is understanding the mission of the institution. SUSLA's mission (approved 2007) states:

“Southern University at Shreveport, an institution within the Southern University and A & M System, seeks to provide **quality education** for its students, while being **committed to the total community**. This institution **prepares students for careers** in technical and occupational fields, awards certificates, diplomas and associate degrees; and **offers courses and programs that are transferrable** to other colleges and universities. Dedicated to **excellence in instruction** and **community service**, this open enrollment institution **promotes cultural diversity, provides developmental and continuing education** and **seeks partnerships with business and industry**”.

Review SUSLA's mission statement—its purpose, what does it say it is going to do and how well should it be done? The following are excerpts from the mission statement about what the institution does:

1. **Quality education!** How effective is the institution and how do we know?
2. **Committed to the total community!** How well does the institution serve the community and how do we know?
3. **Prepare students for careers!** How prepared are students for careers and are they the right careers? How do we know?
4. **Offer transferrable courses and programs!** How many students successfully transfer and how well did the institution and their program prepare them for transfer?
5. **Excellence in instruction!** How excellent is the instruction to those who receive it and how do we know? What are the outcomes of the instruction?
6. **Promote cultural diversity!** How well does the institution promote cultural diversity and how do we know?
7. **Provide developmental and continuing education!** How well does the institution provide developmental and continuing education and how do we know?
8. **Seek partnerships with business and industry!** How well does the institution do that and how do we know?

Institutional effectiveness is about understanding to what extent are we fulfilling our mission.

### **Institutional Accreditation & Institutional Effectiveness**

Southern University at Shreveport is regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The purpose or mission of SACSCOC is “...to assure the **educational quality** and improve the effectiveness of its member institutions”. SACSCOC membership affords SUSLA the opportunity to participate in Title IV student assistance programs (i.e., financial aid) as required by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). The USDOE mandates accreditation for Title IV participation to “ensure that the education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of **quality**”.

To be accredited by SACSCOC, SUSLA must be in compliance with the standards found in the *Principles of Accreditation*. While all of the standards reflect various facets of the quality of the institution, there are two fundamental standards that are specific to institutional effectiveness.

1. **Core Requirement 2.5: Institutional Effectiveness.** This could be considered the macro level institutional effectiveness standard. This is **planning and assessment** at an institutional level. It says:

*“The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission”.*

**2. Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1: Institutional Effectiveness.**

This could be considered the micro level institutional effectiveness standard. This is **assessment** at the departmental or unit level. It says:

*“The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas:*

- 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes*
- 3.3.1.2 administrative support services*
- 3.3.1.3 educational support services*
- 3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate*
- 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate”.*

**Institutional Effectiveness: Institutional & Departmental Level**

While the concept of institutional effectiveness is about understanding to what extent are we accomplishing our mission, strategic planning, academic program review and assessment are the mediums in which institutions use to answer this fundamental question.

**Figure I: Components of Institutional Effectiveness**



### **Strategic Planning**

Institutions develop a strategic plan to identify what they need to accomplish in the next five to ten years. The institution identifies the goals to be accomplished, the actions and resources needed to accomplish those goals, and specific targets to evaluate the plan.

As it pertains to institutional effectiveness, the strategic plan improves the quality of the institution. The goals of the plan should connect to the mission of the institution, ensuring that—as previously stated—the right things are being done—excellently.

For example, SUSLA’s mission says that we “prepare students for careers”. A goal in the institution’s strategic plan is to “cultivate a culture of academic excellence”. To accomplish that, the institution plans to expand high-demand, high-wage academic programs that meet regional needs and student demand”. One facet of preparing students for careers is offering high-demand programs to facilitate job placement. SUSLA can offer educational programs, but if students are not able to work, how well did we serve the community, the student, the institution?

The strategic plan is integral and pivotal to accomplishing the institution’s mission. It plans for improvement and ensures the quality of the institution.

## **Departmental Program Review**

Program Review occurs every five years for each program. The process assists departments in determining the effectiveness of the program: mission attainment and quality. It provides a systematic means by which decision-support is provided to continuously improve programs and associated operations. Moreover, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools requires a systematic review of all academic programs and services (*Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1, Core Requirements 2.5 and 2.7.2, and Federal Requirements 4.2 and 4.4*).

The program review framework guides the department in:

- reviewing the goals and outcomes of the program;
- examining the program for strengths and opportunities for improvement;
- examining departmental performance indicators;
- analyzing resources; and
- developing an action plan to improve the program.

The evaluation of programs are driven by the following guiding questions:

1. How well does the program fit with the purpose and scope of the SUSLA's mission?
2. Is the current curriculum timely and relevant?
3. Is there a viable job market for the graduates of this program?
4. What is the competitive environment for this program offering (i.e., market share)?
5. What is the overall quality of the program and are improvements being made?
6. Are the program's outcomes being achieved?
7. Does the program have adequate resources to ensure educational quality?
8. What improvements are recommended for continuous quality improvement? What resources are required to implement these recommendations?

The process is collaborative, one in which program directors, faculty, and divisional chairpersons work together to review how effectively all elements of the program - curriculum, staffing, budget, facilities and services - contribute to the mission of the institution and to the success of students in meeting program and student learning outcomes.



## **Assessment**

Assessment is fundamental to institutional effectiveness. It answers the question: “How well are we doing what we say we are going to do?” How can you emphatically answer this question if you do not assess? The answer is, you cannot.

**Assessment is an annual process of gathering and interpreting information to determine whether a program is meeting established goals and then using that information to enhance the program.** Assessment tells you what you are doing well and what you are not doing so well and therefore, what you need to do better.

It is a process of examining the operations of the department and developing a plan for improvement when needed. For example, if the fundamental purpose of your department is to “provide programs and services that attract and enroll prospective students with a desire to learn,” the assessment conducted should indicate to what degree the department did just that.

For academic programs, assessment, according to Angelo (1995), includes an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education.

## **Levels of Assessment**

SUSLA engages in assessment at the course, program, and institutional level to a degree in which it is useful and efficient for program units.

### Course-Level Assessment

General education, online, and other applicable courses evaluate the quality of a curriculum by assessing student learning within the classroom. This is done to ensure that 1) students acquire the intended

learning in a course; 2) students are prepared for their next course; and 3) the student learning environment is optimal.

### Program-Level Assessment

All educational units engage in program-level assessment. That is, assessment that informs the department about the impact of the overall program, focusing on the group and not individual students. The results reflect the entire major—not a course. Think about how students learn—they are introduced to new concepts, these concepts are taught in subsequent courses for further understanding, then the same concepts are applied or used to further understanding and learning. One course typically does not reflect this type of learning.

For example, a student may be introduced to a theory in a survey course. This theory is then taught in-depth in a more advanced course. The student may be asked to apply that theory and examine it in relationship to other theories in another course. Finally, the student may be asked to develop new ways of thinking about the theory in a capstone project. For program-level assessment, while it is important for students to understand the theory, it is more important to know if the student is able to use and apply that information appropriately. As such, the student would be assessed based on the learning desired for the program; which in this example, is how the student uses the information learned to create new ways of thinking.

### **Institutional-Level Assessment**

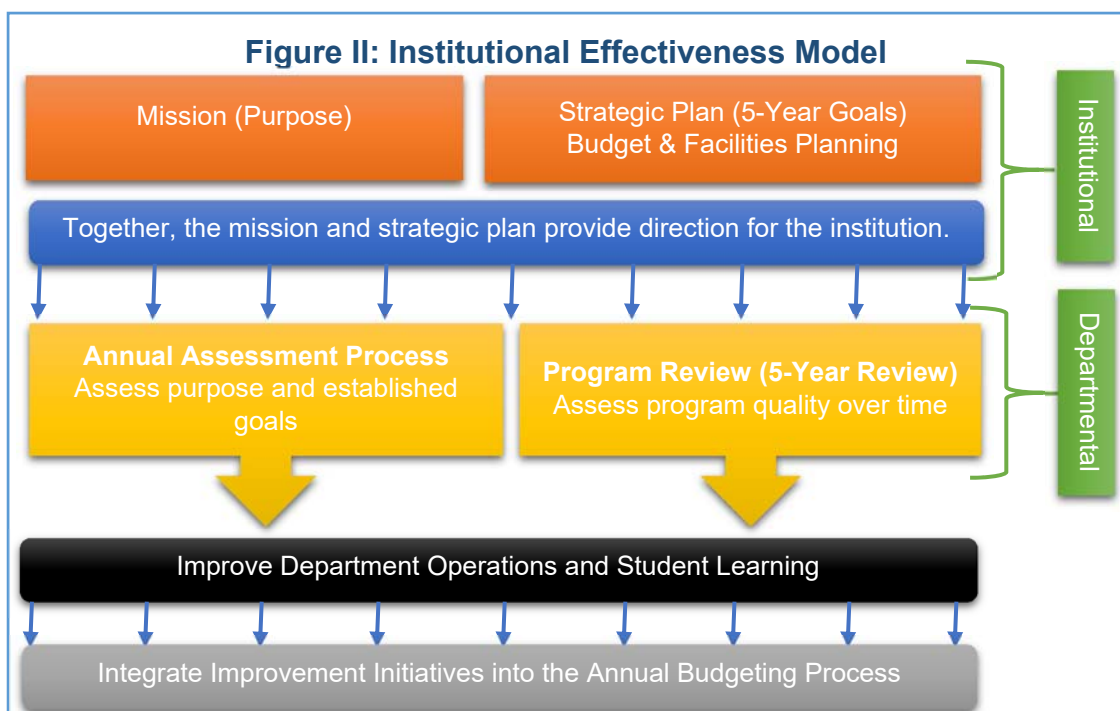
Institutional-level assessment occurs academically and non-academically. Non-academically, the institution assess students institution-wide using standardized or non-standardized assessment instruments, including, but not limited to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, Ruffalo-Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, Graduate Exit Survey, etc. Academically, the University assesses the extent to which students achieve the intended University Student Learning Outcomes:

- Written and oral communication: Demonstrate proficiency in written and oral communication by composing and presenting structured texts in a variety of oral and written forms according to purpose, audience, and occasion with implementation of thesis, supporting details, and idea development.

- Critical thinking and quantitative reasoning: Solve problems by interpreting, analyzing, evaluating and applying known information received from statistical and other data, past experience, problem-solving techniques, inference, the scientific method, mathematical equations, graphics, etc., to make decisions, judgments, and predictions, constructing well-supported and sustained arguments to justify conclusions.
- Technological competency: Effectively utilize various modes and media using technology such as computers, computer software applications, the internet, and other technology to produce documentation, data and graphical presentations appropriate to various academic and professional arenas/venues.
- Research and information literacy: Conduct research, synthesize and evaluate information to develop arguments and to organize evidence into a presentation using proper discipline-specific formats to cite and document primary and secondary sources.
- Professional deportment: Demonstrate professional and ethical behavior as required by discipline-specific codes of conduct and as needed in a diverse and global workforce or in the articulation to a four-year college or university program.

## THE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

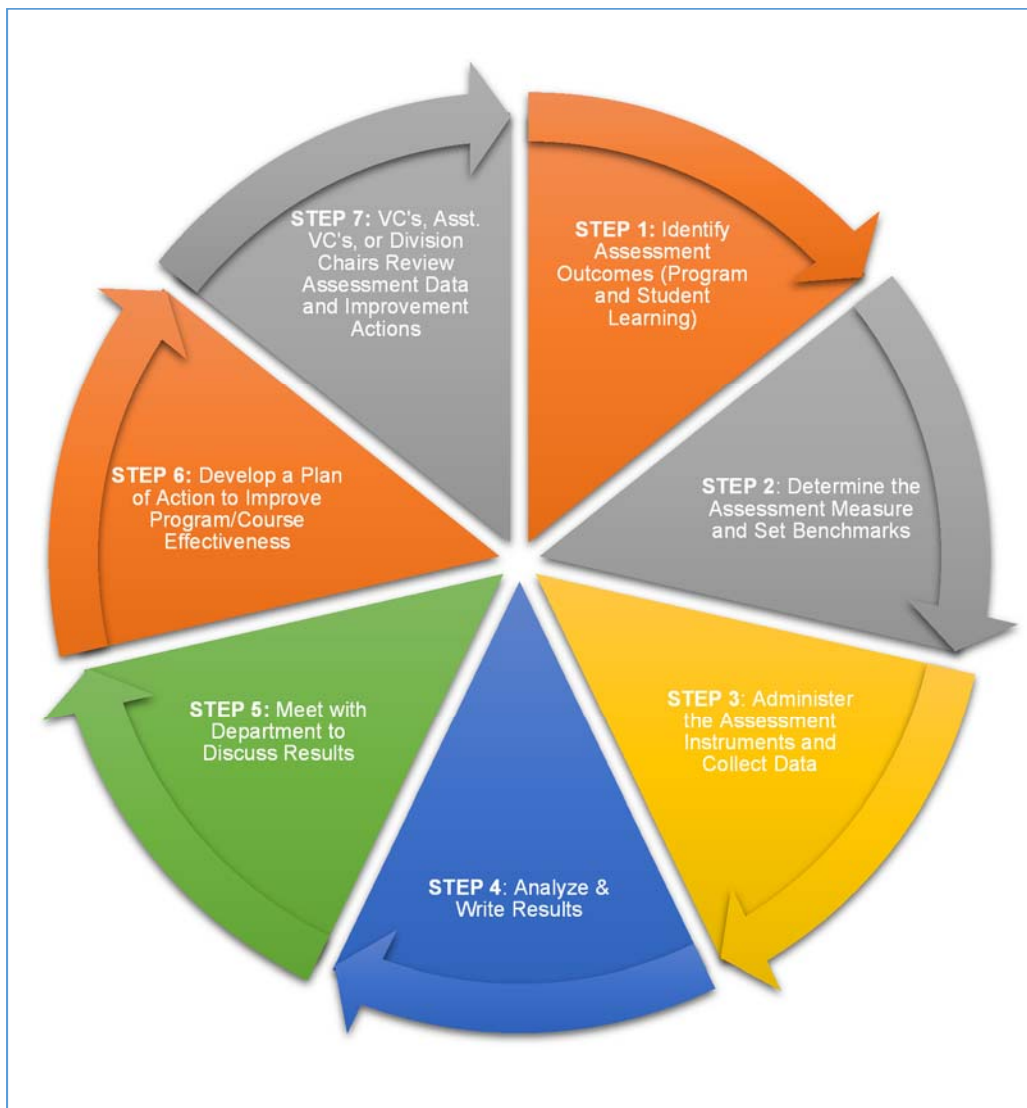
Figure II provides a model of institutional effectiveness at SUSLA.



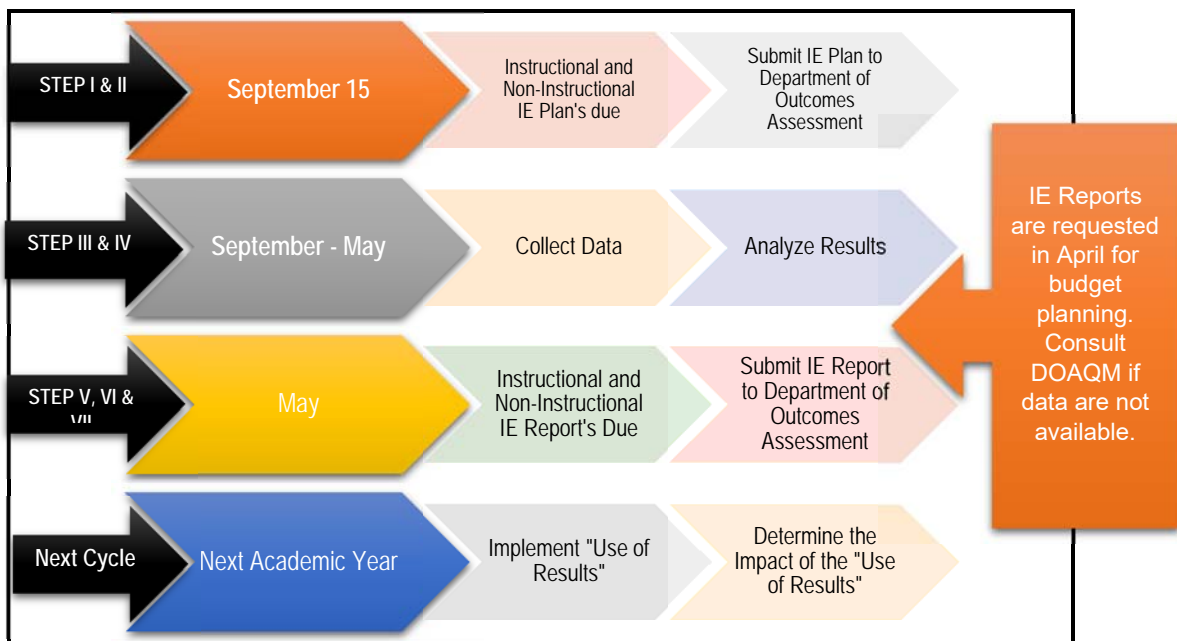
## CYCLE FOR COMPLETING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PLANS & REPORTS

As depicted in Figure III and IV, SUSLA adheres to an on-going and cyclical process for assessing the effectiveness of its non-instructional and instructional programs and courses. Programs are to complete an Institutional Effectiveness Plan in the fall of each academic year and report the findings in the Institutional Effectiveness Report in April/May. Similarly, applicable courses complete a Course Assessment Report in accordance with the University assessment cycle.

**Figure III: IE Planning and Reporting Process**



**Figure IV: Annual Assessment Planning, Reporting & Submission Cycle**



\*Note: Course Assessment Reports are due at the end of the course.

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSESSMENT

### The Institutional Effectiveness Plan and Report

Each department that receives a budget allocation should complete an annual Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Plan and Report. All funded departments or functions of the University have a responsibility for instituting the mission of the institution. Therefore, to determine the effectiveness of each unit, an IE Plan and Report is required.

There are instances in which two or more departments or programs may complete one plan and report as one unit. In these instances, the department's supervisor in collaboration with the Department of Outcomes Assessment and Quality Management should be consulted. Examples include stackable instructional or academic programs and departments where the operations are relatively inextricable or highly interdependent.

### Instructional Programs

The Institutional Effectiveness Plan and Report for Instructional Units are to be completed by University academic degree programs—both face-to-face and online degree programs. An academic degree program at Southern University at Shreveport leads to the attainment of a certificate, associate's degree, or technical diploma and/or is recognized

on the University's degree inventory. Concentrations, independent of a degree program must also be assessed.

Program directors/coordinators or department heads, with assistance from department faculty, are responsible for completing the plan and report. Program directors/coordinators should coordinate the assessment of the degree program with faculty in the department.

### Non-Instructional Programs

The Institutional Effectiveness Plan and Report for Non-Instructional Units are to be completed by all administrative, student and educational support units. These units are budgeted units and are clearly delineated on the University's organizational charts.

Directors and coordinators, with assistance from department staff, are responsible for completing the plan and report.

### **Tips for Sharing the Assessment Workload**

- Meet with faculty or staff at the beginning of each academic year to plan assessment for the year. Determine who is most appropriate to assess what, how the assessment will be done, and when the data should be collected and made available for reporting.
- Do not wait until the end of the year to try to collect assessment data. It WILL ALWAYS be overwhelming.
- Make a calendar in Microsoft Outlook® to set reminders of when data should be collected and by whom.
- Ask faculty or staff who collect the data to provide a preliminary analysis and summary while the information is easily retrieved from memory.
- Discuss quarterly the assessment efforts and results of direct reports, when available. Incorporate the discussion in meetings to ensure the activity is occurring. This is a helpful reminder to personnel to gather the data.
- Ensure that everyone in the department is a part of the process from the beginning to the end. This offers inclusion and buy-in.
- If you are a one-person department, work with the Department of Outcomes Assessment to identify opportunities to make the assessment a part of your normal workload.

## The Course Assessment Report

The Course Assessment Report (CAR) is required to be completed by general education, online, and other applicable courses as designated by the division chair. Course instructors are responsible for completing the report as designated by the program coordinator. The program chair has the purview to schedule the collection of data as deemed meaningful.

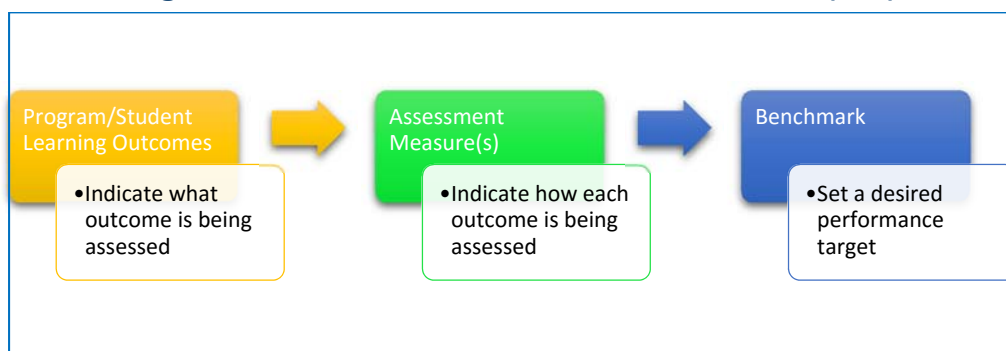
For courses with multiple sections and multiple instructors, faculty may pool their data and designate one person to complete the assessment form for the course. However, all faculty teaching the course, even adjuncts, should contribute to the assessment by providing appropriate data and information.

The Course Assessment Report (CAR) is submitted to the program coordinator and Department of Outcomes Assessment and Quality Management.

## STEPS OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

STEPS I-III: The Institutional Effectiveness Plan is submitted in the fall of each academic year. It includes program outcomes, student learning outcomes where applicable, assessment measures, and the benchmarks.

**Figure V: The Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP)**



The following subsections provide steps to constructing or writing the Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP).

## STEP I: IDENTIFY ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

Important to the process is knowing what to assess. Assessing insignificant aspects of the department or program can yield data that “get the IE Report completed”, but with meaningless data that does not help to improve the department. Programs and departments assess to what degree the program is accomplishing its intended purpose (statement of mission) through outcomes assessment. Programs indicate (outcomes) and assess the “intended” affect the program should have on those the program serve.

Following are some simple exercises that will assist departments and programs in identifying what to assess:

**Plan for assessment.** Outcomes should be assessed on a continuous basis in order that trend data may be gathered and analyzed. While SUSLA is committed to an organic assessment process, continuity and rational assessment is desired and promoted. For program outcomes, more often than not, these will be assessed on a recurring basis—annually or biennially. Do what is helpful to the department. Assessment results may warrant annual assessment of the same outcome to measure improvement.

For student learning outcomes, desired learning for a program typically does not change unless the purpose of the program changes. For example, the desired learning outcomes for a general psychology program are the same today as they were five years ago with relatively little change. Therefore, programs should plan to assess all learning outcomes within 150% of the program’s length.

**Table I: Sample Program Assessment Planning Matrix**

Year → Outcome ↓	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Outcome 1	X		X		X
Outcome 2		X		X	
Outcome 3	X	X			X
Outcome 4		X	X	X	
Outcome 5	X		X	X	X

All outcomes assessed within 150%  
of a 2-Year Program

**Examine the mission statement.** Mission statements identify why a department or program exists. Each mission statement should list key functions of the department. These functions should be assessed to



determine effectiveness. For example, see the sample mission statement.

“The Payroll office staff will work as a team to produce timely, accurate compensation for all work performed, we have confidence in each other as we all possess technical knowledge and seek to understand payroll laws in efforts to operate with honesty and confidentiality, while giving the best customer service. In doing so, we commit to be professional with all customers and use discretion while handling confidential information not only because we are a resource for the Dartmouth campus, but because we care about what we do and take pride in our jobs” (www.darthmouth.edu).

The clear key functions of this department is to produce timely and accurate compensation and give excellent customer service. Therefore some key questions to develop outcomes or objectives to be assessed would be:

1. How timely was payroll for all employees? What is involved in this process that need to be assessed?
2. How accurate is the payroll for all employees? What affects the accuracy of payroll?
3. Were all personnel satisfied with payroll services? What is important for personnel to be satisfied with?
4. How honest and confidential are the departments’ practices? Were there any breaches of confidentiality?
5. How well does the team work together? How is this reflected in the department’s outputs?

Consider this mission statement from an academic department.

“The MassBay Business Department seeks to **promote skill development**; foster productive attitudes and behaviors; reinforce **positive ethical and social conduct**; and provide a successful program in business education and **industry employment**. MassBay’s business programs and courses provides opportunities to **think critically**, engage in **analyzing workplace issues** within the classroom setting; and develop an appreciation of diversity and cultural differences in the modern business world” (Mass Bay Community College).

Some clear key aspects of this academic department are skill development, productive attitudes and behaviors, critical thinking, analysis of workplace issues, etc. This mission statement lists several key educational goals that are critical to this program and indicates that the department will cultivate these skills and values in its graduates.

Therefore some key questions to develop outcomes or objectives to be assessed would be:

1. Do the students have the skills needed when they graduate? What are those skills and what do they look like?
2. Can the students think critically when they graduate? What does thinking critically look like from this department?
3. Can the students analyze workplace issues? What issues do they need to analyze in the workplace? What knowledge or skills do they need to do that effectively?
4. How prepared are the students for industry employment? How do we know that? Who do we need to ask? What can inform this question?

**Examine strategic goals.** The institutional strategic plan is broad and aligns with every department in the University. Each strategic goal has strategies and benchmarks. Where applicable, these strategies and benchmarks should be assessed in the IE plans and reports. Why? The assessment informs SUSLA if the benchmarks in the strategic plan are being achieved and if not, a plan can be developed to ensure that it is accomplished.

For **example**, Objective 1.3 of SUSLA’s strategic plan is to “increase partnerships with K-12 and post-secondary agencies to expand enrollment and transfer.” A desired outcome is an increase in the number of students who transfer to four-year post-secondary institutions. Key questions to develop outcomes or objectives:

1. Is the mission of my program to transfer students to post-secondary institutions or prepare them for the workforce?
2. How does my program contribute to the overall objective of increasing the number of transfers to post-secondary institutions?
3. How prepared are students when they transfer? How do I know?
4. How does program completion affect the number of students who are able to transfer? Do students transfer before completing the program? Are these students being tracked?

Another **example**, Objective 3.2 desires that the institution would “deliver efficient and effective service-orientated administrative processes for internal and external customers”. A desired outcome is improved efficiency in the workplace. Key questions to develop outcomes or objectives:

1. How efficient are my processes for my internal and/or customers? How do we know?
2. What does efficient processes look like in my department? What benchmarks tell me that they are efficient?

## Understanding the Types of Outcomes

There are three types of outcomes that can be assessed: program, process, and student learning. All departments assess program outcomes.

Program Outcome: Program outcomes assesses the effectiveness of the operations of your program. “Program outcomes illustrate what you want your program to do. These outcomes differ from learning outcomes in that you discuss what it is that you want your *program* to accomplish” (Bresciani, M.J., n.d., p. 3).

Process Outcome: Process outcomes focus on activities, tasks, or “to-do” items. That is, what the program or office will do to accomplish an outcome (e.g., establish a center for learning, develop a workshop schedule, hold workshops, etc). Process outcomes are *NOT* assessment outcomes and furthermore, not measurable. The assessment or institutional effectiveness typically does *not* include outcomes that are not measurable.

Student Learning Outcome: A student learning outcome describes what a student should know, think, or be able to do as a result of exposure to content in some form (e.g., academic program, workshops or processes, etc.). “Learning outcome statements are anchored in verbs that identify the actions, behaviors, dispositions, and ways of thinking or knowing that students should be able to demonstrate” (Maki, 2004, p. 61).

## University Student Learning Outcomes

SUSLA has identified SLO's at the institutional level for all associate degree-seeking students. Programs are encouraged to assess these outcomes across the curriculum by developing outcomes that align with the University's student learning outcomes. For example, departments can develop written communication outcomes specific to the programs purpose. The student learning outcomes for the institution are defined below:

### Written and Oral Communication

Demonstrate proficiency in written and oral communication by composing and presenting structured texts in a variety of oral and written forms according to purpose, audience, and occasion with implementation of thesis, supporting details, and idea development.

- Write and speak fluently and concisely, applying standard English conventions in grammar, mechanics, usage and punctuation

- Adapt speaking and writing to context, considering opposing viewpoints
- Present ideas coherently and logically without plagiarism
- Employ principles to influence attitudes, beliefs and actions when appropriate
- Summarize, analyze, and interpret oral and written texts, with the ability to identify assumptions and differentiate fact from opinion.

### **Critical Thinking and Quantitative Reasoning**

Solve problems by interpreting, analyzing, evaluating and applying known information received from statistical and other data, past experience, problem-solving techniques, inference, the scientific method, mathematical equations, graphics, etc., to make decisions, judgments, and predictions, constructing well-supported and sustained arguments to justify conclusions.

- Demonstrate background knowledge of subject sufficient to understand the nature of a problem
- Define a problem verbally or by means of numerical or geometrical representatives of real-world phenomena
- Determine/employ techniques appropriate to solve a problem
- Make deductions from consequences
- Formulate alternatives
- Predict outcomes
- Verify solution satisfies the requirement of the problem

### **Technological Competency**

Effectively utilize various modes and media using technology such as computers, computer software applications, the internet, and other technology to produce documentation, data and graphical presentations appropriate to various academic and professional arenas/venues.

- Create documents using various word processing, data management, and spreadsheet technology for written presentations
- Create presentations using PowerPoint technology to accompany oral presentations
- Relay information through data or graphical representation.

### **Research and Information Literacy**

Conduct research, synthesize and evaluate information to develop arguments and to organize evidence into a presentation using proper discipline-specific formats to cite and document primary and secondary sources.

- Explore scientific and academic topics using specific electronic search engines, i.e. Medline, iLink, OPAC, and LOUIS
- Research scientific and academic topics utilizing various resources presented in the library, to include but are not limited to: books,

periodicals, newspapers, microfilm, microfiche, audio and video cassettes, encyclopedias, atlases, and other reference material, special collection and special services, necessary in constructing a thesis/term paper, white paper or other informational document.

- Apply appropriate discipline-specific citation format, i.e. APA/MLA, to document sources used in the research of information.

### Professional Deportment

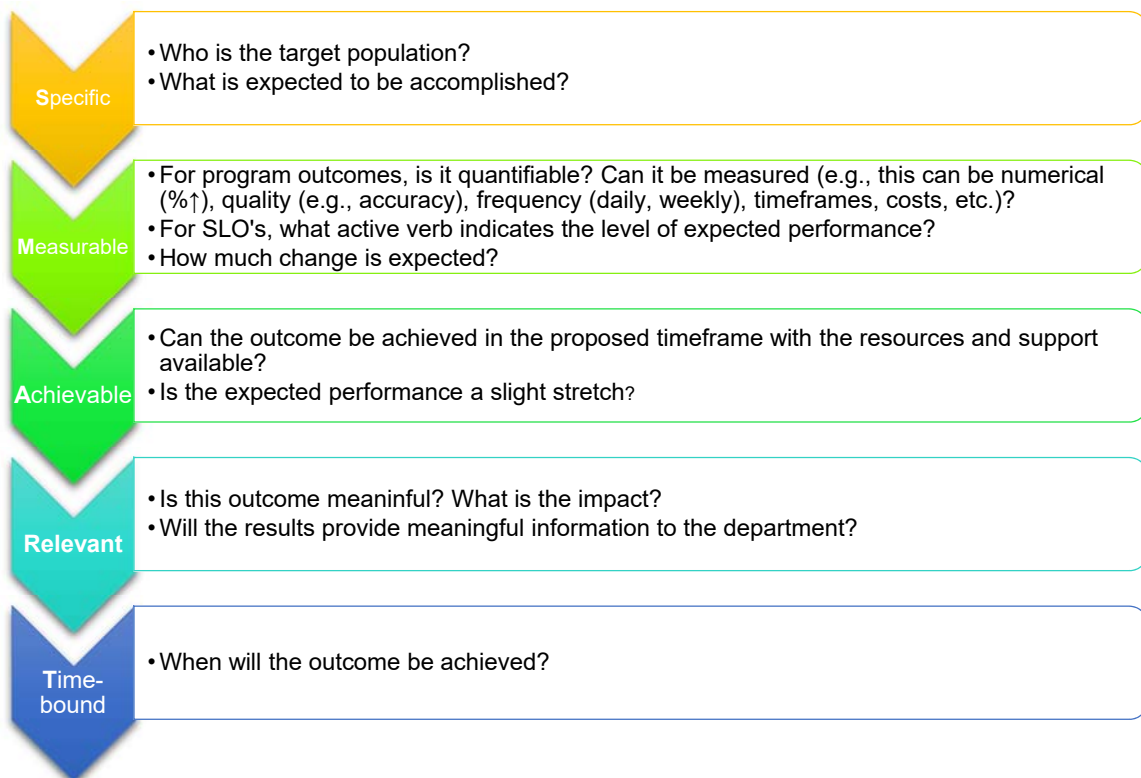
Demonstrate professional and ethical behavior as required by discipline-specific codes of conduct and as needed in a diverse and global workforce or in the articulation to a four-year college or university program.

- Model professional and ethical conduct
- Demonstrate responsible behavior and self-directed actions
- Accept supervision and work effectively with supervisory personnel
- Habituate promptness
- Display integrity in practices and reporting of information.

### Writing S.M.A.R.T. Outcomes

Outcomes, both program and student learning, should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

**Figure VI: S.M.A.R.T. Outcomes**



## Program Outcome Examples

Using the Payroll Office example (p. 17), develop some SMART outcomes. Think about the following questions and develop outcomes.

1. How timely was payroll for all employees? What is involved in this process that need to be assessed?
  - a. Possible Program Outcome: Employee compensation will be *processed in a timely manner*.
2. How accurate is the payroll for all employees? What affects the accuracy of payroll?
  - a. Possible Program Outcome: Employee compensation will be *completed with minimal to zero errors*.
3. Were all personnel satisfied with payroll services? What is important for personnel to be satisfied with?
  - a. Possible Program Outcome: Personnel *will be satisfied* with the overall services provided by the payroll department, to include the accuracy and timeliness of payroll as well as the customer service provided by department personnel.

## Writing Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)

Program student learning outcomes should be SMART; however, these outcomes are constructed based on the desired knowledge, skills and abilities students should possess and use action verbs to make them measurable.

More specifically, student learning outcomes describe what a student should know, think, or be able to do as a result of exposure to content in some form (e.g., academic program, workshops or processes, etc.). "Learning outcome statements are anchored in verbs that identify the actions, behaviors, dispositions, and ways of thinking or knowing that students should be able to demonstrate" (Maki, 2004, p. 61).

Keeping in mind the SMART outcome, below are three different methods to constructing learning outcomes.

1. **(Action Verb) (Modifiers) (Object)**  
**Example:** Analyze the basic components of fire as a chemical reaction, the major phases of fire, and examine the main factors that influence fire spread and fire behavior.

**Explanation:** The action verbs "analyze" and "examine" indicate the expected level of performance. Students are expected to

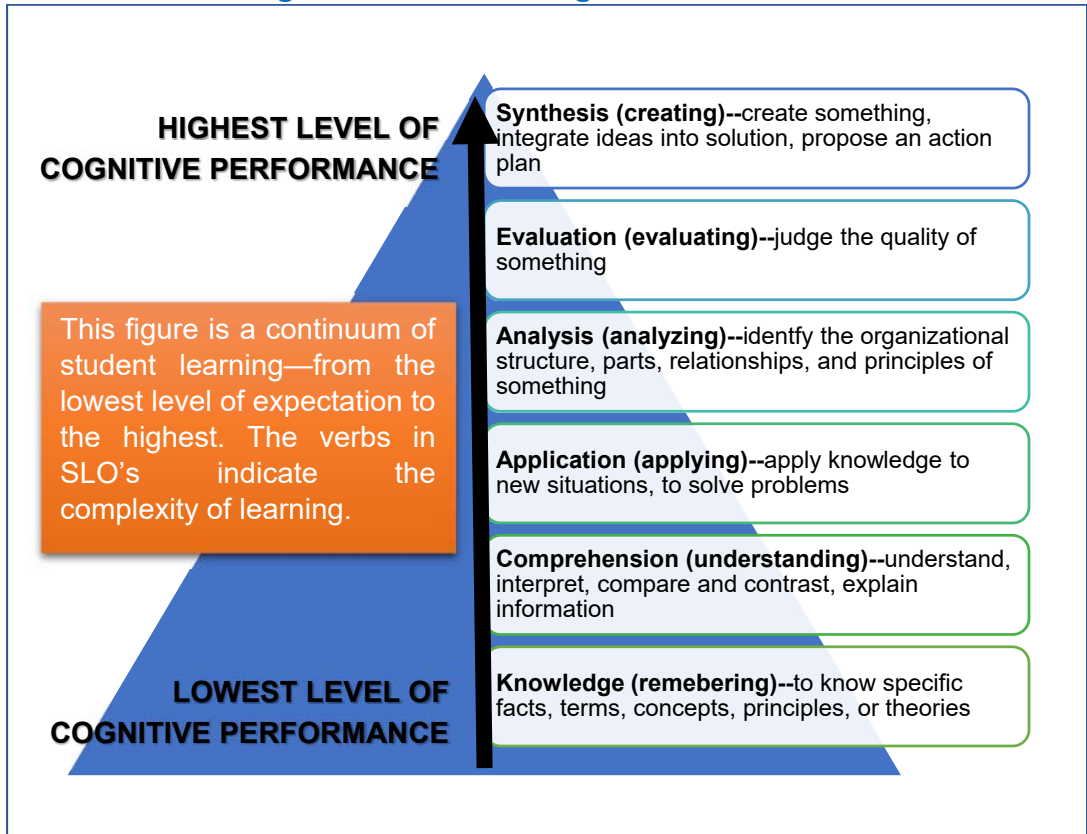
know about the basic components of a fire and how it behaves. With the action verb and the object, the outcome would read: analyze the basic components of fire. Is the outcome SMART? Modifiers specify the meaning of another word or phrase. Adding the words “chemical reaction”, “the major phases”, and “the main factors that influence” explicitly states what will be learned.

2. **SWiBAT (Student Will Be Able To)** + **Active Verb** + **Condition** (as a result of) + **Measurement** (as measured by or as demonstrated by ...) + **When** (at what timeline).
3. **Condition** (As a result...; from participating in...) + **Audience** (selected population being assessed) + **Behavior** (active verb) + **Degree of Achievement**

### Identifying Performance Levels for Outcome Statements

Student learning outcomes should clearly indicate the level and type of competence that is required. Avoid terms such as show *understanding*, develop *awareness*, possess a *level of comfort*, *appreciate*, become *aware of*, become *familiar with*, *know*, and *learn*. Use Bloom’s Taxonomy (p. 26) to identify appropriate verbs when writing SLO’s.

Figure VII: Levels of Cognitive Performance



Below are examples of how the expected performance a student learning outcome changes based on the active verb indicated. These examples are based on the continuum in Figure VII on page 23.

## **KNOWLEDGE**

Student can list the major theoretical approaches of the discipline.

**Explanation:** Active verbs in the “KNOWLEDGE” domain represent the lowest level of cognitive performance. Students are required to remember or recall content, resulting from a lecture, reading, or memorization of material. These verbs are useful when students are not required to have a deep understanding, but just to remember the content.

## **COMPREHENSION**

Students can describe the key theories, concepts and issues for each of the major theoretical approaches.

**Explanation:** Active verbs in the “COMPREHENSION” domain require students to understand something. Students who can describe or explain content understand it, which results from discussions, reflections, etc.

## **APPLICATION**

Students can apply theoretical principles to solve real-world problems.

**Explanation:** Active verbs in the “APPLICATION” domain require students to use what they have learned to solve a problem. This application of knowledge requires a deeper understanding of the concepts, resulting from critical thought, case studies, role plays, observations, etc.

## **ANALYSIS**

Students can analyze the strengths and limitations of each of the major theoretical approaches for understanding specific phenomena.

**Explanation:** Active verbs in the “ANALYSIS” domain require students to break knowledge into parts and analyze the relationships between the parts.

## **EVALUATION**

Students can select the theoretical approach that is most applicable to a phenomenon **and** explain why they have selected that perspective.



**Explanation:** Active verbs in the “EVALUATION” domain require students to judge something using criteria that they have learned and deeply understand and apply that knowledge.

## SYNTHESIS

Students can combine theoretical approaches to explain complex phenomena.

**Explanation:** Active verbs in the “SYNTHESIS” domain require students to put parts or ideas together to make a whole based on their understanding of the information.

## Taxonomy of Learning Domains (Bloom’s Taxonomy)

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom, along with a group of educational psychologists, established a way to “assess student [learning] and the outcomes of educational practice” (Eisner, 2000, p. 2). In doing so, a hierarchy was established to classify cognitive operations—represented as action verbs—in the order of their complexity. A student’s ability to perform at the highest level means that they can perform at the level that precedes it. Bloom’s taxonomy was updated in the 1990’s by a group of cognitive psychologists led by Lorin Anderson who was a former student of Bloom. These updates are reflected in the taxonomies below.

### Cognitive Learning Domain

Student learning outcomes associated with the cognitive domain or **knowledge** typically use verbs like those below to describe what the student should know as a result of exposure to some level of knowledge. Please note that the listing of verbs below is **not** exhaustive nor is it mutually exclusive.

**Figure VIII: Bloom’s Taxonomy Cognitive Domain Verbs**

Basic Knowledge	Continuum				Higher Order Thinking
Remembering (knowledge)	Understanding (compreh.)	Applying (application)	Analyzing (analysis)	Evaluating (evaluation)	Creating (synthesis)
Can the student recall or remember the information? Student remembers or recognizes information as communicated with little personal assimilation.	Can the student explain ideas or concepts? Student grasps the meaning behind the information and interprets, translates, or comprehends the information.	Can the student use the information in a new way? Student uses information to relate and apply it to a new situation with minimal instructor input.	Can the student distinguish between the different parts? Student discriminates, organizes, and scrutinizes assumptions in an attempt to identify evidence for a conclusion.	Can the student justify a stand or decision? Student judges or evaluates information based upon standards and criteria, values and opinions.	Can the student create a new product or point-of-view? Student creatively applies knowledge and analysis to integrate concepts or construct an overall theory.

Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's
Cite Define Duplicate Enumerate Identify Imitate Label List Match Memorize Name Quote Recall Repeat Reproduce State Write	Classify Convert Define Describe Discuss Estimate Explain Generalize Identify Illustrate Locate Paraphrase Recognize Report Restate Select Summarize Translate	Apply Chart Choose Compute Demonstrate Determine Dramatize Employ Establish Illustrate Interpret Operate Schedule Sketch Solve Use Write	Analyze Appraise Compare Contrast Correlate Criticize Diagram Differentiate Discriminate Dissect Distinguish Examine Experiment Infer Investigate Limit Outline Question	Access Appraise Argue Conclude Critique Decide Defend Diagnose Evaluate Judge Justify Rank Recommend Select Support Value	Assemble Construct Create Design Develop Formulate Generate Hypothesize Initiate Invent Modify Reframe Synthesize Write

### Psychomotor Learning Domain

Student learning outcomes associated with the psychomotor domain typically use verbs that are **skill or task-oriented**, like those below, to describe what the student should be able to do as a result of exposure to something. Please note that the listing of verbs below is **not** exhaustive nor is it mutually exclusive.

**Figure IX: Bloom's Taxonomy Psychomotor Domain Verbs**

Basic Skills Level	Continuum				Critical Understanding of Performance
	Observe	Model	Recognize Standards	Correct	
Students translate sensory input into physical tasks or activities. <b>*SLO's not written at this level.</b>	Students are able to replicate a fundamental skill or task.	Students recognize standards or criteria important to perform a skill or task correctly.	Students use standards to evaluate their own performances and make corrections.	Students apply this skill to real life situations.	Students are able to instruct or train others to perform this skill in other situations.
<b>Verbs for LO's</b>	<b>Verbs for LO's</b>	<b>Verbs for LO's</b>	<b>Verbs for LO's</b>	<b>Verbs for LO's</b>	<b>Verbs for LO's</b>
Hear Identify Observe See Smell Taste Touch Watch	Attempt Copy Follow Imitate Mimic Model Reenact Repeat Reproduce Show Try	Check Detect Discriminate Differentiate Distinguish Notice Perceive Recognize Select	Adapt Adjust Alter Change Correct Customize Develop Improve Manipulate Modify Practice Revise	Build Compose Construct Create Design Originate Produce	Demonstrate Exhibit Illustrate Instruct Teach Train

## Affective Learning Domain

Student learning outcomes associated with the affective domain typically use verbs that are **behavior oriented (correspond to attitudes or values)**, like those below, to describe what the student should think as a result of exposure to something. Please note that the listing of verbs below is **not** exhaustive nor is it mutually exclusive.

**Figure X: Bloom's Taxonomy Affective Domain Verbs**

Inherited Value System	Continuum			Well Thought-out Value System
Receiving	Responding	Valuing	Organizing	Characterizing
Students become aware of an attitude, behavior, or value.	Students exhibit a reaction or change as a result of exposure to an attitude, behavior, or value.	Students recognize value and display this through involvement or commitment.	Students determine a new value or behavior as important or a priority.	Students integrate consistent behavior as a naturalized value in spite of discomfort or cost. The value is recognized as a part of the person's character.
Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's	Verbs for LO's
Accept Attend Describe Explain Locate Observe Realize Receive Recognize	Behave Comply Cooperate Discuss Examine Follow Model Present Respond Show Studies	Accept Adapt Balance Choose Differentiate Defend Influence Prefer Recognize Seek Value	Adapt Adjust Alter Change Customize Develop Improve Manipulate Modify Practice Revise	Authenticate Characterize Defend Display Embody Habituate Internalize Produce Represent Validate Verify

## Student Learning Outcome Examples

(This example is taken from *A Program Guide for Outcomes Assessment* at Geneva College, April 2000 and the University of Central Florida Program Assessment Handbook, 2005):

### Example 1

**Poor.** Students will be able to independently design and carry out research.

**Explanation:** The problem with this is that the statement does not specify the type or quality of research to be done.

**Better.** Students will be able to independently design and carry out experimental and correlational research.

**Explanation:** This specifies the type of research, but not the quality students must achieve. If a student independently does any research that is experimental or correlational, it would be viewed as acceptable.

**Best:** Students will be able to independently **design** and **carry out** experimental and correlational research that yields valid results.

**Explanation:** Here, the standard for students to aim for is clear and specific enough to help faculty agree about what students are expected to do. Introductory students can understand the outcome statement, even if they don't know exactly what experimental and correlational research methods are.

## Example 2

**Poor:** Students should know the historically important systems of psychology.

**Explanation:** This is poor because it says neither what systems nor what information about each system students should know. Are they supposed to know everything about them or just names? Should students be able recognize the names, recite the central ideas, or criticize the assumptions?

**Better:** Students should understand the psychoanalytic, Gestalt, behaviorist, humanistic, and cognitive approaches to psychology.

**Explanation:** This is better because it says what theories students should know, but it still does not detail exactly what they should know about each theory, or how deeply they should understand.

**Best:** Students should be able to recognize and articulate the foundational assumptions, central ideas, and dominant criticisms of the psychoanalytic, Gestalt, behaviorist, humanistic, and cognitive approaches to psychology.

**Explanation:** This is the clearest and most specific statement of the three examples. It provides students an understandable and very specific target to aim for. It provides faculty with a reasonable standard against which they can compare actual student performance.

## Example 2

**Poor:** Students completing the undergraduate program in Hypothetical Engineering will have knowledge of engineering principles.

**Explanation:** This is a weak statement because it does not specify which engineering principles a graduate from the program should know. Also, it does not define what is meant by "have knowledge". Are they to simply define the principles, or be able to apply the principles, etc?

**Better:** Graduates will be competent in the principles of engineering design, formulating requirements and constraints, following an open-ended decision process involving tradeoffs, and completing a design addressing a hypothetical engineering need.

**Explanation:** This statement is better as it lists the specific areas in hypothetical engineering that a student must be competent in. However,

it is still vague, as the level of competency is not stated. Are they expected to understand these concepts and how will they apply them?

**Best:** Graduates will be able to apply and demonstrate the principles of engineering design, formulating requirements and constraints, following an open-ended decision process involving tradeoffs, and completing a design addressing a hypothetical engineering need.

**Explanation:** This is a much better learning outcome statement for two reasons. First, the specific requirements are listed and second, the level of competency is also stated. A student must be able to apply and to demonstrate the listed engineering principles.

## Curriculum Mapping

For program-level assessment, the curriculum map assists in designing and understanding assessment. It aligns student learning outcomes to courses and if desired, activities. It provides a visual of how students learn the program's student learning outcomes. Curriculum means a path taken in small steps—the root word. A map provides an understanding of the small steps taken in each course to master the student learning outcomes. Each course is a small step.

Table II provides an example of a curriculum map. The program's student learning outcomes are listed and aligned with the hypothetical courses. The "I" represents where the outcome is introduced in the curriculum. That is, students are exposed to this topic for the first time. The "E" represents where the outcome is emphasized in the curriculum. That is, a significant amount of attention is given to this content and students are provided an opportunity to practice this content, providing more than a basic knowledge about the subject matter. The "M" represents where the student masters the content in the curriculum. The student understands the content and can apply the information learned. Finally, the "A" represents the point where students are assessed. That is, data is collected to determine if in fact students have mastered the content.

**Table II: Sample Curriculum Map Template**

Program Outcomes	Sample Program Courses (In order of complexity and learning)			
	CMAP 1234	CMAP 5678	CMAP 9101	CMAP 1121
SLO 1	I	E	M	A
SLO 2		E		A
SLO 3	A	M		
SLO 4	I	I	I	E
SLO 5	I	E	M	A

Table II demonstrates gaps in learning and inappropriately sequenced content. For example, for SLO 2, the content is not introduced or mastered at any point in the curriculum. For SLO 3, the mastery of the outcome is assessed in an introductory or survey course before students have the opportunity to master the content. This type of assessment resembles course-level assessment rather than program-level assessment because the results will not reflect what students have learned as a result of the program. For SLO 4, the students are only introduced to the concept in several courses without appropriate instruction to master the concept for assessment. Determining the point in which to assess the outcome helps the assessor to know what assessment measure is most appropriate to assess student learning.

## STEP II: DETERMINE THE ASSESSMENT MEASURE

Programs are to develop appropriate ways of assessing each outcome. There are a number of *right* ways to assess an outcome. It is important to think about what will provide the “best” data to analyze the outcome.

**Assessment Measure:** The assessment measure is the instrument used to assess the outcome and determine if the benchmark has been achieved. The assessment measure:

- provides an *objective* means of measuring the outcomes quality, efficiency or productivity of programs, operations, activities or services
- indicates how you will assess each of your outcomes
- indicates when you will assess each outcome

Outcomes that are non-student learning related can use any appropriate instrument to assess the outcome. However, outcomes that assess student learning must use a direct assessment measure.

### **Direct Assessment Measures**

Direct assessment measures assess student’s actual learning and require a demonstration of their achievement (Allen, 2004). Student learning outcomes *must* be assessed using at least one direct assessment.

#### Sample Direct Assessment Instruments

- Samples of individual student work

- Pre-test and post-test evaluations
- Standardized tests
- Performance on licensure exams (if assessment indicators or sub-scores are provided)
- Blind-scored essay tests (scored with rubric)
- Internal or external juried review of student work
- Case study/problems
- Capstone papers, projects or presentations
- Project or course embedded assessment
- Documented observation and analysis of student behavior/performance
- Externally reviewed internship or practicum
- Collections of work (portfolios) of individual students (must be objectively evaluated)
- Activity logs
- Performances scored with set criteria
- Interviews (including videotaped) evaluated with set criteria

### **Indirect Assessment Measures**

Indirect assessment instruments measure student *perception* of learning and not actual learning.

#### Sample Indirect Assessment Instruments

- Questionnaires and Surveys (e.g., employer, students, graduating seniors, alumni, etc.)
- Syllabi and curriculum analysis
- Transcript analysis

### **Course-Embedded Assessment**

“Course-embedded assessment uses the student performance on assignments or exams that already occur within the curriculum to indicate achievement of objectives” (Knowles and Knowles, 2012, p. 27). In other words, it is the assessment of actual student work in courses.

### **Course-Embedded Assessment Process**

**Step 1:** Indicate the expected student learning outcome (SLO) for the program.

- Step 2:** Identify the course(s) where the SLO will be assessed. NOTE: The learning outcome should be assessed in the course where students have mastered the content identified in the outcome.
- Step 3:** Determine the appropriate assessment measures (instrument) to assess the SLO in the course (example on page 2 and 3). Evaluate the assignments in the course to determine which one most appropriately assesses the learning outcome.
- Step 4:** Determine the benchmark (target) that would indicate student achievement (example on page 2 and 3).
- Step 5:** Evaluate student performance on course embedded measures to assess program effectiveness.
- Step 6:** Analyze the results and determine the level of student achievement (example on page 2 and 3).
- Step 7:** Determine use of results or improvement actions based on the results.

## Examples of How to Embed Assessment in the Course

### Figure X: Using an Exam (Most Common Option)

#### STEP 3: Select Assessment Measure (Instrument)

Assessment Measure/Instrument	Questions Embedded in Exams/Quizzes
How to embed in course	Identify questions on the exam (usually final) or quiz that holistically assess the student learning outcome. Evaluate student performance on identified questions. See Table A for an example of how to do this.

**Table III: Sample Evaluation of Student Responses on the Exam**

Final Exam: Accurate Student Responses (1=Correct/0=Incorrect)									
Q#	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	% Correct
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	100%
9	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	62.5%
11	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	62.5%
25	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	75%
33	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	87.5%

**STEP 4: Sample Benchmark or Standard of Performance Statement:** At least 80 percent of students will answer each embedded



question correctly on the Final Exam in MGMT 4509: Senior Capstone. Five questions were identified on the final exam that specifically assess the student learning outcome.

**STEP 6: Sample Analysis of Results Based on Table A:** Overall, students answered the embedded questions on the final exam with 77.5 percent accuracy. However, the target of 80% accuracy on each of the five questions was not achieved. Specifically, students scored below 80 percent in three primary areas or domains: X, X, and X. Table A: Sample Evaluation of Student Responses on the Exam delineates students' performance on the embedded questions pertinent to the student learning outcome.

**STEP 7: Sample Use of Results (Improvement Actions):** Improvement actions should be based on the content in questions 9, 11, and 25. The assessor should ask themselves what actions should be taken to improve student performance in those content areas. These improvements should be strictly related to the learning outcome and the data.

### Figure XI: Using a Rubric (A Common Option)

#### STEP 3: Select Assessment Measure (Instrument)

Assessment Measure/Instrument	Essay, Research Paper, Projects, Oral Presentation, Student Portfolios, Field Experiences, etc.
How to embed in course	Design a rubric to assess student achievement of the SLO. Identify a course assignment (like those listed above) to use the rubric to assess student learning.

**Table IV: Sample Evaluation of Student Scores on a Rubric**

Written Communication Rubric (Scores for a Total of 20 Students)					
Rubric Categories	4-Exceed Expectations	3-Meet Expectations	2-Needs Improvement	1-Unacceptable	Average Score
Context & Purpose of Writing	4	8	6	2	2.7
Content Development	5	2	8	5	2.35
Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	6	5	1	8	2.45
Sources & Evidence	9	6	4	1	3.15
Control of Syntax & Mechanics	10	4	3	3	3.05

#### **STEP 4: Sample Benchmark or Standard of Performance**

**Statement:** On average, students will achieve a score of “Meets Expectations” or “3” in each rubric category. The Senior Capstone Rubric has five levels: unacceptable (1), needs improvement (2), meet expectations (3), or exceeds expectations (4). The Senior Capstone Rubric will be used to score student work on the senior research paper in MGMT: 2609.

**STEP 6: Sample Analysis of Results Based on Table B:** The target or benchmark was not achieved. On average, students scored at the “Meet Expectations” level in two of the five rubric categories. The average of 20 students scores were the following in each rubric category: context and purpose of writing—2.7; content and development—2.35; genre and disciplinary conventions—2.45; sources of evidence—3.15; control of syntax and mechanics—3.05. Table B: Sample Evaluation of Student Scores on a Rubric delineates students’ performance on the XXX pertinent to the student learning outcome.

#### **STEP 7: Sample Use of Results (Improvement Actions):**

Improvement actions should be based on the following rubric categories: context and purpose of writing, content development, and genre and disciplinary conventions. The assessor should ask themselves what actions should be taken to improve student performance in those content areas. These improvements should be strictly related to the learning outcome and the data.

#### **Why Grades Are Not an Appropriate Measure of Assessment**

In understanding why grades are not an effective method to assess student learning, it is important to understand the purpose of assessment in post-secondary education. Program (instructional) assessment is conducted to *improve the quality of instructional programs and student learning*. Authentic and quality assessment provide faculty with data necessary to inform curricular, instructional, and/or program improvements. As such, through the assessment process, it is critical that faculty gather data that will lend to this purpose.

In gathering assessment data, grades may be the most efficient data gathering resource, however, they are *not* effective in assessing student learning for several reasons: 1) grades are often assignment and course based and not program based; 2) grades can often be inflated with extra

points (e.g., for effort, for participation, for class discussion, etc.), curved grades, weights, etc.); 3) grades can be influenced by subjective measures (e.g., grading an essay based not based on specific standardized criteria--rubric); and 4) grading focuses on the individual student versus the program. "Grades [only] represent the extent to which a student has successfully met the faculty member's requirements and expectations for a course" (Rogers, n.d.).

While a letter grade of a *B* indicates that a student has learned a great deal about a subject, it does not provide information about which aspects need improvement. For example, a grade of a *B* on an English paper might reflect adequate content, poor mechanics, and average synthesis, or it might reflect poor content, adequate mechanics, and average synthesis.

Determining the effectiveness of a program requires a different type of assessment than that offered through course grades (Allen, 2004). The emphasis in program assessment is broad learning outcomes achieved across the curriculum with a focus on "integration of learning and long-term retention" (Allen, 2004, p, 13).

### **Set the Benchmark**

When setting the benchmark for outcomes, it is important to do it strategically. It is not "guessing" or arbitrarily deciding what might be achieved or even deciding on the "magical" 70% threshold. To set an appropriate benchmark, it is important to know where you are now, what you are trying to achieve, and determining what improvement is needed to achieve it.

**Benchmark:** The level of performance that indicates to the department that the outcome has been achieved.

### **Using Historical Data**

Use data that you have already gathered to set a baseline or starting place. For example, if over the past three years your students have scored a 65%, a good target may be 67 or 69%--depending on the number of students served. 80% may be unrealistic unless drastic changes are being made. This example also applies to operational units.

### **Using External Sources**

When historical data are not available, external data may be useful in setting benchmarks. This sets the targets based on comparisons with

other schools or national norms. That is, the standard is set at the average performance of others.

Beware of setting unusually high (100% or all) or low (50%) targets. For example, it is unlikely that 100% of students will achieve a benchmark. If so, this may point to issues with the assessment measure or low targets.

Benchmarks should be analyzed over time and not increase randomly. Each target should have a clear rationale for the increase.

## STEPS III-VII: THE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT (IER)

### Write the Assessment Results

In writing assessment results, there are essential components that should be included in the narrative to ensure that a complete record of assessment activity is available for decision-support. Below are helpful hints that may be useful in guiding faculty and staff in analyzing and interpreting data and writing the narrative.

#### Step 1: Gather Materials

Gather the raw data from the assessment instrument (e.g., rubric, survey, examination, etc.) that was administered. Conduct a data analysis.

#### Step 2: Analyze and Interpret the Data

Analyzing and interpreting the data provides departments or units with an idea of their performance in the area measured. Analyze the data from the lens of why the assessment was conducted. Ask questions like, what are the strengths, what are the weaknesses, what are the needs.

#### Step 3: Write the Results

In writing the results, be sure to include the following information in your write-up or narrative. These items are not included in any particular order of relevance.

1. **Achievement of Benchmark:** Clearly state at the beginning of the narrative if the established benchmark was achieved. For example, if the benchmark was “70 percent of the students will score at the ‘acceptable level’ or above in each category on the Research Process Rubric,” then indicate whether or not the benchmark was

achieved. If it was not achieved, indicate such and provide the overall average or result.

- II. **Description of Participants:** Include a brief description of the participants (i.e., who they are, how many participated, etc.) in the narrative. For example, if a survey was administered, indicate the number of participants the survey was administered to (if available) and the number of participants who returned the survey. Likewise, if the assessment measure was an exam, indicate how many participants took the exam. If any results were discarded for a participant(s), indicate such. As the assessor, determine what other information will be useful in interpreting the assessment results.
- III. **Assessment Methodology:** Briefly state how the assessment measure was used to assess the outcome. For example, if a rubric was used as the assessment measure for a research paper, succinctly describe the assessment process (i.e., origin of the papers, number of assessors or scorers, process for scoring, how and when the data was collected (if substantive and applicable), etc.). Note, when routine, this information can be included when describing the assessment measure and can typically be summarized in one or two sentences.
- IV. **Highlight Findings:** Discuss the assessment results in relationship to the benchmark. That is, what is the expected or desired performance level and what were the actual results. In addition, the basic results of the assessment measure should be included in the narrative. For example, if a rubric was used to assess a student learning outcome (SLO), student performance in each rubric category germane to the SLO should be included in the narrative. The level of detail to be included in the results narrative beyond this should be determined by the assessor. Consider the following in making this determination:
  - a. Previous assessment/trend data: if an outcome has been previously assessed, the trend data should be briefly mentioned in the narrative. For example, if a survey has been administered over the past two years, this data can be mentioned in the narrative in relationship to the current results.
  - b. Outliers: perhaps the benchmark was achieved, but through the analysis of data, the assessor identified data that were outliers or anomalies. Some examples include a content area where student performance was considerably low or high, a test question(s) in

which all students got correct or incorrect, a survey item that each participant rated poorly, etc.

## **Write the Use of Results**

In writing the “use of results”, there are essential steps that should be considered before determining what actions should be taken to improve the program or learning assessed. Below are helpful hints that may be useful in guiding faculty and staff in determining how to use the data collected to improve the program and/or services offered.

### **Step 1: Have a Department Meeting (Where Applicable)**

Gather the members of the department to review the data and determine a “sustainable, reasonable course of action to improve student learning” and/or the program (Walvoord, 2010, p. 69). Make sense of the assessment results and try grouping the data by theme when data is collected from multiple measures or assessment methods (Jankowski, 2013)

### **Step 2: Determine the Focus of Improvement**

As a team, based on the results, determine what should be the focus of improvement. That is, examine the data for areas of importance to the unit, areas that show the greatest need for improvement, and areas that are currently feasible to improve. It is also important to review the results for any “bad” or erroneous data that was possibly collected. Step three includes questions that facilitates defining a focus.

### **Step 3: Questions to Consider**

#### General Questions

- How can the department improve the areas identified?
- Did the data reveal areas where performance is somewhat acceptable, but a higher level of performance is desired or needed?
- Will additional information (data) be needed before actual improvement actions can be determined? (Walvoord, 2010)
- What trends have been examined and what do they reveal?
- Are additional assessment methods necessary? Did the assessment method used provide useful data that can be used to improve the program?
- Does the department need to review best practices or the literature to determine how to improve the program?

#### Questions Specific to Student Learning Outcomes

- ❑ What does the data say about student’s mastery of the subject matter? (Southeast Missouri State University, n.d.)
- ❑ Where in the curriculum are students receiving instruction and practice about these concepts? (Walvoord, 2010)
- ❑ Does the curriculum need to be adjusted in order that students learn these particular concepts? Does the program have enough data to make this determination?
- ❑ Does the data reveal a lack of core or fundamental skills that students need for mastery of the outcome assessed (e.g., critical thinking, oral communication, written communication, quantitative reasoning, etc.)?
- ❑ What do the data say about your students’ preparation for taking the next step in their careers? (Southeast Missouri State University, n.d.)

#### **Step 4: Write the Use of Results**

After carefully reviewing pertinent questions in “Step 3”, determine what actions are needed to improve the program. Essentially, this is using the information from the answered questions to determine your response.

For example, if the department determines that additional information or assessment is needed before improvement actions can be identified or implemented, this should be thoroughly discussed in the narrative for the “use of results”. Details should be provided that includes what will be done, when it will be done, and how it will be done.

Likewise, if data has been reviewed and clear actions have been determined by the department, this should be delineated in the narrative for the “use of results”.

All write-ups or narratives for the “use of results” should include 1) the specific action to be taken (e.g., curriculum change, service adjustment, professional development, etc.), 2) when it will be taken—that is, a timeframe, and 3) how the action will be taken. A mature action plan also includes a feedback mechanism.

### **Sample Ways to Improve Departments and Programs**

#### **Improve Program Enrollment**

- Enhance program recruiting literature and websites to provide students with academic and program information
- Possibly change or implement placement or admission criteria where warranted

- Find ways to offer program scholarships
- Engage faculty in pro-active recruiting
- Coordinate with recruitment to communicate with interested prospects

### **Improve Program Completion**

- **Develop a “map” of course schedules** by term for every major with the critical courses highlighted. If a student does not successfully complete a critical course in the term recommended, place a registration hold. Require the student to meet with an advisor to find out what happened and take appropriate action to ensure the student understands how to proceed. For example, if an accounting major has not completed calculus by the end of the first year, it is unlikely that the student can complete the degree in a reasonable amount of time. Part of the conversation with the advisor may well involve looking for an alternate major that might better suit the student’s strengths and provide a viable alternative for reaching the student’s career goals.
- **Establish Freshman Interest Groups** (known by several different names) allowing small groups of students with similar interests to take several classes together along with a small weekly seminar in the topic. With appropriate supervision, high-achieving senior students can lead the seminar and provide inspiring role models for the new students.
- Pay attention to where students live. Research shows that students who live on campus for the first year earn higher grades and are retained at higher levels than those who live off campus. **Living-Learning Communities** offer an even better opportunity to a smaller segment of the on-campus population. Students in these special programs live in the same residence hall and participate in courses and programs that have a common theme. Teaching at least one of the courses in a classroom in the residence hall will further enrich these programs. The result is an even higher level of academic success and retention.
- **Look at course grades. The courses with high percentages of D’s and F’s particularly those with high enrollment, should be studied.** There are national programs to assist with this effort. Encouraging faculty to take attendance is a good idea for all courses but is particularly important in courses with high percentages of D’s



and F's. This is getting easier with so many electronic options available to assist faculty teaching courses with high enrollments.

- **Survey students who choose to leave the university prior to graduation** and take note of their academic performance. Retention can be an issue for high-achieving as well as low-performing students and different strategies will be necessary to engage and better meet the needs of all student groups.
- Do not neglect the full range of **academic support services** available to help engage and retain students. A great deal can be learned and accomplished by working with student groups, especially student government, since this group often has more resources than the average academic department.
- Be willing to intervene early. Data shows that without intervention more than half of the students who fall below a 2.0 early in their college experience will drop out. Yet, a relatively low cost mandatory course focusing on study habits, time management, note taking, etc. will significantly reduce attrition.
- **Strengthen participation in the University's Early Alert Program** by...in order to...Be willing to deploy new approaches.
- New or revised degree requirements where explicitly warranted
- Offer new career exploration and career services for students who desire to change programs
- Engage in efforts to properly track students to determine if they changed programs, stopped out, transferred to another institution, etc.

### **Improve Student Learning**

- Revisions in content of program courses to strengthen student learning
- Addition/deletion of courses or changes in course sequences
- Develop academic services for students such as tutoring
- Revise the sequencing and prerequisites of the degree programs for optimal learning
- Improve or introduce new teaching methods
- Further refine assessment methods or implement new assessment methods Changed emphases for new or vacant faculty positions
- Enhancements in advising processes
- Review assessment results with alumni and program advisory boards for feedback for improvement

- Co-curricular activities/Increased connections between in-class and out-of-class activities such as employment, internships, student research opportunities, study abroad, and living-learning communities
- Faculty development (i.e., mentoring and advising, adoption of new teaching methodologies, etc.)
- Expanding students research participation or deepening their experience

### **Results/Use of Results Checklist**

- Did I collect the data?
- Are results that are reported connected to the outcome or assessment measure?
- Did I analyze the results for additional observations?
- Did I provide results for each demographics indicated (e.g., faculty, staff, students, parents)?
- Did I suggest major programmatic changes on a small amount of data?
- Did I provide documentation?
- Does the Use of Results contain improvements based on the results or other recorded observations?

**Figure XII: Institutional Effectiveness Planning and Reporting Rubric**

**Description:**

Assessment Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan/Report Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Plan/Report Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Rubric Scale → Categories ↓	Accomplished (3 pts)	Developing (2 pts)	Beginning (1 pt)
<p><b>Program Outcomes (IEP Only) (1.000, 20%)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Articulate desired end result(s).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes are measurable (i.e., can be observed, counted, quantified, etc.).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Action verbs are appropriate for program-level outcomes (re: Bloom’s Taxonomy), where applicable.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes assessed are within the scope of the purpose (mission) of the department.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are results-related (focused on consequences of unit activities).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focuses more on the course-level versus program-level (instructional).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Verbs are present; however, they are incongruent with the desired result of the outcome.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes assessed are within the scope of the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are task-oriented (i.e., focused on activities, instead of expected results of performing the activities).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not appear to be measurable (can be observed, counted, quantified, etc.).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Action verbs lacking or inappropriately incorporated to capture desired results.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes may not be within the scope of the mission or purpose of the department.</li> </ul>

		purpose (mission) of the department.	
<b>Assessment Measures (IEP Only) (1.000, 20%)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Name of measure(s) clearly stated and includes necessary details. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize a maximum of two (2) measures for some or all outcomes, where appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> Measures are appropriate for the type of outcome assessed (e.g., direct measures for SLO's). <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment measure captures desired data. <input type="checkbox"/> Instrument(s) included with IE Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Name of measure(s) stated. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize at least one (1) measure per outcome. <input type="checkbox"/> Measure does not adequately assess the outcome and may need minor improvements. <input type="checkbox"/> Instrument(s) included with IE plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Name(s) of measures not stated or vaguely described. <input type="checkbox"/> Some outcomes lack associated measures. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize few or no direct assessment measures. <input type="checkbox"/> Use course grades (academic units). <input type="checkbox"/> Measure/instrument not developed or designed to capture data desired for outcome.
<b>Benchmarks (IEP Only) (1.000, 20%)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Aligned with desired results of assessment activity. <input type="checkbox"/> Include a target number or percentage. <input type="checkbox"/> Include the target population (students, faculty, staff, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/> Aligned with desired results of assessment activity. <input type="checkbox"/> Include a target or percentage, but does not include the level of performance expected.	<input type="checkbox"/> Benchmark aligns with activities or processes (e.g., # of surveys, # of papers reviewed, etc.) rather than expected performance (e.g., # of students satisfied, # of students that mastered the content, etc.).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explicitly states level of mastery or performance that represent success (e.g., survey or rubric scale, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Level of expected performance does not align with the instrument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Level of expected performance does not align with the instrument.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Target(s) (percentages, mastery levels, etc.) not given for every measure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Results (IER Only)</b> <b>(1.000, 20%)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Written in narrative form.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Indicate if the benchmark(s) was met or not met.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include description (number, percentage, etc.) of participants.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Describe how assessment activity was carried out.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Compare expected performance to actual performance (e.g., the benchmark was 75%, results were actually 65%).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Analyze and interprets data, including the identification of strengths and weaknesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Written in complete sentences, but is somewhat unclear and disjointed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Results are reported, but provide minimal level of analysis and interpretation.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> States that benchmarks were met or not met.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting documentation included with IE report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Written using bullets or incomplete sentences.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Language not related to results gathered from given assessment measure(s).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Status of benchmark not indicated.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Actual findings stated, but omissive of what the data actually means.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Little or no supporting documentation included with IE report.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Compare new findings to past findings (trends).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting documentation attached to IE report.</li> </ul>		
<b>Use of Results (IER Only) (1.000, 20%)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Written based on results.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Written in narrative form.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offers clear explanation of how results will be used for program improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Written in complete sentences, but is somewhat unclear and disjointed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer vague explanation of how results will be used for program improvement.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Actions for specific areas of improvement are not identified, just a broad overview.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not indicate a group or person responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not clearly related or linked to assessment results.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Written using bullets or incomplete sentences.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not reflect on what impact the results have on the department/program.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Neither identifies areas for improvement nor outlines clear strategies for implementation.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Action plan(s) lack details such as time frame or responsible party.</li> </ul>

**Figure XIII: Program Learning Outcomes Check List**

	Describes what students should represent, demonstrate, or produce?	Relies on concrete verbs?	Aligns with collective intentions translated into the curriculum and co-curriculum?	Maps to curriculum, co-curriculum, and educational practices?	Is collaboratively authored and collectively accepted?	Incorporates or adapts professional organizations' outcome statements when they exist?	Can be assessed quantitatively and/or qualitatively?
Outcome 1:							
Outcome 2:							
Outcome 3:							
Outcome 4:							
Outcome 5:							
Outcome 6:							

From: Maki, P. (2004). *Assessing for learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT LIVETEXT

### **What is LiveText?**

LiveText is a web-based software application designed to aid in the development of portfolios, course assignments, and standards or outcomes based projects. LiveText will allow collaboration on classroom assignments as well as track progress on meeting program outcomes. LiveText is accessed online at [livetext.com](http://livetext.com) and all students and faculty have access to the system.

### **How is LiveText used at SUSLA and what are some of the benefits?**

- LiveText is used as an online assessment management tool to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in the outcomes reporting process.
- The assessment features of LiveText allows faculty to 1) collect student work (i.e., papers, videos, etc.) for student development and assessment; 2) score student work using a rubric in real-time; and 3) facilitate a holistic and reliable scoring.
- LiveText portfolios can be customized to document professional and academic achievements to share with potential employers.
- The LiveText account is an online space to develop and share academic achievements both within and outside of the institutional community.
- LiveText provides unlimited storage of academic materials in an online environment that can be accessed anywhere there is an internet connection.

### **How do I set up my LiveText account?**

All incoming students have LiveText accounts. However, students must register their Skymail accounts before they can use LiveText. A registration email is sent directly to the student email—via Skymail—to register. The student's course schedule will automatically be populated in LiveText. All faculty have LiveText accounts. Faculty should contact the Department of Outcomes Assessment and Quality Management to register their course account.

### **How long will the LiveText account last?**

A LiveText account is active for five years. If you need LiveText beyond the length of the initial membership you can renew your account at a discounted rate for one, two or three-year periods.



## GLOSSARY—COMMON ASSESSMENT TERMS

### **Assessment**

Banta (1988): Assessment is “collecting evidence of (1) student performance on specified measures of development, (2) program strengths and weaknesses, and (3) institutional effectiveness” (p. 1).

### **Assessment**

Angelo (1995): An ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education.

### **Assessment Cycle**

Unknown Source: Refers to the *calendar cycle* of planning and assessment that includes annual submittal of plans from academic and administrative units and the follow-up assessment review. It also includes the calendar cycle review of the college’s mission statement, strategic plan and institutional effectiveness process.

**Assessment Measure:** The assessment instrument is the tool used to assess the outcome and determine if the benchmark or criterion has been achieved.

### **Assessment Method**

JCCSEE (2003): A strategy or technique evaluators may use to acquire evaluation information. These include, but are not limited to, observations, text- and curriculum-embedded questions and tests, paper-and-pencil tests, oral questioning, benchmarks or reference sets, interviews, peer- and self-assessments, standardized criterion-referenced and norm-referenced tests, performance assessments, writing samples, exhibits, portfolio assessment, and project and product assessments.

**Benchmark (Criterion for Success):** The standard on which a judgment or decision may be based (Merriam Webster, n.d.). This

statement indicates the target that determines the outcome has been achieved (e.g., Students will score at the “meet expectations” level or higher in each category on the rubric; 75 percent of all work orders will be completed within 7-10 business days).

### **Benchmarking**

Spendolini (1992): Benchmarking is a “continuous, systematic process for evaluating the products, services, and work processes of organizations that are recognized as representing best practices for the purposes of organizational improvement” (p. 9).

### **Change**

McLeod and Atwell (1992): It is essential for assessment determination that certain data be compared over time. Thus, change in indicators, or lack of change, is important for reaching conclusions about the effectiveness of an institution. Key to this is that the same kind of data must be kept for comparison over extended periods of time. The collection of non-comparable or episodic information may be useful to deal with topics of special and limited interest, but will not be sufficient to be pieced together for the illumination of long-term trends.

### **Closing the Loop**

Unknown Source: Using assessment results for program change & improvement.

**Closing the Loop:** “Closing the Loop refers to a wide variety of outcomes and actions that result from an institution’s review and consideration of outcomes assessment data. Critical to this process is that these revisions are made on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data that are gathered systematically, not on the basis of anecdotal evidence or intuition” (California State University Northridge, n.d.). “It encompasses analyzing results from outcome assessments, using results to make changes to improve student learning, and re-assessing outcomes in order to determine the effect those changes had on student learning” Burrack, n.d.).

### **Competency**

McLeod and Atwell (1992): The curriculum field has adopted this term within the special context of reference to a discrete unit of learning mastered by an individual. As the result of an educational experience or experiences, the student in question has become competent or able

to know or do or believe something that he or she had not been able to do previously. The achievement of such a competency may be verified by an indicator such as a test score. Consequently, a competency is defined as a unit measure. Enough of these units constitute a module, a course, a program or a curriculum. Correctly done, these may be accounted for as quantifiable entities and can be factored into the curriculum part of institutional effectiveness assessment of the institution.

### **Course Assessment**

Unknown Source: Assessment of a specific course or common courses.

### **Criterion-Referenced Tests**

JCSEE (1994): Tests in which scores are interpreted by referral to well defined domains of content or behaviors, rather than by referral to the performance of some comparable group of people.

### **Criterion for Success**

Determine based on research and the assessment method chosen, what percentage, percentile, average, or other quantitative measure must be achieved to deem the objective or outcome as successful.

### **Data**

JCSEE (2003): Evidence, in either numerical or narrative form, gathered during the course of an evaluation and that serves as the basis for information, discussion, and inference.

### **Direct and Indirect Measures of Learning**

Unknown Source: A direct measure is one by which students demonstrate what they have learned (exam, project). An indirect measure provides second hand information about student learning (a student questionnaire about what they've learned).

### **Documentation**

The collection or compilation of tangible evidence to demonstrate that a goal, objective, target, etc. has been attained.

### **Family Measure**

Brinkerhoff & Dressler (1990): To represent a complex phenomenon with multiple measures "is called a 'family' of measures, in that they are each separate entities, but they are related to one another. Together, they represent the entire situation. A family of measures clearly provides more discrete information about total unit

performance than a single measure, and this is more compatible with decision making in a context where trade-offs are common".

### **Focus Group**

JCSEE (1994): A group selected for its relevance to an evaluation that is engaged by a trained facilitator in a series of discussions designed for sharing insights, ideas, and observations on a topic of concern.

### **Follow-Up**

JCSEE (2003): Actions taken to maintain the strengths and address the weaknesses that were identified in an evaluation.

### **General Education Assessment**

Assessment of SUSLA's University Student Learning Outcomes.

### **Goal**

Unknown Source: A goal is an end result written in broad terms. Example: As a result of participating in the Pathways to Success Program, students will increase their academic achievement. Here, academic achievement is a broad term.

### **Institutional Assessment**

Unknown Source: Broad assessment of the institutional strategic goals.

### **Institutional Effectiveness**

McLeod and Atwell (1992): This is the condition of achieving the set goals of an institution and being able to verify the attainment of these goals with specific data which show the degree or quality of their attainment. Where the principal goal or goals of the institution relate to instruction and student services, emphasis is placed on student outcomes assessment. Institutional effectiveness data include measures of effectiveness, productivity, efficiency, and relative excellence or quality. Assessment is the overall process of measurement and comparison against set standards. Effectiveness Measurement relates principally to the degree to which institutional goals are met. Productivity Measurement relates mainly to the comparative amount of institutional output. Efficiency Measurement is a more narrow assessment limited to unit costs of production apart from quality or amounts of production. Quality Measurement is also a narrow assessment intended to assess the degree of excellence of output apart from amount produced or production costs. A proper model of general institutional effectiveness must have all four

components present in the appropriate proportion best suited to describe the specific institution.

### **Inter-Rater Coefficients**

JCSEE (2003): This is a special type of reliability coefficient used to determine the extent to which two or more raters are consistent in their scoring of students. It is often used to determine whether two judges grade in the same way (e.g., would students receive the same grade if their responses were graded by two different teachers).

### **Internal Benchmarking**

Spendolini (1992): Comparing practices of administrative units within your own organization or institution.

### **Method of Assessment**

Wheeler, et. al. (1992): The techniques or instruments used to measure attributes and behaviors. Examples include rating scales, observation checklists, structured interviews, and portfolios.

### **Mission Statement**

Bryson (2004): A mission clarifies an organization's purpose, or why it should be doing what it does. (p. 102)

### **Needs assessment**

Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff, and Nelson (1985): Needs assessment is "the process of determining the things that are necessary or useful for the fulfillment of a defensible purpose" (p. 16).

### **Norm**

McLeod and Atwell (1992): This is a standard which has been set by past historical experience; data which may be considered as a baseline measure, but probably not a benchmark measure.

### **Objective**

Unknown Source: An objective is the intended effect of a service or intervention, but is much more specific than goals. It is facilitator centered. Example: The Pathways to Success Program will help students increase their first year grade point average. Compare to the similar goal statement, grade point average is a more specific outcome compared to academic achievement.

### **Objective**

McLeod and Atwell (1992): A written, active and operational subdivision (sometimes referred to as a specific objective) of a

production goal. It must be well defined and, above all, measurable in its accomplishment. An objective should be specific respective to what is to be done, who is to do it, when is it to be completed, how it is to be evaluated and by what measure. A clearly formulated set of objectives is the core of any institutional effectiveness assessment program. Such objectives are evaluated using pre-chosen indicators (data sets). Thus, the institutional effectiveness process is essentially management-by-objectives (M.B.O.), which is its spiritual parent.

### **Outcome**

Programs, instructional and non-instructional, assess to what degree the program is accomplishing its intended purpose (statement of mission) through outcomes assessment. Programs indicate (outcomes) and assess the “intended” affect the program should have on those the program serve.

### **Outcome**

McLeod and Atwell (1992): Outcomes are the end products, the productivity of an institution. Outcomes should not be confused with indicators. Outcomes are the products to be accomplished by specific objectives; indicators are the data which prove that the objectives have been accomplished. Care must be taken not to present the process of evaluation as part of institutional productivity; evaluation should not be made to be an end in itself.

### **Outcome**

Unknown Source: An outcome is the desired effect of a service or intervention, but is much more specific than goals. These are often what students should be able to demonstrate after their participation, which are also defined as learning or developmental outcomes. Outcomes can also be programmatic. A programmatic outcome could be something like an increase in usage of a particular resource or service. It is participant focused. *Example:* As a result of participating in the Pathways to Success Program students will increase their first year grade point average. Compare to the similar goal statement, grade point average is a more specific outcome compared to academic achievement.

### **Plan**

McLeod and Atwell (1992): The institutional effectiveness assessment plan is the written statement of purpose, mission, goals, and outcomes which are specific to a given time period plus the specified procedures for assessment.

**Portfolio Assessment**

JCSEE (2003): Method of assessment that relies on a collection of student- and/or teacher-selected samples of student work or performance in order to evaluate individual student achievement.

**Program Review**

An in-depth review and analysis of specific degreed programs which occurs on a rotating basis of 3-5 years or more.

**Program/Degree Assessment**

Assessment of a degreed program (A.A. in Criminal Justice).

**Qualitative Methodology**

Patton (1990): The detailed description of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; the use of direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and the analysis of excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories.

**Quantitative Methodology**

Rossmann and El-Khawass (1987): The assignment of numbers to objects, events, or observations according to some rule.

**Results:** Indicates if the program met the desired criterion and delineates the results achieved on the assessment instrument. The narrative should be inclusive of how many students or items were assessed, when it was assessed, and the complete results of the assessment. In addition, where applicable, trend data should also be included.

**Rubric**

JCSEE (2003): A description of a specific level of performance within a performance scale.

**Scoring Rubric**

Wheeler, et. al. (1992) a set of rules, guidelines, or benchmarks at different levels of performance, or prescribed descriptors for use in quantifying measures of teacher attributes and performance.

**Standardized Test**

JCSEE (2003): A sample of items or situations with definite directions for administration and scoring most often accompanied by data on reliability and validity and sometimes by normative information.

### **Strategic Planning**

Bryson (1995): Strategic planning is a “disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it” (pp. 4-5).

### **Student Outcomes**

McLeod and Atwell (1992): Measurement of productivity in terms of student accomplishments (Bok, 1986) is probably the key essential in institutional effectiveness measurement. Altieri (1990) has proposed a matrix model which poses five kinds of student outcomes with 11 principal data sources. Student outcomes are grouped as: knowledge and skills, program achievement, learner and sponsor satisfaction, career success and achievement, and impact on the community. Data sources are both external and internal. External data sources include data from transfer institutions, employers, former students, and community groups. Internal data sources may include attrition rates, grades, graduation rates, examination results, faculty and staff opinion, and information from program reviews. These data will possibly provide answers to the key questions of student educational goal attainment, the extent of student learning, student satisfaction, satisfaction of employers and transfer institutions, and community satisfaction.

### **Triangulation**

Wheeler, et. al. (1992) the attempt to obtain more valid results by using multiple sources of data about one aspect of performance, multiple methods of collecting data, and/or multiple interpretations of the same data.

### **Types of Assessment Measures**

- Direct Assessment Instruments

Direct assessment instruments assess student’s actual learning and require a demonstration of their achievement (Allen, 2004).

Student learning outcomes *must* be assessed using at least one direct assessment. Examples: course-embedded assessment, standardized exams, rubrics, etc.

- Indirect Assessment Instruments



Indirect assessment instruments measure student perception of learning and not actual learning. Examples: survey, focus group, etc.

### **Types of Outcomes**

- **Student Learning Outcome**: A student learning outcome describes what a student should know, think, or be able to do as a result of exposure to content in some form (e.g., academic program, workshops or processes, etc.). “Learning outcome statements are anchored in verbs that identify the actions, behaviors, dispositions, and ways of thinking or knowing that students should be able to demonstrate” (Maki, 2004, p. 61).
- **Program Outcome**: “Program outcomes illustrate what you want your program to do. These outcomes differ from learning outcomes in that you discuss what it is that you want your *program* to accomplish” (Bresciani, M.J., n.d., p. 3). Program outcomes assesses the effectiveness of the operations of your program.
- **Process Outcomes**: Process outcomes focus on activities, tasks, or “to-do” items. That is, what the program or office will do to accomplish an outcome (e.g., establish a center for learning, develop a workshop schedule, hold workshops, etc). Process outcomes are *NOT* assessment outcomes and furthermore, not measureable. The assessment or institutional effectiveness report should *not* include outcomes that are not measureable.

**Use of Results or Action Plan**: Describes how the unit/department will improve its program based on the assessment results.

### **Value-Added**

Wheeler, et. al. (1992) the change in an attribute or product that can be linked to an intervention. Examples are the change in student test scores before and after completion of a course or the change in the effectiveness of a teacher's classroom management skills as a result of participation in a workshop series on these skills.

### **Vision statement**

Bryson (2004): A vision clarifies what the organization should look like and how it should behave as it fulfills its mission (p. 102).

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