



GUIDE TO ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

2018- 2019

Principles of Good Assessment

Assessment processes at Utica College are guided by accreditation requirements and best practices as defined by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), the Association for American Colleges & Universities (AAC & U), the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE), and other agencies relevant to Utica College's curricular and co-curricular offerings.

Consistent with the guiding principles articulated in the College's recently published *Guide to Institutional Effectiveness: 2018-2019*, academic assessment is

- Governed by the faculty and/or program directors
- Non-punitive and used to inform improved change
- Relevant, realistic, and sustainable
- Systematic and ongoing
- Well-planned
- Well-documented
- Student centered

Effective assessment processes are characterized by the following:

- They are organized around goals, not individual courses or activities.
- They use [multiple methods](#) to assess each individual goal.
- They rely primarily on [direct evidence](#); indirect evidence is used to supplement the narrative.
- They provide specific evidence regarding areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
- They result in a compelling narrative.
- They produce results that are useful to planning and resource allocations.
- They are shared with and analyzed by all relevant stakeholders.

Assessment Processes and Expectations

Academic Departments and CORE

All academic programs and departments, including Core, are expected to assess program-level student learning and operational goals on an annual basis. Plans and results should be updated in the College's assessment management system, TaskStream, by August 15 of each year. Departments are responsible for reporting assessment findings only for majors or minors in their programs.

All learning goals should be assessed *at least* once in a 5-year review cycle, but best practice recommends assessing each goal twice during the review cycle. [Direct methods](#) must be used to assess student learning. [Indirect methods](#) may be used to supplement findings. Departments are

urged to use assessments that measure multiple learning goals (“work smarter, not harder”) and capitalize on assessments already being done systematically, such as internship evaluations, student teaching reviews, and clinical assessments.

It is expected that the majority of faculty in a program will participate in the assessment process, from administering the assessments to interpreting the results and generating an action plan. Efforts should be made to include adjunct faculty in the process. When warranted, results should be shared with other stakeholders, such as students or alumni.

Reports will be reviewed on a cyclical basis by the Academic Assessment Coordinating Committee (AACC), and feedback shared directly with departmental faculty in face-to-face meetings and by scored rubric. The AACC’s review focuses primarily on assessment processes and their effectiveness.

School deans will review the annual goal reports in TaskStream from August 15 through September 15 and, if warranted, provide written, formative feedback to departments, using the Discussion board feature in TaskStream. When this happens, the dean will notify the department chair or assessment coordinator, letting him/her know that a comment or comments have been made.

If the department’s assessment findings suggest a need for additional or increased resources, the chairperson should make an appointment to meet with the school dean to discuss the findings and the recommended action plan/resource request. When appropriate, deans will advocate for academic departments in their school.

In addition to completing annual goal assessments, faculty are required to submit copies of their course syllabi to the respective School office during the first week of classes. *Course-level learning objectives* are expected to be clearly articulated in each syllabus. Syllabi will be filed in the School’s shared drive. Likewise, each faculty member’s Summary of Professional Activities (SOPAs) should be updated and submitted to the respective School office by August 15 of each academic year.

Academic programs and departments also complete a 5-year program review. Departments scheduled for 5-year reviews should have the self-study completed by October 15 of the academic year when it is due. Policies, processes, and procedures related to the 5-year program review may be found in the [Academic Assessment Coordinating Committee’s Handbook](#). Requirements are also outlined on the [“Assessment at Utica College”](#) site.

For programs that have specialized accreditors, the accreditation reports typically replaces the self-study. However, the College may require the program to engage in additional analyses of data, particularly with respect to enrollment trends and economic forecasts. Copies of the program’s accreditation report(s) and annual updates should be uploaded into the department’s document repository in the TaskStream workspace. Program faculty are expected to meet with the Provost to discuss the accreditation report, team visit report, program goals, and resource needs.

Co-Curricular Operations

The College, recognizing and valuing the learning that students gain while outside the classroom, maintains that the “co-curriculum is an exceptionally important part of a student's college experience”: <http://www.utica.edu/student/cocurriculargoals.cfm>. As such, co-curricular and support units in Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Athletics are required to identify student learning goals and systematically assess these goals. Specifically, the following operations are responsible for assessing student learning in addition to operational effectiveness: Athletics, the Office of Student Living and College Engagement, the Counseling Center, Career Services, Campus Safety, Student Conduct and Community Standards, Learning Services, the Office of Student Success, Tutoring, Opportunity Programs, Health Services and Wellness Center, International Education, and Admissions.

Assessment plans and results should be updated in TaskStream by June 30. Reports will be reviewed by the Co-Curricular Assessment Committee.

Institutional Learning Goals

Institution-level student learning refers to the college's [five \(5\) intellectual skills](#). All units responsible for assessing student learning must ensure that their program-level goals are mapped to the relevant intellectual skill or learning goal. This allows the College to identify where it is meeting its institutional goals and how well each unit contributes to developing these outcomes.

Institutional Data and Indirect Assessments

Utica College systematically collects information related to its effectiveness in achieving its mission, goals, and institutional priorities. The Office of Institutional Research conducts indirect assessments of student learning and institutional effectiveness. Such measures include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), and the Student Opinion of Teaching survey. Departments and programs are encouraged to utilize institutional data and assessments where and when appropriate. The NSSE and SSI results may be found at <https://www.utica.edu/ir/studentsurveys.cfm>.

In order to reduce the likelihood of survey fatigue, any unit that plans on administering a campus-wide survey beyond the scope of a program or department should contact the Office of Institutional Research to make sure the timing does not coincide with the administration of another survey.

Operational Effectiveness

Academic Assessment at Utica College focuses on both operational effectiveness at the division and program level and student learning at the institutional, programmatic, and course-specific levels. Division-level operational effectiveness assessment is carried out in response to the goals established by the Provost's cabinet, while program-level operational effectiveness assessment responds to operational goals established by individual academic programs. The assessment is

carried out by various offices and programs reporting through Academic Affairs; information is disseminated in regular reports and utilized in decision making.

Sharing Assessment Results

All members of a department or program have a shared responsibility regarding assessment, both doing it and analyzing the results. Program-level assessment results must be shared with and reviewed by all departmental faculty members.

In each school, programs or departments should schedule retreats each summer in order for faculty to review and interpret recent assessment findings and develop plans of actions based on these results. Departmental faculty should also meet prior to the beginning of each term to discuss ways to implement the action plans and to finalize the assessment strategies for the upcoming semester.

Program-level assessment results, whether related to student learning or operational effectiveness, are likewise shared with the respective School dean and the Academic Assessment Coordinating Committee (AACC) as part of the annual review process. The dean uses this information to determine resource needs; AACC uses it to assess the institution's assessment processes and identify faculty development needs. The Academic Assessment Coordinating Committee reports at the close of each traditional semester to the Provost and the Faculty Senate on the status of assessment at Utica College. The Dean for Academic Assessment is responsible for reporting significant findings and evidence of continuous improvement to the College's Board of Trustees.

Departments are urged to look for additional ways to share assessment findings with important stakeholders, namely alumni and current students.

With all learning assessments, assessment data remains confidential and is reported only in aggregate form at the program level. All electronic data is secured by limiting access to the password protected files. The privacy of both students and faculty is protected, and unless the assessment is also an assignment in a course, student performance in the assessment activity does not affect course grades or progress toward graduation.

Connecting Assessment to Planning and Budgeting

Through the annual goal report process, departments and programs indicate action plans based on assessment and other data sources and indicate resource needs. If the department's assessment findings suggest a need for additional or increased resources, the chairperson should make an appointment to meet with the school dean to discuss the findings and the recommended action plan/resource request. When appropriate, the school dean will advocate for the department at the divisional and institutional-level.

Assessment Resources

Assessment resources are available to faculty and staff on the “Assessment at Utica College” webpage (<https://www.utica.edu/academic/Assessment/new/resources.cfm>). These resources include links to professional development materials, College documents, and rubrics to assess student learning.

The Dean for Academic Assessment is likewise a resource to support faculty and staff with their assessment processes. The Assessment Office is located in White 127. The dean may be reached at extension 2568 or by email: aedamian@utica.edu.

Glossary of Terms Associated with Assessment

Academic Program – According to NYS Education Department, an academic program is organized around the set of educational requirements necessary to qualify for a registered degree. The curriculum or program includes general education or specialized study in depth in a particular field, or both (NYSED, 2012).

Artifacts – The work produced by students while engaged in a learning experience.

Analysis of Findings - Examination of the data gathered during the assessment cycle, including reflective consideration about what actions, if any, should be taken.

Action Plans - Actions taken to improve the program or assessment process based on the analysis of results; “Closing the loop.”

Assessment – Measures the degree to which goals have been met; provides specific evidence of strengths and areas needing improvement.

Assessment Method – Indicates how an assessment was conducted. Examples include surveys, tracking, focus groups, performance evaluations, rubrics. Also referred to as **assessment measure**.

Assessment Process – The systematic collection, review, and use of information about student learning, educational programs, student support programs, and college services undertaken to improve teaching/learning and institutional effectiveness.

Assessment Plan - A document which outlines how and when selected outcomes will be assessed.

Assessment Report - An annual document based on the Assessment Plan that presents and explains assessment results and shows how assessment results are being used to improve the program.

Benchmark - A standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or assessed.

Closing the loop – The term used to signify the next step or ongoing steps in the assessment cycle. Also referred to as **action plan**.

Co-curricular Units – The areas outside the classroom where the College also achieves its educational mission.

Course-embedded Assessments – Direct methods to assess student-learning that are well integrated into and organic to the educational experience.

Course Student Learning Goals (CSLG) – the measurable learning/knowledge/skill expectations for all students completing an academic course, documented in the syllabi and program review documents. Direct measures are to be used; indirect measures/results will be

used to support the direct measure findings. CSGL are identified by faculty, described in the course syllabus, and it is the faculty of each course who determine what to measure and the tool to use for this faculty-driven process.

Course Operational Goals –focus on the functioning of the course, rather than the learning achieved by the students. Examples include development of new courses, deletion of a course, edits to a course, and course mapping to program goals.

Course Syllabus – A document that lays out the expectations, including the learning goals, for a single course.

Curriculum Map – A matrix representing a program's learning goals and indicating where they are developed in a program and to what extent.

Direct Methods of Assessment – Measures used to document student performance. Examples of direct measures include rubrics for capstone projects, portfolios, papers, and performances.

Document Roadmap - Published by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the document roadmap is a tool where institutions might align specific sources of evidence with accreditation standards. The document roadmap is useful in demonstrating institutional compliance and identifying areas where the institution might need to improve.

5-Year Program Review – Required of academic departments, the 5-year program review is a self-study completed within a 5-year review cycle. The self-study requires departments to examine curriculum, student learning, faculty expertise, enrollment in the major(s) and minor(s), and other areas of relevance to the institution.

Findings - Results (evidence, data and/or information) gathered from assessment.

Formative Assessments – Assessments that occur throughout the learning process that aim to understand and, therefore, improve learning.

Institutional Effectiveness - Institutional effectiveness refers to how well an institution is achieving its mission and goals. An effective institution is characterized by a clearly defined mission that articulates who it serves, what it aspires to be, and what it values. Likewise, an effective institution has clear goals that are broadly communicated to its stakeholders.

Indirect Methods – Measures used to assess students' perceptions of their learning and educational experiences. Examples of indirect measures include surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Institutional Priorities –In consultation with the Board of Trustees the college President identifies the College's institutional priorities for the year. All goals are linked directly to the College's Strategic Plan and are executed at the Divisional level. Independent divisional goals may also sometimes inform and direct new strategic initiatives or institutional goals through the established strategic planning processes.

Institutional Student Learning Goals – The measurable student learning goals that are realized in the complete educational experience, both curricular and co-curricular. At Utica College, the key intellectual skills are the institutional learning goals.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Measureable values that indicate the extent to which the institution is achieving its mission and goals.

Metrics - Standards of measurement used to assess efficiency, performance, progress, or quality.

Mission Statement - A concise statement outlining the purpose of a program, who it serves, and what distinguishes it.

Program Student Learning Goals (PSLG) – the measurable learning/knowledge/skill expectations for all students graduating from a particular curriculum/major or students being served by a particular unit.

Program Operational Goals – Goals set for and by a program, usually during the 5-year program review process. However operational goals may be set during a review for an external accreditor or in the interim between program reviews. Operational goals address the functioning of the program.

Program Review – Required self-study process completed by each academic program. It is usually conducted on a five-year rotation, unless external program accreditation cycles require a different review time line.

Rubric - Specific sets of criteria that clearly define for both student and teacher what a range of acceptable and unacceptable performance looks like. Criteria define descriptors of ability at each level of performance and assign values to each level.

Target - A value that indicates whether or not a goal has been achieved.

TaskStream – The software package used to document assessment results and manage assessment processes.

Validity - The extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure and the extent to which inferences and actions made on the basis of test scores are appropriate and accurate.

Value added – Evidence that shows the effects educational providers have had on students during their programs of study beyond what would have occurred through natural maturation. A comparison of the knowledge and skills students bring to the educational process with the knowledge and skills they demonstrate upon completion of the educational process.

Program Review Schedule: 2018 – 2020

(revised as of August 2018)

AY 2018 - 2019

Program Title	Award	PR due
COMPUTER SCIENCE	BS	10/15/2017
PHILOSOPHY	BA	10/15/2017
PSYCHOLOGY - CHILD LIFE	BS	10/15/2017
BIOLOGY (including Animal Behavior, Neuroscience, and Psychobiology)	BS	10/15/2018
GEOSCIENCES	BA & BS	10/15/2018
PHYSICS	BA & BS	10/15/2018
PHYSICAL THERAPY (PPT&DPT)	DPT	10/15/2018

AY 2019 - 2020

Program Title	Award	PR due
MATHEMATICS	BA	10/15/2019
THERAPEUTIC RECREATION	BS	10/15/2019

AY 2020 - 2021

Program Title	Award	PR due
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA	BS	10/15/2020
FFCM and FFCI	MS/BS	10/15/2020
GOVERNMENT & POLITICS	BA	10/15/2020
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES	BA	10/15/2020
HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION	MS	10/15/2020
PSYCHOLOGY	BA & BS	10/15/2020

Notes