

SECTION VI

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

Program Review and assessment processes are designed to incorporate continuous improvement into academic programs. As a consequence, program evaluation and the assessment of student learning outcomes should occur on an ongoing basis. Both program review and assessment should result in outcomes that strengthen academic programs and directly benefit students. Program review and assessment support the university's mission to promote effective teaching and learning. In addition, the Higher Learning Commission (UNC's regional accreditor) and the State of Colorado (Department of Higher Education) expect program review and assessment of student learning to be incorporated into the practice of academic units.

This section of the Manual is divided into three parts: Part A addresses assessment of student learning; Part B describes the comprehensive program review process at UNC; and Part C is a glossary that contains commonly used terms in both assessment and program review.

Part A. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment of student learning is one component of the comprehensive program review process. Student learning outcomes (learning objectives; SLOs) describe what students will know and be able to do as a result of the courses, programs of study, and other activities associated with earning a degree. Making learning outcomes explicit addresses two ends: it provides faculty with goals against which to evaluate student progress, and ultimately the efficacy of the course/program; and it provides students with a set of stated expectations to help them to understand the structure of the course/program and their progress toward meeting course/program goals. In making learning objectives transparent and assessing progress toward meeting them, faculty can gather evidence about what is and is not working in current practice, and use that evidence to improve course/program quality.

Core elements of academic program area assessment strategy include:

1. Program level undergraduate and graduate student learning outcomes. At a minimum, an assessment plan must specify what it is that any student graduating with a particular degree should know and be able to do. A well developed assessment strategy will map individual course offerings to the larger program goals (see the entry for 'curriculum map' in Part C).
2. Methods of assessing student performance on each of the student outcomes. The methods must include consideration of direct evidence, and may include indirect evidence. Best practice includes multiple measures. Examples of both direct and indirect evidence for courses and programs are provided at the end of Part C.
3. A process that identifies, on a regular basis, the results of the assessment process and how these results will be used to develop programmatic improvements to address the areas in which outcomes are not being achieved or require additional support.

4. A centralized (at the unit level) electronic repository that contains the unit's assessment materials (including collected evidence, analysis and documentation of use of the results of assessment). The repository may be kept in TracDat (a software program used across the university for keeping track of assessment and program review data), although TracDat is not required¹. Assessment and program review recordkeeping should be supervised by a faculty member from the program area and should be updated at least annually.

Faculty members on the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Program Review and Assessment Committee (PRAC) are available to serve as resources to answer questions and provide input on program area assessment plans. In addition, support is available from the Provost's Office of Assessment and the HSS Dean's Office.

Part B. Comprehensive Program Review Process

The program review process consists of two main elements, the comprehensive review, typically completed every five years, and the annual progress report, undertaken on a yearly basis.

Guidelines for the comprehensive program review are available at the following URL: <http://www.unco.edu/assessment/programReview/index.html>. Comprehensive program review documents receive written feedback from the Program Review and Assessment Committee, the dean and the provost.

The Annual Progress Report is completed by each program area in order to summarize progress toward comprehensive program review goals and items identified for action in the dean's response and the provost's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The annual report is reviewed at the college level only.

HSS Format for Program Review Annual Progress Report

In addition to providing the dean with information useful in evaluating programs' annual progress, this format has been designed to provide programs with a tool that will be useful for the comprehensive review process. The categories of reporting outlined in Sections 1 and 2 are taken from the comprehensive review protocols. The report is due to the dean's office on October 1st of each year.

Section 1: Report Narrative

The narrative portion of the report should be no more than 5 pages.

- a. Discussion of progress toward goals. The program should discuss progress toward accomplishing its goals, providing a description of specific actions taken during the previous year related to these goals. If goals have changed, the program should describe why.

¹ See p. 3 of the UNC Program Review Policy for conditions to be met in opting out of TracDat.

- b. Discussion of Provost's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)² and the Dean's Recommendations. The program should provide an update on the status of actions outlined in the Provost's MOU and the Dean's recommendation letter.
- c. Discussion of program review data. The program should discuss any significant changes that occurred over the previous year. The discussion should address known or suspected reasons for these changes and how the program intends to respond to the changes.
- d. Discussion of resource needs. The program should briefly discuss any changes in resource needs resulting from its annual assessment and review of student learning outcomes, quality measures, program review data, and/or progress toward goals.

Section 2: Assessment Report

The assessment report consists of two tables and accompanying explanatory narrative, as needed. Assessment data, rubrics, and other related materials (such as that in TracDat or elsewhere) should be included as an attachment rather than as a link. The tables should contain five categories of information: (1) the outcome or quality measure being evaluated; (2) methods and evidence that are being used to evaluate the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) or Quality Measures (QM); (3) what was learned about the SLO or QM by virtue of undertaking the assessment; (4) evaluation of whether the results met, failed to meet, or exceeded expectations; and (5) what actions were or will be taken as a result of what was learned. The two tables below provide examples of the table formats and reportage. While it is not an expectation that each SLO and each QM be assessed each year, the unit should have in place a plan that provides for regular periodic evaluation of each articulated SLO and QM.

OUTCOME (Student Learning)	METHODS/ EVIDENCE	RESULTS (Describe results of assessment related to outcome specified)	STATUS (exceeded expectations, met expectations, did not meet expectations)	ACTIONS TAKEN (describe specific actions taken based on results of assessment)
Students are able to formulate a testable research hypothesis	Research project for capstone course includes hypothesis formulation	Only 60% of students were successfully able to formulate a testable hypothesis in the capstone course	Did not meet expectations	COUR 344, a prerequisite to capstone, will be reconfigured to focus more specifically on hypothesis formulation. Target for accomplishment:

² This section refers only to those who have completed a comprehensive review since the MOU process was implemented in 2008.

				spring 2012.
Students are able to develop an idea in writing through the use of concrete examples and specific details	Random sample of writing assignments from COUR 131, 223, and 389; blind reviews by two faculty members	Comparison of writing samples to evaluation rubric found that 84% of students achieved this outcome	Met expectations	None required. Will resample in fall 2011.

OUTCOME (Quality Measure)	METHODS/ EVIDENCE	RESULTS (Describe results of assessment related to outcome specified)	STATUS (exceeded expectations, met expectations, did not meet expectations)	ACTIONS TAKEN (describe specific actions taken based on results of assessment)
Each FT faculty member will present/publish one or more juried papers each year.	Professional meeting programs; journal tables of contents	Each FT faculty member had at least one juried paper/publication; several had two or more.	Exceeded expectations	None required. Will re-compile at end of spring 2012.
Graduating senior survey will show 90% or greater satisfaction with program quality	Senior survey contains two items asking about program quality, one closed-ended, the other open-ended	Likert scale item showed 95% of graduating seniors satisfied or very satisfied with program quality. Narrative responses overwhelmingly positive, with exception of 30% who suggested reordering COUR 245-COUR 287 course sequence.	Met expectations	Will explore feasibility/ advisability of reordering 245/287 sequence. Decision to be made by end of fall 2011.

*Note – Programs should save evidence used in the assessment process, annual progress reports and any written responses from the college program review team and dean in an electronic file to serve as resource documents for the comprehensive review. These documents

may be stored in TracDat using any standard file format, or may be compiled and stored electronically elsewhere.

Part C: Assessment and Program Review Glossary

Annual Progress Report: A report completed by each program area in order to summarize progress toward comprehensive program review goals and to report on progress toward meeting the recommendations in the dean's letter and the provost's MOU. The annual progress report is reviewed at the college level.

***Assessment Methods:** The discipline-appropriate collection and analysis of aggregate-level data that form the basis for evaluating program performance with respect to its defined student learning outcomes and quality measures. The strongest assessment relies on multiple types of data. Programs must include direct evidence of student learning outcomes and may also include indirect evidence as appropriate.

***Criterion:** The measure, performance indicator, or descriptor defined by the program against which program performance is assessed. Criteria may be aspirational or they may reflect the minimum standard of performance required without triggering a decision to make changes in one or more aspects of the program.

Curriculum Map: A matrix that cross-lists SLOs with courses in a program of study in order to explicitly describe how the courses contribute to ensuring that students achieve SLOs over the course of the program. Typically, the cells of the matrix will indicate whether a particular SLO is introduced, applied and/or mastered in the context of a given course.

Descriptor: A word or phrase used as a label to describe or classify how a particular piece or pieces of evidence demonstrate achievement of a particular SLO or QM.

Direct Evidence: Direct evidence includes student products or performances that demonstrate specific learning has taken place. Evidence differs from data or information in that it entails interpretation and reflection in addition to collection and analysis.

Formative Assessment: Assessment done on an ongoing basis to help determine whether changes should be made at the course, program or unit level. Formative assessment is most typically undertaken at the course level.

Indicator: (1) an indirect measurement of an outcome. For example, the proportion of graduates that are hired by employers in a particular field may be viewed as an indicator of the quality of the training that program graduates receive; **(2)** a composite measure that is composed of several pieces of evidence that point to a particular conclusion with respect to a QM or SLO.

Indirect Evidence: A form of data that relies on self-report, or reporting of others' perceptions, with respect to achieving standards or outcomes. Evidence differs from data or information in that it entails interpretation and reflection in addition to collection and analysis.

Measure/Measurement: **(1)** numerical information that quantifies outcomes. Measure most often refers to the results of performance on a particular dimension. For example, a measure might be a test score or the percentage of students who agree with an evaluative statement; **(2)** a general gloss used to refer to evidence collected and analyzed to assess SLO or QM

Program Review: A regularly recurring evaluation of an academic program that is intended to support, develop, and maintain high quality academic programs. The process involves collecting, synthesizing, evaluating and reporting information related to practices and outcomes within programs typically on a five year cycle. After the unit has completed its report, it is reviewed by PRAC, the dean and the provost.

Program Review and Assessment Committee (PRAC): Standing HSS committee that is charged with reviewing and responding to five year comprehensive program reviews. In addition, PRAC reviews annual progress reports and may offer assistance with assessment plans from the various programs in the college.

Quality Measures: Describes the standards programs have identified as necessary to achieve desired levels of quality in relation to program mission and goals. Quality measures may be phrased in reference to structure, productivity and/or activities.

Student Learning Outcomes: Program level SLOs describe what students will know or be able to do by the time they graduate. Another way of looking at program level SLOs is that they describe knowledge, skills and/or dispositions that students will demonstrate by the time they graduate. SLOs defined at the course level should describe what students will know or be able to do by the time they complete the course. Course level and program level SLOs should articulate (see curriculum map).

Student Learning Outcome (SLO) Assessment Methods: discipline-appropriate collection and analysis of aggregate-level data that form the basis for evaluating student performance with respect to the defined SLOs.

Summative Assessment: methods that attempt to capture the end results of learning in a course or program of study.

*Indicates wording taken from the assessment council document.

Some examples of Direct and Indirect Measures of Student Learning at the Course and Program Levels

	DIRECT MEASURES	INDIRECT MEASURES
Course Level	Exams and quizzes; pre/post tests; embedded questions on exams	Student course evaluations
	Standardized tests	"Muddiest points" and other in-class techniques
	Research papers and reports, case study analysis with direct and explicit links to learning objectives	Surveys of time of task, numbers of hours spent on homework, co-curricular activities
	Observations and ratings of field work, internship performance, service learning, clinical experiences	Quality of class participation
	Rubric scores for writing, oral presentations, and performances	
	Grades based on explicit performance criteria related to clear learning goals	
Program Level	Capstone projects, senior theses, exhibits, or performances with clear evaluation criteria linked to SLOs; portfolio of student work through the course of the program	Focus groups or exit interviews with graduating students, employers, alumni, faculty
	Pass rates or scores on licensure, certification, or subject area tests	Job placement
	Student publications or conference presentations	Employer, student, alumni surveys
	Employer and internship supervisor ratings of specific aspects of students' performance	Graduate school placement rates

	<p>Analysis of student work products (e.g., essays, oral presentations, exams), particularly when these are undertaken by multiple observers with inter-rater reliability</p>	<p>Transcript studies that examine patterns of course selection and grading</p>
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