Assessment Guidelines
SACS recommendation

“The institution is requested to demonstrate that it has completed at least one cycle of its assessment plan and used the results of its evaluation of that cycle as a basis for continued improvements within the programs and services.”
University Assessment Committee

• Purpose is to help lead the University’s assessment process by implementing an institution-wide systematic, ongoing cycle of assessment

• Composed of representatives of each division or college/school. Each division or college/school will have its own assessment committee that will work closely with their departments on assessment issues specific to their areas.

• Representatives from these various areas will then meet on a regular basis to share issues/ideas of importance to other divisions or colleges/school.
Members of the University Assessment Committee

- Lisa Lord, Chair
- Marcie Moore, Institutional Research and Planning (ex officio)
- Becky Finley, Division of Student Affairs
- Dana George, Athletics
- Janetta Waddell, College of Education
- Darry Hardy, College of Business
- Teresa Houston, Division of Finance
- Julie Jackson, Division of Student Affairs
- Terry Latour, Academic Affairs
- George Miller, Alumni/Foundation
- Tracy Mims, College of Arts and Sciences
- Deborah Moore, Academic Affairs (non-academics)
- Melinda Rush, School of Nursing
Agenda

Step 1: Overview of Student Learning Outcomes
Step 2: How to write Student Learning Outcomes
Step 3: Assessing Curriculum Outcomes
Step 4: Assessment Data Collection
Step 5: Writing a Unit Plan
Step 6: Using the Unit Plan to assess learning
Step 7: Reporting
What is the curriculum?

The curriculum encompasses all educational programs including student development, the library, financial and operational areas of the college involved in or supporting student learning.

The “expected outcome” of an educational process is learning.

Everything about the college is curriculum!
What are student learning outcomes?

“Student learning outcomes are properly defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of higher educational experiences.”

CHEA 2003
Learning Outputs and Outcomes

Output – An indirect indicator of learning such as retention rate, graduation rate, enrollment data, graduate school entry rate, satisfaction rate, exam passage rate, etc.

Outcome – A measurable change in student learning and/or in the learner as the result of engaging in a learning activity or program.
outputs vs. student learning outcomes

• Most survey data, as well as graduation, retention, transfer, and employment rates, are outputs and not outcomes.

• Student learning outcomes measure change in learning (and/or the learner) and answer two questions?

• What do students (graduates) know that they did not know before?

• What can they do that they could not do before?

• Output data does not directly and specifically measure changes in student learning.

(Dugan 2002)
How to Write Learning Outcome Statements

• Describe the specific knowledge, skills, behaviors or attitudes expected of the learner (graduates in the major.)
• Begin with an action verb (Bloom’s taxonomy verbs) that describes level of learning.
• Focus on what learners can “do or show” as a result of a learning experiences.
• Describe the intended learning outcome, not the learning process.
• Describe the learner’s performance, not the instructor’s.
### Bloom’s Classification of Cognitive Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Related Measurable Behaviors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Recalling or remembering something without necessarily understanding, using, or changing it.</td>
<td>define, describe, identify, label, list, match, memorize, point to, recall, select, state</td>
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<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Understanding something that has been communicated without necessarily relating it to anything else.</td>
<td>alter, account for, annotate, calculate, change, convert, group, explain, generalize, give examples, infer, interpret, paraphrase, predict, review, summarize, translate</td>
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<td>Application</td>
<td>Using a general concept to solve problems in a particular situation; using learned material in new and concrete situations.</td>
<td>apply, adopt, collect, construct, demonstrate, discover, illustrate, interview, make use of, manipulate, related, show, solve, use</td>
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<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Breaking something down into its parts; may focus on identification of parts or analysis of relationships between parts; or recognition of organizational principles.</td>
<td>analyze, compare, contrast, diagram, differentiate, dissect, distinguish, identify, illustrate, infer, outline, point out, select, separate, sort, subdivide</td>
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<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Creating something new by putting parts of different ideas together to make a whole.</td>
<td>blend, build, change, combine, compile, compose, conceive, create, design, formulate, generate, hypothesize, plan, predict, produce, reorder, revise, tell, write</td>
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<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Judging the value of material and methods as they might be applied in a particular situation; judging with the use of define criteria.</td>
<td>accept, appraise, assess, arbitrate, award, choose, conclude, criticize, defend, evaluate, grade, judge, prioritize, recommend, referee, reject, select, support</td>
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Examples of Operations Outcomes  
(finance, administration, physical plant, etc.)

• More likely to use “outputs or indirect measures” in these units.
  – “Students will complete the financial aid process prior to the semester deadline.”
  – “Student will pay fees within allocated deadlines.”
  – “Students rate dormitory living conditions as satisfactory.”
Learning Outcomes

Short-term Outcomes

Expect
at graduation or program completion

Knowledge
Comprehension
Application
Analysis
Synthesis
Evaluation
Learning Outcomes for Operations

Short-term Outcomes

.expect at graduation
or program completion
Assessing Curriculum Outcomes (using student assessment data to assess the curriculum)

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<tr>
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<th>Assessment Measures</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Timetable</th>
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Assessment Measures

• Indirect measures (outputs) can provide useful information for making improvements.
• Non-academic units may use output measures more than direct (outcome) measures.

Examples:
- Exit interviews
- Focus groups
- Alumni, employer, and student surveys
- Graduate follow-up studies
- Graduation, retention, and transfer rates
- Job placement data
- Satisfaction surveys
- Self-reported data
Assessment Rubrics

• What is a Rubric?
  A rubric is a rating scale that contains a set of assessment criteria that specifies the required characteristics for each level of quality of knowledge, skills, and/or performances.

• [Iowa State University Rubrics](http://www.educ.iastate.edu/elps/elpsrubrics.htm) Examples
Characteristics of a Good Departmental/Unit Assessment Plan

- The plan flows from the mission statement.
- The focus is on the program as a whole rather than on individual components.
- The number of critical learning outcomes is small.
- The assessment plan is a product of input and discussion by the entire department/unit (staff and students).
- The plan is integrated into the curriculum or services provided.
- The plan is ongoing rather than periodic.
- The plan is manageable.
- The plan uses multiple measures, both qualitative & quantitative and direct & indirect measures.
• Students understand their role in assessment (how it will be used and how it can help them).
• The results of assessment activities are used by faculty/units to improve; they are seen as a means rather than an end.

Source: Concordia College; Ball State University; Higher Learning Commission (NCA)
Summary

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The “assessment” shift ..

• Is not about producing more student assessment data.
• Is not directly about students!
• It is about the use of student assessment data (most of which already exists) to evaluate the extent to which the curriculum is producing the expected quality of learning.
• It is about improving the curriculum (the learning environment) as the outcome of the assessment process.
Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan

- **Student Outcome**
  - What a graduate should know, value, or be able to do at graduation and beyond

- **Assessment Tools and Methods**
  - What assessment tools and/or methods will you use to determine achievement of the learning outcome?

- **Data Collection and Analysis**
  - Describe how the data from the assessment tools and methods will be collected.

- **Results of Evaluation**
  - What were the findings and recommendations?

- **Use of Evaluation Results**
  - What changes in curriculum, courses, or procedures were made as a result of the program learning outcome assessment process?
The ultimate purpose of (the) assessment (plan) is the improvement of the curriculum, not evaluation of student performance.

Evaluation’s most important purpose is not to prove, but to improve. (Platt)