

FSU Assessment Planning Tool

This tool is designed as a resource for those considering creating an assessment plan for their academic program. Along with this tool, “Creating A Program’s Assessment Plan” a three-part professional development series, is designed to support programs in their assessment planning process. For more information about taking part in this professional development contact Dr. Cate Kaluzny at ckaluzny@fitchburgstate.edu.

What is an Assessment Plan?

An assessment plan is a tool to describe the process and timeline for conducting the assessment of a program’s learning outcomes (LOs). Included within this are details of the assessment to be undertaken, the timeline for assessment activities and the collecting, analyzing, and use of program assessment data.

Why Create an Assessment Plan?

There are a variety of reasons why it is a good idea to create an assessment plan for your program including the following:

1. Having a well-written assessment plan reduces the amount of time you will ultimately have to devote to conducting your assessment for your program, since it can clarify tasks and timelines.
2. An assessment plan provides a framework to guide your assessment for your program, ensuring everyone is on the same page and is clear on their individual responsibilities and the overall timeline.
3. An assessment plan is a good way to start conversations among relevant stakeholders (i.e. faculty, staff, students) about not only assessment, but also about teaching, learning, curriculum, etc. in your program.
 - An assessment plan is a good way to see if your assessment is well-aligned with external expectations (for example, strategic planning initiatives or other institutional directions, professional standards, etc.)

Key Elements of a Successful Assessment Plan

Context

- Reflect on your program or department's mission statement and update or revise to reflect the learning that takes place there.
- Reflect on your learning outcomes (LOs) and consider updating or revising as needed to fit the learning in your program/department.
- How does assessment of the LOs you will assess fit into strategic directions for your program (and the unit/college/institution outcomes or ILPs)?

Curriculum Mapping

- Focus on required courses for all majors in the field of study. This is an opportunity to check alignment of program learning outcomes with course offerings.
- Where are students practicing, reinforcing, etc. learning outcomes?

Timeline

- When will each learning outcome be assessed? Which LO will be addressed first, second, etc.?
- Be realistic when planning a timeline. If this is your first assessment plan start small and build on it.

Resources

- Who will be involved in the assessment of each learning outcome?
- What will each individual's responsibilities be (tied to the timeline)?
- Have you been in contact with the Director of Assessment to schedule orientation and training for the assessment planning process?

Methods

- Establish the goals for your assessment.
 - Create a multi-year plan in which 1-2 LOs are assessed each year.
 - Use capstones to assess multiple LOs at once.
- Collect and evaluate evidence
 - Each outcome should include indirect and direct data collection.

- Are you already collecting information from students you can use to assess your learning outcomes?
- Use pretest posttests to gather evidence about progress from freshman to senior status of a student.
- It is important to consider scope:
 - What specific population of students will you assess?
 - Will the potential set of data adequately achieve your assessment goals?

Analysis

- How will the data collected help you understand how well students are achieving the learning outcome(s) you are assessing?
- What method(s) will you use to analyze the data you collect?
 - Simpler is often better.

Interpretation

- How will interpret the results of your analysis?
- Who will be involved in the interpretation?
 - How can you involve as many stakeholders (faculty, staff, students) as possible to give you the best perspective on the results?
- How will you decide the implications of your results?
- Who will determine the actions that can or should you take based on the results you obtained?

Final Steps

- Incorporate the results of your assessment into your Annual Report and use it to inform your action plan and your next program review.
- How will you communicate your results to different stakeholders?