

Assessment at UNC

UNC faculty, staff, and administrators collect assessment data to understand what and how students learn. They use assessment results to improve teaching and learning by modifying course instruction, program curriculum, and program activities. UNC faculty, staff, and administrators also conduct assessment to respond to institutional accreditation recommendations and to align with program accreditation requirements. However, the primary purpose for continuous, deliberate, and meaningful assessment efforts at UNC is to improve teaching and learning.

Guiding Principles

1. **Guided by mission.** Assessment of student learning is guided by UNC's mission (including UNC's vision, values, purposes, and goals) and the missions of individual programs.
2. **Institutionally supported.** Assessment is most effective when the university provides resources for assessment activities, such as professional development, financial support, technology, and mechanisms for sharing assessment data.
3. **Improve teaching and learning.** The primary goal of assessment of student learning is for faculty and staff to improve teaching and learning at the course and program levels.
4. **Use of results.** Assessment of student learning results are valuable for highlighting excellence; improving teaching and learning; making evidence-based decisions; and informing planning, policy, and resource decisions.
5. **Faculty/staff driven.** Assessment of student learning is most effective when it is owned and driven by the faculty and staff in a program/unit.
6. **Student involvement.** Students serve as a primary stakeholder in assessment of student learning. As a student-centered institution, UNC strives to find opportunities to involve students in assessment of student learning efforts.
7. **Collaborative effort.** Assessment is most effective as a community effort involving faculty, staff, students, administrators, and the community. Assessment fosters more systemic improvement of teaching and learning when representatives from across the educational community are involved in assessment activities.
8. **Useful and meaningful.** Assessment of student learning is most effective when it focuses on issues that faculty, staff, and students find meaningful and when it produces evidence that faculty, staff, and students find useful.
9. **Manageable and sustainable.** Effective assessment is manageable and sustainable when it is designed to align with available human and financial resources.
10. **Assessment is ongoing.** Assessment is most effective when it is an ongoing activity that is part of the regular operations of a program/unit, rather than a sporadic endeavor.
11. **Use of best practices.** Assessment is most effective when best practices for assessing student learning guide the work.

12. **Transparent.** The UNC community is committed to being transparent to internal and external stakeholders about how assessment of student learning is conducted and how the results are used.

Priorities

Assessment is integral to understanding whether students are meeting institutional learning goals. To understand this, we must maintain equitable and inclusive assessment practices for our diverse student population, a common value across all programs and services at UNC. The purpose of learning outcomes assessment is to support, develop, and maintain high quality programs. It is an iterative process that begins with articulating learning outcomes for students; aligns the curriculum and instructional programming to those outcomes; collects, analyzes, reports, and interprets the data about student outcomes; and uses the results to improve teaching, learning, and program delivery. This assessment process is rooted in inquiry about what and how well students are learning. These goals are in alignment with Rowing, Not Drifting, UNC's 10-Year Strategic Plan.

In addition, this policy ensures UNC's compliance with the regional accreditor Higher Learning Commission (HLC), specifically regarding evaluative criterion 4.B:

- 4.B. The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.
1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and co-curricular offerings.
 2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
 3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional, and other relevant staff members.

The Assessment Council

UNC's Assessment Council is a representative advisory council established to develop and provide effective policies and procedures to the university concerning learning outcomes assessment in accordance with university learning goals and HLC accreditation requirements. Charged by the President's Cabinet, the Assessment Council is the principal body responsible for developing and maintaining the institution's learning assessment efforts. It is charged with making formal recommendations concerning best practices in the design, development, and deployment of learning outcomes assessment including data collection, analyzing results, and making changes for the improvement of student learning. To this end, the Council maintains a systematic review process to provide feedback and recommendations concerning programmatic and institutional learning outcomes assessment planning. Consequently, the Council promotes and supports faculty development regarding learning outcomes assessment. The Council also supervises the conferral of annual assessment grants aimed at program assessment improvement. The Council maintains an open line of communication with institutional committees, administrative bodies, and academic units, including but not limited to the Faculty Senate, Academic Leadership, the Liberal Arts Council, the Academic Policies Committee, Institutional Research, and the Division of Academic Effectiveness.

Responsibilities of the UNC Assessment Council

1. To review and make recommendations concerning assessment policies and procedures in accordance with university priorities and HLC accreditation requirements.
2. To lead periodic review and revision of curricular, co-curricular, institutional, and general education learning outcomes.
3. To review and make recommendations concerning resources and training to ensure effective assessment practice across the university.
4. To review and make recommendations concerning assessment plans submitted by academic programs (including the general education program).
5. To assist academic units with regular updates to assessment planning and results reporting.
6. To review and compile an annual report on the status of program assessment results to the Assistant Provost for Academic Effectiveness.
7. To review proposals for assessment grants and award those grants annually.
8. To co-sponsor the annual Teaching and Assessment Symposium.
9. To approve guidelines governing Council procedures.
10. To submit written requests to the President's Cabinet to review any change in Council governance prior to adopting such a change. Rationale for the revision must accompany the request for review.

Assessment Planning

The assessment of student learning outcomes in programs is intended to guide the determinations of strengths, areas of improvement, needed curriculum revisions, pedagogical strategies, and the improvement of student learning and success. Thus, an assessment plan serves as an integral component to guide programmatic self-assessment and to document student learning and program effectiveness. An effective assessment plan will demonstrate these characteristics:

- Articulate the program mission and the learning outcomes (PLOs) for each degree, certificate, and/or concentration.
- Align the PLOs to UNC's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs).
- Create curricular or learning opportunity maps for each degree program's PLOs.
- Develop and maintain a 5-year timeline for assessing all program learning outcomes coinciding with the program review cycle
- Identify the methods to be used to assess each PLO and targets for each assessment.
- Differentiate learning outcomes and assessment data among program degree offerings
- Adhere to good practices for the assessment of student learning in the discipline.

- Document curricular and instructional revisions and improvements to student learning resulting from the analysis and use of learning outcomes assessment data.
- Meet institutional reporting requirements.

It is also suggested that each instructional unit map of the student learning outcomes (SLOs) for each course to the overarching PLOs. Mapping course-level SLOs to PLOs and, where applicable, to the ILOs is an indication of a structured curriculum. This SLO course-level mapping documentation can supplement a unit's assessment plan.

Mission Statements

A mission statement is a concise, action-based statement that succinctly articulates the philosophy, goals, and overall purpose of an organization. Mission statements for academic programs will include the purpose of the program, a general statement of the activities of the program intended to fulfill that purpose, the stakeholders it serves, and the values and principles that guide the program's activities. It will distinguish the program from other academic programs and should be consistent with the mission of the institution and the larger academic unit, i.e. college, of which it is a part. The mission statement serves as the foundation for the program's goals and learning outcomes. It is focused on the present state of the program, as opposed to a vision statement, which articulates what a program or an organization aspires to be. The following are elements of an effective mission statement:



Be sure to review the mission statement periodically to ensure that it still reflects the current state and scope of the program and its activities. Changes to the mission statement of the institution or college may require revision and realignment of the program mission statement also.