Program Assessment Planning:

A Three Part Series on How to Set Up a Manageable and Effective Assessment Plan

Office of Assessment and Evaluation
at Virginia Tech

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Overview

Assessment overview

◦ What is assessment?

◦ Why do we do assessment?

◦ Are we required to do assessment?

Developing a Program Assessment Plan: What is included in the three part series?

◦ Part I: Developing a mission statement, writing good student learning and program outcomes, and developing a curriculum map

◦ Part II: Implementing appropriate measures, creating additional assessment maps, developing targets, and analyzing data

◦ Part III: Designing an action plan, closing the loop, and reporting results
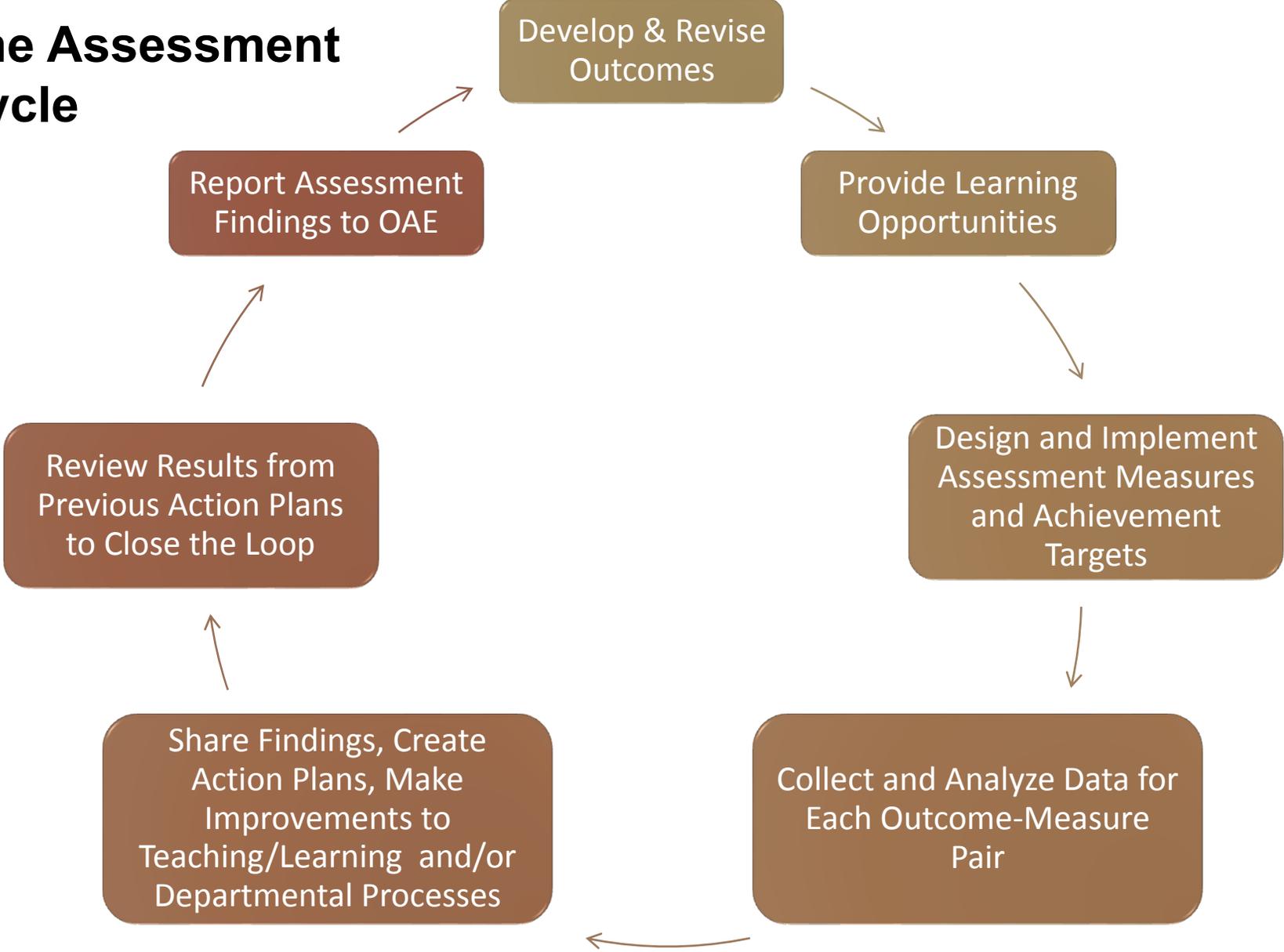
What is assessment?

Suskie (2009, p.4) defined assessment as an ongoing four-step process:

1. "establishing clear, measureable expected outcomes of student learning;

2. ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes;

3. systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations;

4. using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning."

Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The Assessment Cycle

Develop & Revise Outcomes

Provide Learning Opportunities

Design and Implement Assessment Measures and Achievement Targets

Collect and Analyze Data for Each Outcome-Measure Pair

Share Findings, Create Action Plans, Make Improvements to Teaching/Learning and/or Departmental Processes

Review Results from Previous Action Plans to Close the Loop

Report Assessment Findings to OAE

Why should programs do assessment?

◦ Help identify a program's strengths and areas for improvement
◦ Provide student learning evidence for stakeholders including discipline-specific and regional accreditors
◦ Highlight the contributions of the program to stakeholders
◦ Encourage collaboration among faculty in the program
◦ Create a group program vision and ideal
◦ Encourage the review of the curriculum as a whole

BUT the PRIMARY REASON is to improve the teaching and learning process

What are the SACSCOC requirements for program assessment?

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Comprehensive Standard,

"3.3.1 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"

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (2011, December, pg. 27). *The principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement*. Retrieved from http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

What are some things SACSCOC considers when examining this standard?

- ◦ "How are expected outcomes clearly defined in measureable terms for each educational program?
- ◦ What assessment instruments are used and why were they selected?
- ◦ Have the programs assessed the extent to which they have been successful in achieving their learning outcomes?
- ◦ If called for, have program improvements been made as a result of assessment findings?"

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (Second Edition 2012, p.55). *Resource manual for the principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement*. Retrieved from http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Resource%20Manual.pdf

RECAP from Part I – Mission Statements, Outcomes, and Curriculum Mapping

Mission Statements

◦ Statement covering values and purpose of the program
◦ Foundation for student learning and program outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes

◦ Specific knowledge, skill, or ability students are expected to achieve
◦ Are measureable and observable

Program Outcomes

◦ Statements that define program metrics or services
◦ Are measureable, specific, and feasible

Curriculum Mapping

◦ Technique allowing programs to align courses and other academic experiences with their learning outcomes
◦ Can assist in the assessment planning process

RECAP from Part II – Measures, Additional Mapping Techniques, Targets, and Analyses

Measures
◦ Aspects to consider when choosing measures for your outcomes
◦ Direct vs. indirect measures

Additional Mapping
◦ Assessment methodology map
◦ Assessment timeline plan

Target and Analysis
◦ Developing targets
◦ Matching your targets and analyses

Part III – Action Planning, Closing the Loop, and Reporting

By the end of this session you will be able to:

1. Describe what makes a good action plan

2. Explain the three ways to "close the loop"

3. Identify what needs to be documented in your reporting process

4. Summarize the questions your assessment plan should be able to answer once completed

Action Planning

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What makes a good action plan?

Action plans:
- Describe the changes a program intends to implement to address curriculum or program deficiencies identified as a result of the assessment
- Describe specific programmatic changes with timelines if possible
- Should be discussed among the faculty to involve them in the improvement or planning process

Action plans can entail:
- Changes to the curriculum (i.e., course sequencing)
- Changes to the assessment plan or methods
- Changes to pedagogical practices
- Implementation of new technology and / or assignments

Closing the Loop: What does this really mean?

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What does it mean to "close the loop"?

"Closing the Loop" is more than action planning.

- ◦ Consists of following up on an implemented change to see if it had the intended effect
- ◦ Is a key component of the teaching / learning process
- ◦ Shows if the action plan had a "return on investment"
- ◦ It is usually the most difficult step for programs to accomplish

What does it mean to "close the loop"?

"Closing the Loop" can be accomplished in several ways*

Process #1

Assessment results show that the program has achieved their outcome.

◦ In this process the program:
  ◦ collected data;
  ◦ reported results showing that outcome was achieved given specified target; and
  ◦ the program planned to continue to measure the outcome in future assessment cycles.

What does it mean to "close the loop"?

Process #2

Assessment results show that the program has NOT achieved their outcome.

- In this process the program:
  - collected data and
  - reported results showing that the outcome was not met given the specified achievement target.
- The program then:
  - identified and implemented an action plan to improve performance on the outcome; and
  - examined the impact of the action plan by re-measuring and collecting data on the outcome in a future cycle.
- The program then determines if the outcome is being met and if not takes further action to improvement performance.

What does it mean to "close the loop"?

Process #3

The program determines that the assessment plan is ineffective and needs to be revised.

◦ In this process the program:

- ◦ collected the data and reported the results;

- ◦ determined that the assessment plan was not accurately measuring the outcome or the outcome needed revision; and

- ◦ documented the changes to be made to the assessment plan and re-measured in a future cycle.

Reporting

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What needs to be documented?

For each degree program, certificate, or interdisciplinary minor the program documents:

- ◦ The expectations of the faculty for both the program and student learning outcomes
- ◦ How these expectations are measured and what the expected performance is
- ◦ Results at an aggregate level
- ◦ Actions taken by the program for improvement and the results of those actions

The program should:

- ◦ Demonstrate that an ongoing, systematic, periodic process is in place.
- ◦ Document repeated cycles of assessment, analysis, reflection, and action.

What questions should your final assessment plan be able to answer?

◦ Outcomes:

- ◦ What do faculty identify as the most important concepts for students in their program to learn?
- ◦ Can the students achieve the learning outcomes given the current structure of the curriculum?
- ◦ What do faculty identify as potential program development areas?

◦ Measurement:

- ◦ How will each of these outcomes be measured?
- ◦ What achievement targets do faculty expect for these outcome-measure pairs?
- ◦ When was the evidence collected and what did it show?

What questions should your final assessment plan be able to answer?

◦ Analysis and Improvement:

  ◦ Was the expected performance level met?

  ◦ What can the program do to improve if they didn't meet the achievement target?

  ◦ How are the results and improvements being communicated within the department and to other stakeholders?

  ◦ What are the results of previously implemented action plans? Did they assist with student learning?

What does the final report look like?

Student Learning Outcome (SLO)	Assessment Methodology (Measure)	Target	2014-2015 Academic Year Findings Did you met your target?	Action plan (if target was not met or program desires further improvement)	Comments Regarding Previous Action Plan Implemented for this Student Learning Outcome
SLO: Explain the core biological concepts related to evolution and principles of genetics.	Capstone paper. In BIOL4030, students are required to complete a capstone paper. This paper contains a section for students to explain the core biological concepts related to evolution and principles of genetics. A rubric will be used to evaluate student performance on this aspect of the capstone paper.	80% of the students will met or exceed expectations on the rubric items pertaining to history and evolution (score of 3 or 4 on a 4-pt rubric; 4 = exceeding expectations).	65% of the seniors taking the BIOL 4030 course were rated as meeting or exceeding expectations. Target: Not Met	Although there was a slight increase in student performance from the previous year, we still are not meeting our target. The program has decided that students need some refresher sessions on core evolution and genetics concepts since this information is mainly covered during their sophomore year in the program. This will be implemented during 15-16 and re-measured in 16-17.	Last year the program decide to review with students what was expected of them in the capstone paper. There was a 10% increase in the percentage of students meeting the target. (2013-2014: 55%)
	Any other methodology that was used to assess learning outcome #1				

What does the final report look like?

Program Outcome (PO)	Assessment Methodology (Measure)	Target	2014-2015 Academic Year Findings Did you met your target?	Action plan (if target was not met or program desires further improvement)	Comments Regarding Previous Action Plans Implemented for this Program Outcome
PO: Students enrolled in the BS Biology program at the end of their sophomore year will complete the program.	Tracking of students enrolled in the program.	80% of students enrolled at the end of their sophomore year will complete the program.	85% of students who were enrolled in the program at the end of their sophomore year graduated. Target: Met	NA	The program did not meet the established target for this program outcome in 09-10 (65% in 2009-2010) and decided to require students to complete an additional course prior to moving into the upper division courses. The finding for this year shows a vast improvement over the findings from the 2009-2010 academic year. It took the program a few years to implement this action plan but we feel that it has made a tremendous difference in the number of student completing the program.
	Any other methodology that was used to assess program outcome #1				

Summary and Review

Mission Statement

Student Learning and Program Outcomes

Curriculum Mapping

Measure and Targets

Findings

Analysis and Action Plans

Documenting and Reporting

Question and Answer

For questions or additional information please contact the Office of Assessment and Evaluation

We are always happy to help!

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Presentation will be made available on the Office of Assessment and Evaluation website.