



Program Assessment Handbook

Centenary College of Louisiana



Program Assessment Handbook

Centenary College of Louisiana

This handbook is intended to guide the assessment planning process for major programs, interdisciplinary programs, co-curricular and student support programs. The handbook includes:

Section 1: An brief overview of assessment and its purpose

Section 2: A step-by-step guide to developing a program assessment plan

Appendix: Worksheets, planning tools, examples, a list of online resources related to assessment, and works cited

Section 1: An overview of assessment and its purpose

Program assessment refers to the systematic process of defining a program's purpose or function, and a method for gathering, analyzing, and using information to **improve** student learning, **inform** faculty and campus leaders about the contributions of a program, **guide** campus decision-making, and **support** external accountability and accreditation.

A useful definition comes from Mary J. Allen, who defines assessment as “a framework for focusing faculty attention on student learning and for providing meaningful discussions of program objectives, curricular organization, pedagogy, and student development” (Allen 4). The most important (and meaningful) part of assessment is that it is used to *improve student performance*. As the authors of “A Simple Model for Learning Improvement: Weigh Pig, Feed Pig, Weigh Pig” point out, “[a]ssessing learning does not by itself result in increased student accomplishment, much like a pig never fattened up because it was weighed” (Fulcher, et al 3)

An effective program assessment process should allow faculty and program directors to answer these questions:

1. What are you trying to do?
2. How well are you doing it?
3. What actions should you take and why, based on answers to the above questions?
4. What actions have you taken?
5. What are the results of these actions?

Section 2: A step-by-step guide to developing a program assessment plan

Assessment is a continuous improvement process that begins with articulating the program's purpose and goals, defining measurable outcomes, and determining methods of measuring success. Once you have established a plan, you will implement the process, collect and analyze data, and act on findings. The assessment process should follow these steps:

1. Determine your purpose:
 - A. Purpose statement
 - B. Program goals
 - C. Outcomes
2. Establish Multiple Measures for each Outcome
 - A. Direct
 - B. Indirect
3. Establish Targets (Desired level of performance)
4. Collect and Summarize Data
5. Interpret Results and Develop Actions for Improvement
6. Implement Change and Monitor Results

[Before you begin working on your program assessment plan, it helps to determine your assessment needs. See "Worksheet 1: Determining Assessment Needs" in the appendix to help.]

Step 1: Determine your purpose

A. Purpose Statement

The purpose statement is a broad statement of values, aspirations, and goals for a department or program, and it should state how the program aligns with and contributes to the college's mission. We often think implicitly about our purpose when we describe ourselves for various purposes, so take a look at your catalog description and website. Academic departments and programs should look at how they've described themselves in Admissions materials. Administrative units may have described their mission in job descriptions or annual reports. Check with disciplinary or professional associations. How might you describe a graduate of the program?

There are several ways to approach the crafting of a purpose statement. Regardless of the approach, the process should be collaborative and should engage relevant stakeholders. A well-defined purpose statement contains the following elements:

- A brief but targeted statement of the program's purpose, its function, its essential values, and guiding principles, including an explanation of why you do what you do and for whom,
- Highlights of the most important activities, operations, and offerings of the program,
- A clear indication as to how the program aligns with the college's mission,
- Clearly-defined program goals.

[You may want to consult "Worksheet 2: Reviewing a Purpose Statement," a resource called "How to Write a Program Mission Statement," and examples of purpose statements, all of which are provided in the Appendix]

B. Program goals

Part of your purpose statement is the articulation of program goals, which should be clearly defined. Goals and outcomes are often confused in discussions about assessment. Here, "goals" refer to the broader concepts, and "outcomes" drill down to more specific results or details. Goals should be based on what is important and might cover:

- **Knowledge and conceptual understanding**
- **Thinking and other skills**
 - Applying knowledge
 - Analysis
 - Evaluation, problem-solving, and decision-making
 - Synthesis and creativity
 - Critical thinking
 - Information literacy
 - Performance
- **Attitudes, values, dispositions, and habits of mind**

- Metacognition - learning about one's own learning (style, strategies)
- Productive dispositions, habits of mind (organization, independence, curiosity)
- Self-Efficacy

Effective statements of goals focus on the end (what the student will be able to do) rather than the means (what is being taught) and use concrete, precise language. The more clearly you articulate your program's goals, the easier it will be to develop outcomes and assess them.

Start by collecting and reviewing existing program goals, which might be stated on the website, in a previous program report, on course syllabi, promotional materials, or in the catalog. Look at similar programs at other institutions or refer to professional agencies (AACU, SACSCOC, NCATE, etc.) for guidance and inspiration.

In collaboration with other members of your program or department, generate and prioritize by importance a list of goals for your program. (Between 3-7 is good.) [To facilitate this process, ask members of your program or department to complete "Worksheet 3: Defining Program Goals," which can be found in the Appendix.]

Once you have determined a limited number of goals, you can draft goal statements. These should describe the expected performance of the student or specific behaviors expected from graduates of the program. [Once you have drafted statements about your program's goals, you can review them using "Worksheet 4: Reviewing Program Goal Statements" and find examples of program goal statements in the Appendix.]

It can be helpful to consider how goals are distributed across certain student learning "domains," for example, knowledge, abilities, experiences, disposition, values. A matrix for inventorying and charting goals might look like this:

Goal:	Knowledge	Ability	Experience	Disposition	Value
1	X		X		
2		X	X		
3				X	X

C. Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes are precise statements of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students should possess upon completion of a learning experience or sequence of experiences. Learning outcomes should be specific and measurable. They should also emerge directly from your stated program goals.

Once you've defined learning outcomes, it can be useful to use a matrix such as this one to map how the outcomes relate to and align with the program's goals:

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3
Outcome 1	Outcome 3	Outcome 6
Outcome 2	Outcome 4	Outcome 7
	Outcome 5	Outcome 8
		Outcome 9

Learning Outcome statements should:

- be clear and simple,
- include only one outcome per statement (rather than “bundled” statements)
- be framed in terms of the program rather than individual courses,
- focus on the result rather than a learning activity or process.

[For a helpful guide to understanding learning outcomes, see the link to “Creating Learning Outcomes” in the Appendix, where you will also find examples of learning outcomes and “Worksheet 5: Reviewing Learning Outcomes”]

Step 2: Establish Multiple Measures for Each Outcome

To assess a learning outcome, you will need a measurable activity or method of gathering information that allows you to see if the learning process is effective. A measurable activity could be an exam or set of exam questions, an essay, a project, or a portfolio. An indirect measure of effectiveness could be a survey of students, alumni, or employers, which allows you to gather information about perceptions of student learning. Graduate and work placement data can also be used as an indirect measure of learning outcomes. There is no perfect assessment measure so it's important to use multiple measures to gather helpful information.

A. Direct Measures

Direct measures allow you to assess student competencies at various stages of the program, and can be used to assess:

- Cognitive abilities: What does the student know?
- Performance abilities: What can the student do?
- Affective abilities: What does the student care about?

Examples of direct measures include capstone (senior seminar) course assignments, portfolios, embedded exam questions, research papers, projects, national or state standardized tests (Major Field Test), and licensure exams.

B. Indirect Measures

Indirect measures allow students and others to report on what students have learned and can be used to measure:

- Cognitive abilities: What does the student report that she or he knows?
- Performance abilities: What does the student report that she or he can do?
- Affective abilities: What does the student report that she or he cares about?

Examples of indirect measures include national surveys (NSSE), institutional surveys, exit interviews with graduates, alumni or employer surveys, or focus groups. Surveys can be created through the college's evaluation system, EvaluationKit, and can be added to course evaluations.

As you establish measures to assess learning, evaluate whether the selected method is valid for capturing the information you require. Ask:

- Does this method measure the learning outcome(s) we are assessing?
- Is the method reliable? Will it yield consistent responses over time?
- Is the method feasible? Will we be able to consistently collect the necessary data?
- Will this method give us information that will be useful for improving the program?
- Will this method provide data that will be easy to interpret?

A useful device to align assessment measures with learning outcomes is a chart that shows what indicators (exam, portfolios, etc) are assessed and how (direct, indirect). An example of such a chart would look like this:

Outcome	Final Exam	Major Field Test	Research Paper	Exit Interview
Apply theory X to a problem			Direct	Indirect
Acquire necessary knowledge of Y	Direct	Direct		Indirect
Proficiency in Written Communication			Direct	Indirect

Another useful tool is a matrix that charts the learning and assessment cycle throughout the duration of the program (100-level through graduation). This also allows you to pinpoint when and where learning activities associated with learning outcomes take place. Such a matrix might look something like this:

Outcome	Course 1XX	Course 2XX	Course 3XX	Capstone
Apply theory X to a problem		Introduced	Emphasized	Reinforced & Assessed
Acquire necessary knowledge of Y		Introduced	Emphasized	Assessed
Proficiency in Written Communication	Introduced	Used	Emphasized	Assessed

Step 3: Establish Targets (Desired level of performance)

A performance target refers to the number of students who achieve a specified level of performance at the end of a learning activity, sequence of activities, or program. A target is aspirational. In order to establish targets for student learning, you first need to establish a rubric that sets benchmarks for each stage of student learning, from novice (level 0 or 1) to exemplary (level 4). Be sure to define the standards for each benchmark, and make sure that there is consensus among program members as to the meaning of each benchmark. Here is an example that defines each benchmark for an effective purpose statement:

1 – Novice	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Exemplary
No purpose statement or educational goals are included.	Purpose statement and goals are vague, unclear, or lack coherence. They are too general to distinguish it from other programs or are focused on the department rather than the program.	Purpose statement and goals identify the program's purpose, but needs some development. The statement might not be focused on learners as the primary stakeholders.	Purpose statement and goals outline the program's purpose. (i.e., why the program exists and what the program does that distinguishes it from other units or programs). All points are included or well-developed. The wording of the statement is focused on learners as the primary stakeholders and is clear to a general audience.

There can be multiple targets per outcome. For example, your program might aim for 80% of students in a capstone course to demonstrate proficiency (3), while you might also aim for 50% of students in the same course to demonstrate exemplary (4) performance. Benchmarks and targets are often specific to disciplines and programs and depend on the culture of the department and so must be arrived at by consensus. Nonetheless, targets should be specific, clearly stated, and focused on the appropriate course-level. In other words, we probably shouldn't expect a student in a 100-level course to demonstrate mastery of a particular ability. Another approach would be to establish a target median. Of course, you could also collect and report both percentages and median scores.

Expect to spend some time "norming" your assessment results once you've established benchmarks and targets. One helpful activity is to meet as a department or program and cross-assess student work to make sure everyone understands learning standards in the same way. This will make the collection and interpretation of results more effective in the long run.

Step 4: Collect and Summarize Data

Once you have defined learning outcomes, identified multiple measures, and established benchmarks and targets, you are able to begin collecting assessment data. This can be done in every course, in a select number of courses (ie all 300-level major courses), and/or in a senior capstone. Keep in mind that the more data you collect at various stages of student learning, the more accurate a picture you will get of your program's effectiveness. You will also need to decide how often you will collect data: each semester? Annually? Every time a course is taught? Semi-annually? Again, the more often you collect data, the more helpful the data becomes.

Centenary reports program assessment data annually in the required program review. While it may take several years of data collection to see patterns or trends, it is helpful to collect and summarize the data annually, and to review the data with members of your program or department.

A chart that tracks data annually can be helpful as you look at assessment results over time. Here is one example:

Outcomes 1-3: Senior Writing Portfolios.

1 Reflects ability to structure text to convey meaning

AY:	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
% at or > 3.0	89	90	66.6	75	71	86
% < 2.0	0	0	16.6	0	0	0

2 Shows clear thesis or purpose and development

AY:	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
% at or > 3.0	89	90	66.6	75	71	86
% < 2.0	0	0	16.6	0	0	0

3 Shows ability to present polished writing appropriate to task

AY:	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
% at or > 3.0	89	80	66.6	75	71	71
% < 2.0	0	0	16.6	0	0	0

Another effective method for collecting and summarizing data is "curriculum mapping," a process for collecting and recording data that identifies when content and skills are addressed in courses and when and which assessment methods are used for each outcome and course-level, including the expected benchmark students should achieve at each stage. A curriculum map with performance targets might look something like:

	Course	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4	Outcome 5
Required	101	1		1		
Required	102		1		1	1
Required	201		2	2		
Elective	301				2	2
Required	320	2		3		
Required	420	3	3		2	3
Capstone	480	4	4	4	3	4

1	2	3	4
Novice	Developmental	Proficient	Exemplary

With this map, you can take the percentage or median score for each course in which the outcome is assessed and compare it to your target, thus allowing you to identify areas of improvement.

Step 5: Interpret Results and Develop Actions for Improvement

As you summarize and interpret collected data, you should be able to identify areas for improvement, such as course content, course sequence, curricular matters, and the assessment process itself. You might also identify external areas for improvement such as staffing issues that affect class sizes or content coverage or budget constraints that impact access to instructional technology. As you identify these areas for improvement, consider steps the department or program might take to address these areas. Actions to improve student learning might take the form of:

- **Changes to the Assessment Plan**
 - Revision/refinement of learning outcomes
 - Revision/refinement/addition of assessment measures
 - Refinement of benchmarks and targets
- **Changes to Curriculum**
 - Change in course sequence
 - Change in course content
 - Change to learning activities or assignments
 - Addition or deletion of courses
- **Changes to Academic Processes**
 - Changes to schedule or frequency of course offerings
 - Improvements in technology
 - Changes in Personnel
 - Faculty Development
 - Changes or Improvements to Academic Advising

Step 6: Implement Change and Monitor Results

As you accumulate data and implement changes, monitor the results to determine if the actions taken have an effect over time. In subsequent years, expect to report on the impacts of these actions.

Each of these parts of the assessment process—purpose statement and goals, learning outcomes, assessment measures, data and interpretation, actions for improvement—should be included in your program’s annual review. The guidelines for this review are as follows and can also be found at <https://www.centenary.edu/about/policies-procedures/academic-policies/program-review-guidelines/>

Program Review Guidelines

I. Purpose Statement

State your program/unit purpose statement, and a brief narrative of how it is linked to the College’s purpose statement.

II. Goals and Outcomes

Provide the current goals and outcomes/objectives for your unit. Goals are broad statements describing overarching long-range intended outcomes for the unit. Goals are usually not measurable and need to be further developed as separate distinguishable outcomes or objectives, that when measured appropriately, provide evidence of how well you are accomplishing your goals. For academic units these would be student learning outcomes that can be qualitatively and/or quantitatively measured. Administrative unit outcomes are usually statements that describe the desired quality (timeliness, accuracy, responsiveness, etc.) of key functions and services within the administrative unit. Operational outcomes define exactly what the services should promote (understanding, knowledge, awareness, appreciation, etc.).

III. Method of Assessment

Describe the methods used to assess each of objectives stated above. Multiple methods of assessment should be used (e.g. for academic units: field tests, surveys, embedded assessment instruments, portfolios, admission rates into graduate programs, or evaluations from employers of Centenary graduates; e.g. for administrative units: survey results, timeliness records, records of efficiency of services provided, focus groups, etc.).

IV. Assessment Findings and Achievement of Basic Educational Goals Articulated in College Purpose Statement

For each outcome mentioned in section III present the assessment data.

V. Planning

For all outcomes shown above, state how you used the assessment data to improve or modify your program as to improve student outcomes. Include actions taken, currently being undertaken, and being planned by the department to address any differences

between goals and current outcomes. These actions may relate to course content, course offerings, major/minor requirements, instructional methods or technology.

VI. Implementation of best practices

Describe how the program/unit is attempting to implement the best practices in the particular field of expertise. Examples include the use of outside peer-reviewers and national standards (nationally-stated discipline-specific learning outcomes, major field achievement tests, etc). State how the use of these practices will improve the efficacy of the program/unit.

VII. State of program/unit

(On a separate page. To be retained by cabinet member and not submitted to IEC.)

Comment on the state of the program/unit, including brief evaluations of each member of the unit not otherwise (third-year review, performance review, etc.) reviewed.

Participation of all full time and continuing part time faculty in the review is expected.

Appendix

- Worksheets
- Examples
- Helpful Resources
- Bibliography
- Works Cited

Worksheet 1: Determining Assessment Needs

Program: _____

Academic Year: _____

Date Prepared: _____

What are you assessing?

- Undergraduate program
- Graduate program
- Minor program
- General Education program
- Student Support Program
- Other _____

Why are you assessing?

- For internal purposes (e.g. program review, etc.)
 - Good management
 - Quality motivation
 - Knowing where you are
 - Knowing where you have been
 - Knowing what is possible and how to get there
 - Other _____
- For external purposes
 - Regional and program-level accreditation
 - Making a case for resources
 - Applying for a grant
 - Other _____

What do you want to know?

- Discipline-specific knowledge
- Competency skills
- Technology skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Attitudes and Perceptions
- Community Impact
- Attendance Records
- Success of graduates
- Retention Information
- Other _____

From whom will you collect the data?

- New students
- Current students
- Graduating students
- Alumni
- Faculty
- Employers of graduates
- Other _____

Who will see the results?

- Department
- Deans and administrators
- Advisory committees
- Review committees
- Accrediting bodies
- Students
- Alumni
- Other universities
- Other _____

How will the data be used?

- Internal program review
- Accreditation review
- Curriculum review
- Committee report
- Career services
- Recruiting and marketing
- Other _____

How often will you collect the data?

- One-time projects
- Each semester
- Each year
- Other _____

Who will collect the data?

- Individual faculty
- The department
- The college
- The university
- Other _____

(Adapted from *UCF Academic Program Assessment Handbook*, University of Central Florida, 2005)

Worksheet 2: Reviewing a Purpose Statement

Program: _____

Academic Year: _____

Date Prepared: _____

Is your mission statement brief and memorable?

Does it clearly state the purpose of the program or unit?

Does it indicate the primary functions or activities of the program?

Does it indicate the program's core values/guiding principles?

Does it indicate who the stakeholders are?

Does it clearly support the college's mission?

(Adapted from *UCF Academic Program Assessment Handbook*, University of Central Florida, 2005)

Examples of Purpose Statements

Biochemistry

Given the centrality of chemistry in modern society, the B.S. Biochemistry program at Centenary College seeks to provide a strong foundation in the science and to foster processes of scientific conceptualization and reasoning that support life-long learning. Through discovery-based pedagogy and state-of-the-art instrumental holdings, the program equips students for success in advanced study or the workforce by developing skills in defining problems as well as solving problems. Through its emphasis on the importance of undergraduate research and internships, the program is committed to providing personalized, distinctive experiences for all students. Because of its emphasis on the chemistry of biological systems, the Program prepares students to contribute to medicine, health, environmental studies, biotechnology, and other areas where a chemical perspective is required to solve biological problems.

The strong foundation in the discipline as well as the intellectual and professional skills connect with intellectual development, overcoming ignorance, comprehending, interpreting and synthesizing ideas, and analyzing information qualitatively and quantitatively. Discovery-based pedagogy in courses culminating in research experiences connect to the joy of creativity and discovery as well as those mentioned in the previous sentence. The ability to write clearly is developed throughout the curriculum through laboratory reports, notebooks and research reports. The ability to speak clearly is developed in our chemical literature class as well as through research presentations. The curriculum includes topics on environmental impact of chemicals as well as training on their responsible use to minimize impact on the environment. The curriculum and the professional skills the students develop prepare them for careers in the discipline as well as for advanced study in the field or for professional schools. The program leaves students poised for success in the workplace or in advanced study which will in turn position them to be leaders.

Education

The purpose of the Centenary College of Louisiana Department of Education is to prepare competent, caring and knowledgeable educators who have the pedagogical skills, content knowledge, community passion and inquiring minds necessary to be Dedicated Educators. To accomplish this, the Department encourages candidates to inquire about and question their own practices, as well as what they read in courses and observe in classrooms. Candidates through course work and field placements, develop a variety of research-based instructional and assessment strategies they can utilize and augment for years to come. The Department also focuses on the importance of building a caring a collaborative classroom culture. To accomplish this, the Department engages faculty who are skilled in modeling an atmosphere of collaboration, as well as being educators who care enough to take time to know the candidates on a personal basis.

Economics

The B.A program in Economics provides a liberal education for students interested in understanding major economic relationships present in every society. In addition, Economics students study alternative ways of meeting needs within institutional and resource constraints. The B.A. program offers the methodology and analytical techniques appropriate for graduate work in economics and related professions such as Public Administration and Law and provides

a foundation for research and analysis in academic and government institutions [...] The overarching goal for the Economics Program at Centenary College of Louisiana is for students to demonstrate an understanding of economics at the undergraduate level.

English

The Department of English provides for all students at Centenary College instruction to sharpen their skills in rhetoric and textual communication, in literary analysis, and critical appreciation. For its majors, the department offers a traditional course of study in British and American literature, augmented by courses in critical theory, creative and professional writing, and film and cultural studies. The immediate purpose of this program is to prepare its majors for graduate studies and for careers in academe, print media, law, business and other professions where analytical and communication skills are important. The department's larger mission is to provide all Centenary students the means to appreciate not only the "examined life" extolled by Socrates, but also the "felt life" envisioned by Henry James.

History

The department seeks to promote excellence in the liberal arts and sciences by providing students with the analytical, writing, and oral communication skills necessary to gain an understanding of themselves and their own society, and to master knowledge of other peoples' history, development, governmental institutions, and political behavior in a diverse world. The department's student-centered faculty members provide preparation for the professions of law, government service, politics, education, journalism, and business as well as training for more advanced study in history, political science, and international affairs.

Worksheet 3: Defining Program Goals

Program: _____

Academic Year: _____

Date Prepared: _____

After each faculty member has completed this worksheet, arrange a meeting at which you can compare notes and discuss the results.

1. Identify and list all the department goals of which you are aware. Refer to catalog descriptions, program review reports, mission statements, and external agencies (e.g., SACS).

2. Describe “the perfect student” in your program in terms of his or her knowledge, abilities, values, experiences, and attitudes. Which of these characteristics do you think can be directly attributed to the program experience?

3. Ask what this “ideal” student:

a. Knows

b. Can do

c. Values

4. Identify program experiences that contributed to producing and supporting the “ideal” student in your program.

5. What should a graduate of your program know, do, and value?

6. List the desired achievements of your alumni.

(Adapted from *UCF Academic Program Assessment Handbook*, University of Central Florida, 2005)

Worksheet 4: Reviewing Program Goal Statements

Program: _____

Academic Year: _____

Date Prepared: _____

Do your goals describe desired performance?

Are your goals consistent with your mission?

If you achieve your goals, have you reached or moved toward your vision?

Are your goals aligned with your values?

(Adapted from *UCF Academic Program Assessment Handbook*, University of Central Florida, 2005)

Examples of Program Goal Statements

Biology (excerpted)

A. Students who graduate from the Biology Department at Centenary College will develop understanding of:

Core Concepts

1. **Evolution:** The diversity of life evolved over time by processes of mutation, selection, and genetic change
2. **Structure and Function:** Basic units of structure define the function of all living things.
3. **Information Flow, Exchange, and Storage:** The growth and behavior of organisms are activated through the expression of genetic information in context.
4. **Pathways and Transformations of Energy and Matter:** Biological systems grow and change by processes based upon chemical transformation pathways and are governed by the laws of thermodynamics.
5. **Systems:** Living systems are interconnected and interacting.

B. Students who graduate from the Biology Department at Centenary College will develop the following competencies:

Competencies

1. **Ability to apply the process of science.** Biology is evidence-based and grounded in the formal practices of observation, experimentation, and hypothesis testing.
2. **Ability to use quantitative reasoning.** Biology relies on applications of quantitative analysis and mathematical reasoning.
3. **Ability to tap into the interdisciplinary nature of science.** Biology is an interdisciplinary science.
4. **Ability to understand the relationship between science and society.** Biology is conducted in a societal context.

C. Evaluate biological data and synthesize ideas based on biological knowledge they have gained.

D. Understand and participate in the process by which new biological knowledge is constructed.

E. Be prepared for the anticipated rigors of post-graduate education.

Business Administration

Business Administration graduates from the Frost School of Business should possess the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitude for success in graduate school and a career in business. Graduating in the concentrations of Accounting, finance, and Management will demonstrate the ability to apply facts, concepts, theories and analytical methods to understand relationships, interpret information, perform analysis, and solve problems focused on accounting, economics, management, finance, marketing and ethical issues. Additionally, graduates will be knowledgeable in the legal and social environment in which organizations operate; comprehend the role of technology and its effective use in organizations.

Worksheet 5: Reviewing Learning Outcomes

Program: _____

Academic Year: _____

Date Prepared: _____

As you draft learning outcomes, make sure that they address the following guidelines:

- The outcome is critical and specific to your program's purpose.
- The outcome uses clear and precise terms to define the knowledge, ability, value, or attitude a student who graduates from your program is expected to have.
- It is possible to collect accurate and reliable data to measure success at achieving the outcome.
- The outcome can be measured using more than one method.
- The outcome directly addresses how the students' experience in the program contribute to their learning.
- The outcome is singular, and not "bundled."
- The outcome is focused on results not process.
- The outcome is stated so that assessment of the outcome can be used to identify areas for improvement.

(Adapted from *UCF Academic Program Assessment Handbook*, University of Central Florida, 2005)

Examples of Learning Outcomes

[Adapted from A Program Guide for Outcomes Assessment at Geneva College, April 2000:

Poor: Students should be able to independently design and carry out research.

This statement does not specify the type or quality of research to be done.

Better: Students should be able to independently design and carry out experimental and correlational research.

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 should be able to independently design and carry out experimental and correlational research that yields valid results.

Here, the standard for students to aim for is clear and specific enough to help faculty agree about what students are expected to do. Therefore, they should be able to agree reasonably well about whether students have or have not achieved the objective. Even introductory students can understand the outcome statement, even if they don't know exactly what experimental and correlational research methods are.

Examples from Centenary College Programs:

Communication

- 1) To create media deliverables focused on achieving specific communication objectives.
- 2) To create media deliverables that address pertinent assumptions, needs, and/or concerns of the target audiences of these deliverables.
- 3) To create media deliverables that demonstrate competency in applicable communication skills – oral, written, visual, interactive, etc.

Music

- Students will develop conducting and leadership competencies expected of a church musician.
- Students will learn the history of sacred music, especially as it parallels the history of the church, including liturgical forms and hymnology.
- Students will understand the administrative structures and procedures of church music, including management and organization.
- Students will develop a philosophy of sacred music, including an understanding of the place of music in worship, and the creative uses of both traditional literature and newer forms of worship music.

Neuroscience

Outcome 1: Students will utilize the scientific process as a way to arrive at answers to known or unknown questions.

Outcome 2: Students will use quantitative reasoning as a tool to assess and/or predict properties of the nervous system

Outcome 3: Students will understand how Neuroscience is used as an interdisciplinary tool regarding several fields of study to ask questions about the nervous system

Outcome 4: Students will understand the importance of neuroscience as a tool for understand societal interactions

Helpful Resources

Assessment Commons. <http://assessmentcommons.org/view-all-resources/>

“Creating Learning Outcomes” Stanford University.

<https://www.bu.edu/provost/files/2017/06/Creating-Learning-Outcomes-Stanford.pdf>

“How to Write a Program Mission Statement” (pdf) <https://assessment.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1804/2016/06/HowToWriteMission.pdf>

PROGRAM-Based Review and Assessment: Tools and Techniques for Program Improvement. Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, U of Massachusetts Amherst. (Fall, 2001).

http://www.umass.edu/oapa/sites/default/files/pdf/handbooks/program_assessment_handbook.pdf

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UCF Academic Program Assessment Handbook, University of Central Florida, 2005.