

**Delta State University Assessment
Manual
2024**

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The Delta State University Assessment Manual, Mission Statement, and Strategic Plan

Assessment Manual:

The Delta State University (DSU) Assessment Handbook codifies the processes used at Delta State University to provide evidence of institutional effectiveness. It serves as a comprehensive guide to ensure that all academic programs and administrative/student services units are aligned with the university's mission of continuous improvement. By addressing both academic program outcomes and outcomes for administrative/student services, this handbook supports a culture of accountability, data-driven decision-making, and excellence in student learning and institutional operations. Through systematic assessment, DSU strives to maintain high standards and achieve measurable progress toward its goals.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Delta State University is to offer exceptional programs and opportunities that are current, innovative, and responsive to the diverse needs of those it serves. The University provides experiences that cultivate intellectual growth and individual enrichment to develop productive members of local, regional, and global communities.

Strategic Plan Goals:

Initiative I: Academic Programming and Student Success

Goal 1: Increase Student Learning Delta State University will ensure that its graduates are well-prepared for careers through current, relevant, high-quality programs that are responsive to change and dedicated to continuous improvement.

Indicators:

- SP 1. Ind 1. Prepare students for successful performance on national/standardized assessments in relative programs.
- SP 1. Ind 2. Graduate students who obtain employment within one year of graduation.
- SP 1. Ind 3. Fulfill information and resource needs of students, faculty, and staff through library and learning resources.
- SP 1. Ind 4. Maintain a curriculum development and review process that supports continuous improvement.

Goal 2: Serve the Total Student Delta State University will recruit and retain an engaged student population and focus on holistic student development to graduate well-rounded contributors to society.

Indicators:

- SP 2. Ind 1. Increase enrollment across programs.
- SP 2. Ind 2. Increase year-to-year retention.
- SP 2. Ind 3. Increase the graduation rate.
- SP 2. Ind 4. Provide scholarship dollars and aid to students.
- SP 2. Ind 5. Align recruitment initiatives with the university's mission.

- SP 2. Ind 6. Provide advisement for students.
- SP 2. Ind 7. Provide opportunities for student engagement outside the classroom.
- SP 2. Ind 8. Graduate students who contribute to society.

Initiative II: Campus Environment and Continuous Support

Goal 3: Empower Excellence Delta State University will invest in recruiting and fostering dynamic, highly trained employees.

Indicators:

- SP 3. Ind 1. Hire and retain qualified faculty and staff.
- SP 3. Ind 2. Invest in ongoing training and professional development for faculty and staff.
- SP 3. Ind 3. Complete annual evaluations for faculty and staff.

Goal 4: Optimize Operations Delta State University will strengthen and advance its financial, physical, and technological resources demonstrating optimal performance in programs and services.

Indicators:

- SP 4. Ind 1. Improve processes across units on campus for efficiency and timeliness.
- SP 4. Ind 2. Optimize external funding opportunities.
- SP 4. Ind 3. Perform maintenance on buildings in a timely manner.
- SP 4. Ind 4. Provide adequate technology and security of IT infrastructure and systems.
- SP 4. Ind 5. Maintain current and accurate websites, data, and other services.
- SP 4. Ind 6. Maintain an assessment system that supports continuous improvement across all units.
- SP 4. Ind 7. Communicate current university data and information.
- SP 4. Ind 8. Provide a safe and secure campus.

Initiative III: Community and Alumni

Goal 5: Commit to Community Delta State University will impact the region and beyond through outreach and collaboration with community and regional partners.

Indicators:

- SP 5. Ind 1. Impact the region through outreach initiatives.
- SP 5. Ind 2. Provide quality space that can be utilized by external entities.
- SP 5. Ind 3. Collaborate with community and external partners.

Goal 6: Engage Alumni Delta State University will reinforce the values of degrees earned, expand brand recognition, and deepen engagement with alumni.

Indicators:

- SP 6. Ind 1. Collaborate with alumni to expand brand recognition and partnerships.
- SP 6. Ind 2. Engage alumni in initiatives across campus

How Assessment Fits into Accreditation

Overview:

Delta State University (DSU) conducts assessments for institutional improvement and accountability. In particular, DSU is accountable to our accreditor, the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Assessment permeates the accreditation requirements and standards published in *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, a manual published by SACSCOC.

Standards Related to Assessment from *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*:

- **Standard 7.1:** The institution engages in ongoing, systematic, and integrated assessment of student learning and programs to support student learning and improve institutional effectiveness.
- **Standard 7.2:** The institution uses assessment results to inform and improve its programs, services, and processes.
- **Standard 7.3:** The institution maintains and publishes appropriate documentation of assessment activities and their results.
- **Standard 7.4:** The institution involves appropriate stakeholders in the assessment process to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

Assessment Process

Definition of Assessment:

Assessment is a systematic process of gathering and interpreting information to learn how well academic, administrative, and student support units are performing and using that information to measure and improve performance. Performance measures inform the decision-making process and are used to support quality improvement. Assessment involves:

- Sharing explicit expectations and goals
- Setting appropriate criteria and high standards for quality assurance
- Using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance

This process contributes to assurance that educational quality and program effectiveness are emphasized on a regular basis.

The Assessment Cycle:

Outcomes are typically specified at the level of individual educational programs, administrative units, and/or student services units. Delta State University has a total of 46 active programs on its Academic Program Inventory (API) with the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL). There are 21 canceled programs which will remain active only for students who are eligible for teach outs, with an official end date of May 2026. There are three new programs pending IHL approval.

For DSU, the following programs, listed in Chart 1 below, are assessed. The chart also includes information on the status of each program.

Chart 1: Programs and Status for all Delta State University Programs

Active Programs:

Program Name	Award Level	Agency or Association Reviewing Programs	Nationally Recognized or Accredited Status	Status as of May 2024
Accountancy - BBA	Bachelor's	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs	Accredited	Active
Accountancy - MPAC	Master's			Active*
Art - BA	Bachelor's	National Association of Schools of Art and Design	Accredited	Active*
Art - BFA	Bachelor's	National Association of Schools of Art and Design	Accredited	Active*
Aviation Management - BAS	Bachelor's	Aviation Accreditation Board International	Accredited	Active
Aviation Management - BCA	Bachelor's	Aviation Accreditation Board International	Accredited	Active
Biology - BS	Bachelor's			Active
Business Administration - BAS	Bachelor's			Active
Business Administration - MBA	Master's	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs	Accredited	Active
Business Management - CP	Certificate			Active
Chemistry - BS	Bachelor's			Active*
Commercial Aviation - MCA	Master's			Active
Computer Information Systems - BBA	Bachelor's	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs	Accredited	Active
Counseling - EdS	Specialist			Active*
Counseling - MEd	Master's	Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs	Accredited	Active
Criminal Justice - CP	Certificate			Active

Criminal Justice and Criminology - BSJC	Bachelor's			Active
Criminal Justice and Criminology - MSJC	Master's			Active
Curriculum and Instruction - EdS	Specialist			Active
Digital Media Arts - BFA	Bachelor's	National Association of Schools of Art and Design		Active*
Educational Administration and Supervision - EdS	Specialist	Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs	Accredited	Active
Educational Administration and Supervision - MEd	Master's	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (formerly known as NCATE)	Accredited	Active
Elementary Education - BSEd	Bachelor's	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (formerly known as NCATE)	Accredited	Active
Elementary Education - EdS	Specialist			Active*
Elementary Education - MEd	Master's			Active
English - BA	Bachelor's			Active
English Education - BSEd	Bachelor's	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (formerly known as NCATE)	Accredited	Active*
Entertainment Industry Studies - BS	Bachelor's			Active
Environmental Science - BS	Bachelor's			Active
Family and Consumer Sciences - BS	Bachelor's	Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics	Accredited	Active
Family Nurse Practitioner - CP	Certificate	Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)	Accredited	Active

Finance - BBA	Bachelor's	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs	Accredited	Active*
Flight Operations - BCA	Bachelor's	Aviation Accreditation Board International	Accredited	Active*
General Business - BBA	Bachelor's	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs	Accredited	Active
Geospatial Analysis and Intelligence - BAS	Bachelor's			Active
Geospatial Analysis and Intelligence - CP	Certificate			Active
Geospatial Information Technologies - MAS	Master's	United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation		Active
Health, Physical Education and Recreation - BS	Bachelor's			Active
Health, Physical Education and Recreation - BSEd	Bachelor's	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (formerly known as NCATE)	Accredited	Active*
Healthcare Administration - BBA	Bachelor's	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs	Accredited	Suspended Fall 2024
Higher Education - EdS	Specialist			Suspended
History - BA	Bachelor's			Active
Interdisciplinary Studies - BSIS	Bachelor's			Active
Liberal Studies - MALS	Master's			Active
Management - BBA	Bachelor's	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs	Accredited	Active
Management - CP	Certificate			Active
Marketing - BBA	Bachelor's	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs	Accredited	Active
Mathematics - BS	Bachelor's			Active
Mathematics Education - BSEd	Bachelor's	Council for the Accreditation of	Accredited	Active*

		Educator Preparation (formerly known as NCATE)		
Music - BA	Bachelor's	National Association of Schools of Music	Accredited	Suspended Fall 2023*
Music - BM	Bachelor's	National Association of Schools of Music	Accredited	Suspended Fall 2023*
Music Education - BMEd	Bachelor's	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (formerly known as NCATE)	Accredited	Suspended*
Natural Sciences - MSNS	Master's			Active*
Nurse Educator - CP	Certificate			Active
Nursing - BSN	Bachelor's	Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education	Accredited	Active
Nursing - MSN	Master's	Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education	Accredited	Active
Nursing Practice - DNP	Doctoral	Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education	Accredited	Active
Professional Studies - EdD	Doctoral			Active
Psychology - BA	Bachelor's			Active
Secondary Education - MEd	Master's			Active
Social Studies Education - BSE	Bachelor's			Active*
Social Work - BSW	Bachelor's	Council on Social Work Education	Accredited	Active
Speech and Hearing Sciences - BS	Bachelor's			Active
Sport and Human Performance - MS	Master's			Active
Studio Art - MFA	Master's			Active
Teaching (Alternate Route) - MAT	Master's	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation	Accredited	Active

		(formerly known as NCATE)		
University Studies (C2C) - BUS	Bachelor's			Active

Academic Program Pending Approval:

Program Name	Award Level	Agency or Association Reviewing Programs	Nationally Recognized or Accredited Status	Status as of September 2024
Secondary Education - BSE	Bachelor's	Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning		Pending on Approval
Social Sciences and Humanities	Bachelor's	Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning		Pending on Approval
Digital Media	Bachelor's	Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning		Pending on Approval

Additionally, the following administrative units, listed in Chart 2 below, are assessed.

Chart 2: Delta State University Administrative Units

Advancement
Alumni Relations
Athletics
Bologna Performing Arts Center
Bookstore
Continuing Education
Delta Center for Culture and Learning
Facilities Management
Financial Aid
Financial Reporting and Accounting
Food Services
Graduate Admissions
Human Resources
Information Technology
Institutional Grants
Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning

Mailing and Printing Services
Marketing
Student Business Services
Undergraduate Admissions

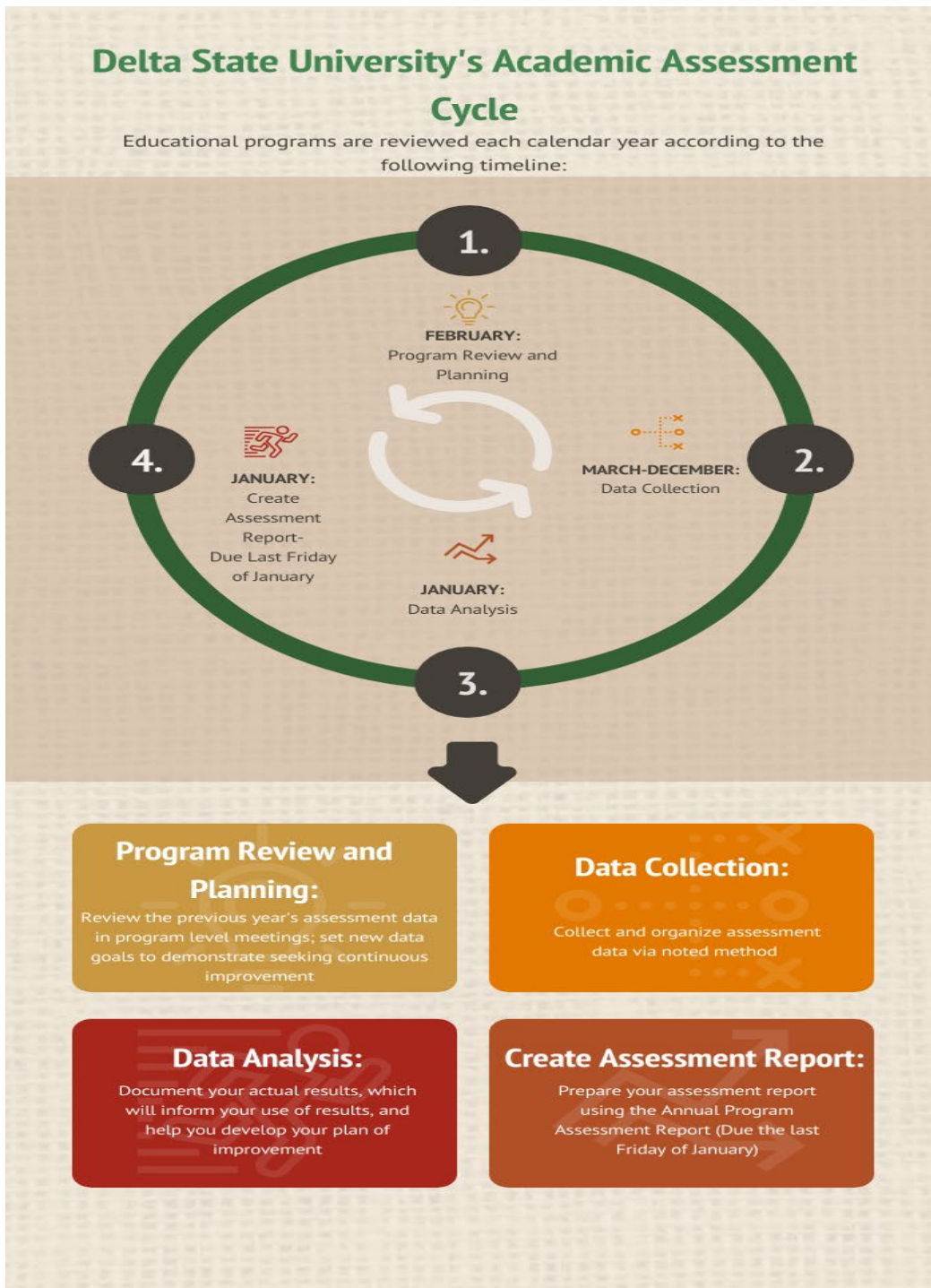
Additionally, the following student services units, listed in Chart 3 below, are assessed.

Chart 3: Delta State University Student Services Units

*Career Services
Collegiate Rec and Wellness
Engagement and Advocacy
Ford Center for Teaching and Learning
Health and Counseling Services
*Housing and Residence Life
**Instrumental Ensembles
Library
*Student Life
Student Success Center
University Policy Department
University Services <i>Housing Administration, Assignment, and Facilities</i> <i>Residential Education, Learning, and Staffing</i> <i>Union and Student Programming</i> <i>Student Conduct and Community Support</i> <i>Sorority and Fraternity Recruitment, Retention, and Risk</i>
**Vocal Ensembles
*NOTE: This unit was deleted in 2024
**NOTE: NEW unit effective July 2024

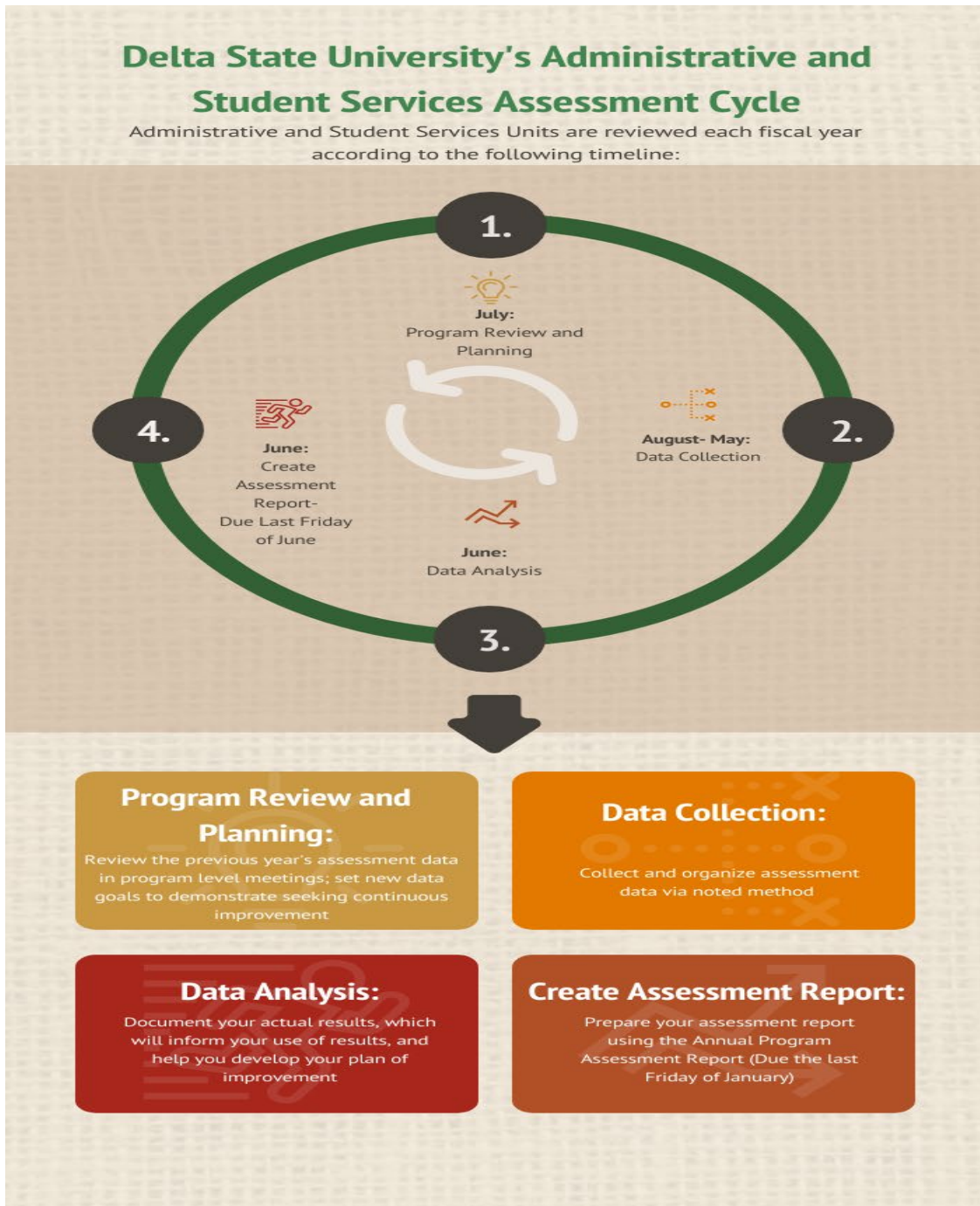
Following the Assessment Cycle shown in Figure 1 below, DSU completes an annual assessment of its academic programs (including degree programs, academic minors, certificate programs, and general education curricular courses).

The following Assessment Cycle, shown in **Figure 1**, outlines DSU Program Assessment Cycle.



Following the Assessment Cycle shown in Figure 2 below, DSU completes an annual assessment of its academic and student support service units and administrative units.

The following Assessment Cycle, shown in **Figure 2**, outlines DSU Administrative and Student Services Assessment Cycle.



The Role of Assessment in Continuous Improvement

Strategic planning, institutional effectiveness, and assessment are cyclical and ongoing. At DSU, the cycle begins with the institutional strategic planning process. The DSU strategic plan is a five-year plan with an annual review. The Office of the President and stakeholders on campus and in the campus community lead the strategic planning process. Leaders reflect on the DSU mission and identify strategic goals during this process. The strategic goals are general in nature and are not measured but do include strategic indicators that are tied to all assessment. The strategic goals are shared with the campus faculty, staff, and students via the website and email dissemination. Faculty also receive training on the plan via the Annual Faculty Development Day hosted by the Provost. Faculty and Staff are also thoroughly educated on the plan via various other trainings on assessment.

Each unit's leadership (i.e., Division Chairs and Unit Chairs, along with College Deans) reflects on the strategic goals and establishes student learning outcomes and program objectives with faculty that further define the goals for their unit. The objectives are measurable.

Additionally, academic/student services units and administrative units provide unit goals with measurable outcomes.

Each unit develops an action plan that includes defining learning outcomes, assessment methods, and expected outcomes. Additionally, the plan explores:

- How the results will inform the decision-making process
- What action will be taken to improve unit performance

The faculty and leadership then measure the objectives or outcomes and analyze the results. Finally, using the results for institutional/unit improvement completes the cycle: How will the unit use the assessment results for improvement?

DSU has established processes and procedures to outline responsibilities for assessment of academic programs, and academic and support services. At the level of educational programs, the assessment process is a shared responsibility between all departmental faculty (instructors, the Unit/Division Chair) with guidance from the Associate Provost and Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC).

According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), “[a]ssessment of student learning and reform of teaching and academic programs are core academic activities. As such, the AAUP sees them as being the primary responsibility of faculty – individually and collectively. In the classroom, a core element of academic freedom is the autonomy of the individual faculty member to determine what and how to teach. At the same time, the AAUP emphasizes the collective responsibility of the faculty as a whole for academic programs, suggesting that an academic department, for instance, can adopt pedagogical or curricular standards that colleagues teaching the course(s) need to adopt.... There is no reason that a faculty cannot collectively take on the task of identifying student learning outcomes,

conducting those assessments, and revising curriculum accordingly.” (Gold, Rhodes, Smith, & Kuh, 2011, p. 7).

Assessment Resources

Several university resources are available to support educational programs and units throughout the assessment process. The Associate Provost offers academic, student services, and program assessment workshops and trainings both in person in the Gertrude C. Ford Center for Teaching and Learning and virtually for online faculty and staff. Additionally, the Assessment Advisory Committee (AAC) provides feedback and assistance to units with drafting learning outcomes and/or unit goals and with all other areas of assessment plans, in addition to helping document the assessment reports in TEAMS.

The DSU Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness and Planning (IR) provides academic departments, as well as student services units, with data reports on various student success metrics and may generate custom datasets and analytic projects upon request (i.e., retrieving, aggregating, and visualizing data for specific programs, courses, sections, locations/modalities, majors, etc., as well as enrollment and survey data). The Gertrude C. Ford Center for Teaching and Learning helps instructors improve educational experiences through training and workshops on using Canvas gradebooks, designing effective assessments, etc.

Defining Program Mission

Every academic (college, division/school, degree/certificate program) and student services entity should have an active and current mission statement, which is “a broad statement of what the program or unit is, what it does, and for whom it does it. It should provide a clear description of the purpose of the program/unit and the learning environment. For a given program/unit, the mission statement should, in specific terms, reflect how the program or unit contributes to the education, careers, success, wellbeing, etc. of students.” (UCF Academic Assessment Handbook, p. 17).

A well-defined mission statement for academic programs includes the following components (Revised from the UCF Academic Assessment Handbook, pp. 17-18):

- **Purpose of the Program:** The main reason(s) why your college, department/school, degree/certificate program exists. Your program’s focus may be preparing students for work in a particular field or to continue their education at the graduate level.
- **Program’s Stakeholders:** The groups of individuals for whom the program is provided and/or those who are benefiting from the program. For example, students, employers, graduate programs, faculty, and staff.
- **Primary Activities:** The program’s most important functions, operations, outcomes and/or offerings that help realize the program’s purpose. For instance, education, scholarship, mentoring.
- **Connection to University’s Mission:** The alignment between the program’s mission statement and the mission statement of DSU. Furthermore, program missions should be aligned with the missions of the department/school and college. Your program’s mission

may be focused on leadership education, which supports part of DSU's mission to "instill strength, skill and character." Another example is a degree program striving to graduate students with a strong knowledge and skill set in the data science discipline, which directly aligns with DSU's mission to preserve, expand, and disseminate knowledge in the sciences and technology.

A well-defined mission statement for administrative/student services units includes the following components:

- **Purpose of the Unit:** This component addresses the core reason why the unit exists. It should clearly articulate the unit's focus and objectives. For instance, the unit's purpose might be to support students in their academic journey, prepare them for specific career paths, or provide essential services that enhance their overall university experience.
- **Unit's Stakeholders:** This refers to the groups or individuals who benefit from or are served by the unit. Stakeholders typically include students, faculty, staff, and potentially external partners or employers. Identifying stakeholders helps ensure that the unit's mission is aligned with the needs and expectations of those it serves.
- **Primary Activities:** These are the main functions and operations of the unit that contribute to fulfilling its purpose. For example, primary activities may include offering advising services, conducting workshops, providing resources, or facilitating extracurricular activities. These activities should be integral to achieving the unit's goals and supporting its purpose.
- **Connection to University's Mission:** The mission statement should align with the broader mission of the university. It should reflect how the unit's objectives support the overall mission and values of the institution. For example, if the university's mission emphasizes leadership and character development, the unit's mission might focus on fostering these attributes among students. This alignment ensures coherence between the unit's efforts and the university's strategic goals.

Exploring Student Learning Outcomes

In the field of assessment, Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) represent the knowledge, skills, and values/attitudes that students are expected to acquire through their academic and extracurricular experiences. SLOs define what students will be able to know, do, and care about by the time they complete a program or course (Nichols & Nichols, 2005, pp. 74-75; SACSCOC Resource Manual, p. 70; Suskie, 2018, p. 41).

When developing, refining, or concluding learning outcomes, it is beneficial to consider several resources and perspectives:

1. **Discipline-Specific Accrediting Bodies:** Review how learning outcomes are defined by relevant accrediting or governing organizations. These bodies often provide guidelines or standards that help shape SLOs to ensure they meet professional and educational benchmarks. For example:

- **CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation):** CAEP provides standards for educator preparation programs, emphasizing outcomes related to the effectiveness of teacher candidates and their impact on student learning.
 - **CCNE (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education):** CCNE outlines expected outcomes for nursing programs, focusing on competencies that ensure graduates are prepared to provide high-quality care.
2. **Aspirational and Peer Institutions:** Examine how similar programs at peer and aspirational institutions define and structure their learning outcomes. This can provide valuable insights into effective practices and help benchmark your program's outcomes against those of comparable institutions.
 3. **Outcome Taxonomies and Typologies:** Study various outcome taxonomies and typologies that categorize learning outcomes into different levels or types. Understanding these frameworks can aid in structuring outcomes in a way that aligns with both educational goals and assessment needs.
 4. **Historical SLO Assessment Plans and Reports:** Review your program's past SLO assessment plans and reports to identify trends, strengths, and areas for improvement. This historical perspective can inform adjustments and enhancements to current outcomes.

Selecting Student Learning Outcomes

When developing expectations for Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), program faculty should consider a range of perspectives beyond their own expertise. Key contributors include:

- **Constituencies:** Input from actual or potential employers, graduate programs, recent alumni, current students, and relevant accrediting agencies or professional organizations is valuable. Engaging these stakeholders ensures that SLOs are relevant and aligned with external expectations and real-world applications (Hart Research Associates, 2013). This collaborative approach also aligns with DSU's mission and strategic plan.
- **Previous Outcomes:** Reviewing and reflecting on previous SLOs is crucial, as many may still be pertinent to the program's objectives. SLOs should be updated periodically to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

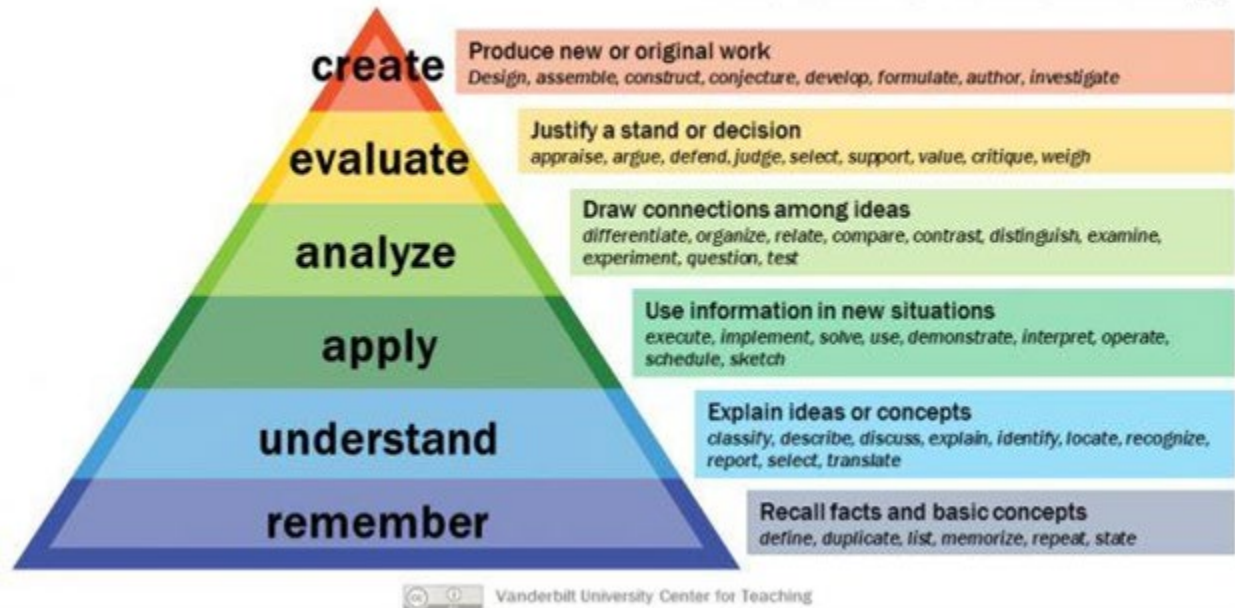
There are two primary reasons for periodically updating SLOs:

1. **Achievement Evidence:** If an SLO has consistently been met for five or more years, this indicates that the program's curriculum effectively prepares students for that outcome. The SLO may be rotated out, allowing for the introduction of a new or equally important SLO.
2. **Disciplinary Changes:** Advances in tools, technologies, scientific discoveries, and innovative techniques may necessitate updating SLOs to reflect new knowledge and skills. Incorporating new content into the curriculum often requires revising or introducing SLOs to stay current with the field.

Formulating the Statement of SLO

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) represent the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that students are expected to acquire by the end of their program. They should be program-level outcomes, distinct from course-level objectives or university-wide goals. Effective SLOs synthesize course-level objectives into a cohesive set of outcomes that reflect the program's overarching goals.

Bloom's Taxonomy



Key aspects of well-formulated SLOs include:

- **Focus:** SLOs should encompass knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior, and perceptions. They should be current, relevant, and rigorous.
- **Clarity and Consensus:** They should be clear and concise, reflecting the program faculty's agreement on what students should achieve upon graduation.
- **Criteria for Evaluation:** The Institutional Assessment Committee evaluates SLOs based on:
 - **Clarity:** The SLO is straightforward and unambiguous.
 - **Focus on Learning:** The SLO describes observable behaviors or actions.
 - **Measurability:** The SLO can be assessed using direct or indirect methods.

Aligning SLOs and Curriculum

Curriculum mapping is a critical process for ensuring that SLOs are addressed throughout the program. This involves creating a matrix with SLOs on one axis and courses on the other. Faculty indicate where each SLO is introduced (I), reinforced (R), and mastered (M). When an SLO is mastered, an assessment is conducted to gather data.

Curriculum mapping helps identify gaps and ensures that there is a cohesive and deliberate progression of knowledge and skills across the program. Templates for various degree levels are provided by the DSU Office of Academic Affairs and are available on the website.

Choosing Best Fitting Assignments

Effective assessment requires selecting assignments that align with SLOs. Assessments should reveal how well students have learned the material, and instructional strategies should support this learning.

Bloom's "Knowledge, Assessment, and Verb Wheel" is a useful tool for selecting appropriate assignments. The wheel categorizes depth of learning and associated action verbs, with assessment methods matching these levels. For instance, for Levels 1, 2, 4, and 5, instructors might use case studies and student reports to assess targeted SLOs.

This structured approach ensures that assessments are well-aligned with learning objectives and provide meaningful insights into student learning and program effectiveness.

When instructors decide which specific assignments to use for assessing different SLOs, they should be mindful of several important distinctions:

- **Assessment Methods and Procedures:** Each unit may employ various methods and procedures to assess and collect data on program goals and student learning outcomes.
- **Program Goal Measures:** Measures of program goals vary widely. Units should provide information on their specific methods and procedures for measuring these goals.
- **SLO Assessment Methods:** Common methods include:
 - Rubrics
 - Exam Scores
 - Portfolios (e.g., art, publication, writing)
 - Recitals/Performance/Art Show Critiques
- **Evaluation Criteria:** All methods and procedures (i.e., assessment plan) are evaluated based on:
 - **Clarity:** Methods and procedures should be clear.
 - **SLO Matrix Completion:** The matrix should be completed (Appendix ???).
 - **Timing:** Measurements should occur at specified times.
 - **Appropriateness:** Measurements must be appropriate for the Program Goals and SLOs.
 - **Balance:** SLO assessment methods should reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods.
 - **Tools:** At least one course/program assessment/measurement tool should be used (attachments preferred).
 - **Direct vs. Indirect Measures:** Most programs should use at least 50% direct measures for SLOs.

Direct and Indirect Assessments and Measures

Assessment of student learning outcomes can be approached through both direct and indirect measures, each providing unique insights into educational effectiveness.

Direct Assessments and Measures

Direct assessments involve the direct examination or observation of student knowledge or skills against measurable performance indicators. These measures evaluate the actual demonstration of learning and are essential for assessing both Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Examples of Direct Assessments include:

- **Quizzes:** Short assessments that test specific knowledge or skills.
- **Tests:** Comprehensive evaluations of understanding across broader content areas.
- **Inventories:** Structured tools for assessing specific knowledge or skills.
- **Team/Group Projects:** Collaborative assignments that assess collective and individual learning outcomes.
- **Standardized Tests:** Exams designed to measure student performance against established benchmarks.
- **Licensure Exams:** Tests required for professional certification, demonstrating competency in a field.
- **Internships:** Practical experiences that assess application of knowledge in real-world settings.
- **Service-Learning Projects:** Community-based projects that integrate academic learning with community service.
- **Case Studies:** In-depth analyses of real or simulated scenarios that assess critical thinking and application skills.
- **Simulations:** Controlled environments that replicate real-world conditions for assessing student performance.
- **Portfolios:** Collections of student work showcasing learning and development over time.

Indirect Assessments and Measures

Indirect assessments gather opinions or self-reports about the value or extent of learning experiences. While these measures are primarily used to assess Program Goals, they can also provide context for understanding SLO achievement when combined with Direct Assessment data.

Examples of Indirect Assessments include:

- **Student Enrollment:** Data on the number of students enrolled in programs.
- **Questionnaires:** Surveys gathering feedback on student experiences and perceptions.
- **Honors and Awards:** Recognition received by students, indicating achievement and success.
- **Scholarships and Awards:** Financial support based on academic or extracurricular achievements.
- **Interviews and Job Placement Data:** Information on employment outcomes and career progression.
- **Satisfaction Measures:** Assessments of student satisfaction with educational experiences and services.

- **Retention and Graduation Rates:** Metrics indicating student persistence and completion of programs.
- **Years of Employment Service:** Data on length of time students remain employed in their field.
- **Graduate/Professional School Placement Rates:** Information on the success of graduates in continuing their education.

Additional Resources:

- **Student Enrollment Information from The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness:** Provides data on student enrollment metrics.
- **Student Satisfaction Reports:** Produced by the Library and other offices to gauge student satisfaction.
- **National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA):** Offers an extensive library of peer-reviewed assignments across disciplines, organized by degree level and specific proficiencies to be assessed. This resource supports the development of effective assignments and assessments.

Both direct and indirect assessments are crucial for a comprehensive evaluation of student learning and program effectiveness, providing a well-rounded view of educational impact and areas for improvement.

Assignment vs. Artifact vs. Assessment

Distinguishing between assignments, artifacts, and assessments can streamline the process of aligning Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) with academic tasks and evaluation methods.

Assignments

Assignments are academic tasks given to students to demonstrate their learning. They typically include a prompt or a set of instructions that students must follow to complete the task. The purpose of an assignment is to provide students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills in a structured manner.

Examples of Assignments:

- **Essay Prompts:** Questions requiring students to write detailed responses.
- **Problem Sets:** Tasks involving solving specific problems or questions.
- **Research Projects:** Assignments that require in-depth investigation and presentation of findings.
- **Presentations:** Oral or visual presentations on a particular topic.

Artifacts

Artifacts are the tangible products of learning, representing demonstrations of competencies or records of student work. These can include traditional items like essays and term papers, as well as other forms of student output.

Examples of Artifacts:

- **Essays and Term Papers:** Written documents that showcase analytical and writing skills.
- **Quizzes and Tests:** Responses to assessments designed to measure specific knowledge.
- **Performance Recordings:** Audio or video recordings of performances in dance, theatre, or music.
- **Artworks:** Paintings, sculptures, digital art, and other visual representations of creativity.

Artifacts are evaluated to determine whether students have met the learning outcomes defined for a course or program.

Assessment

Assessment refers to the broader process of determining what students are expected to learn and ensuring that they achieve those learning objectives. It involves the use of processes, tools, and methods to evaluate student artifacts.

Key Aspects of Assessment:

- **Designing Assessments:** Crafting tools and methods to evaluate student performance effectively.
- **Evaluating Artifacts:** Using criteria and rubrics to assess student work against defined learning outcomes.
- **Alignment:** Ensuring that assignments and artifacts are aligned with SLOs to accurately measure student learning.

Examples of Assessment Methods:

- **Portfolios:** Collections of student work that reflect learning over time and can assess multiple SLOs.
- **Oral Presentations:** Opportunities to evaluate students' verbal communication and presentation skills.
- **Practicum or Internship Evaluations:** Assessments based on real-world application of skills and knowledge.

Assessments can be designed to evaluate multiple SLOs simultaneously or may require several assessments to address complex learning outcomes effectively.

Developing and Applying Rubrics

“A rubric is a coherent set of criteria for students’ work that includes descriptions of levels of performance on the criteria.” (Brookhart, 2013, p. 4). Rubrics are valuable tools for assessing a variety of performances, such as physical skills, oral communication, and clinical competencies. They provide structure and consistency in evaluation by detailing specific performance criteria and achievement levels.

Types of Rubrics

1. Holistic Rubrics:

- **Description:** Holistic rubrics assess overall quality by considering all criteria simultaneously. They offer a general judgment of the performance but do not break down the assessment into specific components.
- **Use:** Often employed for summative assessment, providing a single overall score or grade for the work.

2. Analytic Rubrics:

- **Description:** Analytic rubrics evaluate each criterion (dimension/trait) separately. They list criteria as rows and performance levels as columns, with each cell describing what performance at each level looks like.
- **Use:** Ideal for assessing complex tasks such as capstone projects, internships, or theatrical plays. They provide detailed feedback on specific aspects of the performance, which is useful for formative assessment.

3. Checklists and Rating Scales:

- **Description:** Checklists and rating scales are simpler forms of rubrics that offer less detail than holistic or analytic rubrics. They typically involve ticking off items or rating performance on a scale.
- **Use:** Useful for straightforward tasks or when a broad overview of performance is sufficient.

Benefits of Using Rubrics

- **Clarity and Consistency:** Rubrics ensure that evaluation criteria are clear and consistently applied, reducing subjectivity in grading.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Rubrics provide specific feedback on different aspects of performance, helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Efficiency:** Well-developed rubrics can streamline the grading process and serve multiple purposes, such as assessing SLOs and determining student grades, making the initial investment of time worthwhile.

Developing Effective Rubrics

1. **Define Criteria:** Identify the key elements of performance that align with the SLOs. These criteria should reflect the different aspects of what students are expected to achieve.
2. **Specify Performance Levels:** Outline clear descriptions for each level of performance for each criterion. Ensure these descriptions are explicit and provide a gradient of performance levels.
3. **Use Examples:** Incorporate examples or sample responses to illustrate different levels of performance. This can help standardize evaluations and make expectations clearer to students.

Resources for Rubrics

- **VALUE Rubrics:** Developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the VALUE rubrics assess

- essential learning outcomes such as critical thinking, written communication, and teamwork. They are available for free download on the AAC&U website.
- **University Resources:**
 - **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:** Provides a guide with examples on using rubrics to assess SLOs.
 - **University of Hawai'i at Manoa:** Offers an extensive rubric bank and details best practices in creating and using rubrics.

Developing Unit Goals for Administrative and Student Services Units

Developing effective unit goals for administrative and student services units is crucial for aligning their activities with the broader mission of the university and ensuring they meet the needs of their stakeholders. Well-defined unit goals help guide decision-making, measure progress, and facilitate continuous improvement. The following steps can assist in creating meaningful and actionable goals:

1. **Purpose of the Unit:** Begin by clarifying the primary purpose of the unit. This involves understanding why the unit exists and what it aims to achieve. Goals should reflect the unit's core mission and focus, such as improving student support services, streamlining administrative processes, or enhancing campus facilities.
2. **Stakeholder Needs:** Identify and analyze the needs and expectations of the unit's stakeholders. These stakeholders typically include students, faculty, staff, and possibly external partners or community members. Understanding their needs helps in setting goals that are relevant and beneficial. For instance, if a unit's stakeholders are students, goals might focus on improving student satisfaction or increasing access to essential services.
3. **Primary Functions and Services:** Outline the key functions and services provided by the unit. Goals should align with these primary activities and focus on enhancing their effectiveness. For example, if a unit provides academic advising, a goal might be to increase the availability of advising appointments or improve the quality of advising services.
4. **Alignment with University's Mission:** Ensure that unit goals are consistent with the overall mission and strategic goals of the university. Goals should support the university's broader objectives and contribute to its mission. For example, if the university's mission emphasizes student success and engagement, unit goals might focus on initiatives that enhance student support and involvement.
5. **SMART Criteria:** Apply the SMART criteria—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—to each goal. This approach ensures that goals are clear, feasible, and linked to specific outcomes. For example, a SMART goal for a student services unit might be to increase student engagement in campus activities by 20% over the next academic year.
6. **Review and Revise:** Regularly review and revise unit goals based on feedback, performance data, and changes in institutional priorities. Continuous assessment and adjustment help ensure that goals remain relevant and effective in addressing emerging needs and challenges.

In conclusion, this Assessment Handbook serves as a comprehensive guide for faculty and staff in developing, implementing, and evaluating student learning outcomes (SLOs) and program goals at Delta State University. The process of assessment is integral to maintaining the quality and rigor of academic programs and support services, ensuring that DSU continues to meet its mission of preparing students for success in their academic and professional lives. By following the steps outlined in this handbook—from defining program missions and goals to selecting SLOs, using rubrics, and collecting direct and indirect assessment data—programs and units can create a meaningful and systematic approach to student and program assessment.

Effective assessment relies on collaboration, thoughtful planning, and continuous improvement. As you engage in this process, remember that it is not about simply collecting data, but about using the results to enhance student learning, improve teaching, and strengthen the overall quality of academic programs and services. Assessment is an ongoing effort, and through periodic review and reflection, your program or unit can continue to evolve and meet the changing needs of students, employers, and the university community.

For further assistance, additional resources are available in the Appendix and on the assessment website at deltastate.edu. These resources, along with support from the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning, the Associate Provost, and the Assessment Advisory Committee, are designed to aid you throughout the assessment process.

Thank you for your dedication to promoting excellence at DSU through effective assessment practices.

Appendix

Academic Annual Program Assessment Report Template

Annual Program Assessment Report

Name of Program/Certificate/Minor:

Unit Mission Statement:

PLOs, Evaluations, Expected Results, and Strategic Plan Alignment Definitions:

Student Learning Outcome- This should be a statement that specifies what students will know, be able to do, or demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience or program.

The SLOs should be specific, measurable, and focused on the students' abilities and skills. (Example: Students will Analyze and evaluate primary source documents related to the American Civil War, demonstrating an understanding of historical context and significance.)

Assessment method – This is where you should identify how you plan to know if you are achieving your SLO (example: student performance on final assessment project **Notice this was tied to an assignment/project and **not** a course grade)

Expected outcome – This can also be thought of as your target or threshold of acceptability (example: By the end of HIS 678, ≥85% of students will be able to accurately analyze and evaluate primary source documents related to the American Civil War, as demonstrated by scoring 80% or higher on the final assessment project. **This target is the minimum expected outcome to ensure you are successful)

Actual Results- This is where you share your actual findings after analyzing the data (example: 92% of students in HIS 678 scored ≥85%)

Use of Results- This should be an explanation of how your results are being used to improve student learning related to this SLO (example: Although the results met expectations, of the students who did not score at this level, 91% of them failed the course. An analysis of these results led to offering a low stakes mid-term assessment of students' abilities to analyze and evaluate primary source documents. Students who did not score ≥85% at mid-term were offered a weekly tutoring session to strengthen their skills before the final project **Evidence should be included to support use of results, i.e. screenshot of new mid-term assessment in Canvas; email to students about the tutoring sessions, etc.)

Plans for Continuous Improvement: This should explain how the results will be used to strengthen the program. (Example: Results were shared with full faculty at the March faculty meeting and the decision was made to introduce primary source analysis skills in HIS 567 to strengthen students' background knowledge before they take HIS 678 **You should not say "will

continue to monitor” and you should also make improvements even when you meet your expected outcome)

Implementation Timeline: You should note when you plan to implement your changes (example: New assessment will be given for the first time in the Fall of 2025)

Evidence of Implementation: Evidence should be included to support your plan (i.e... meeting minutes from faculty meeting where decisions were made and new syllabus with the added assignment, etc.)

****Evidence should be collected and submitted with assessment reports.****

Student Learning Outcomes, Methods of Assessment, and Expectations

1. PLO 1:
 - a. Student Learning Outcome (linked to PLO)
 - b. Assessment Method
 - c. Expected Outcome
2. PLO 2:
 - a. Student Learning Outcome (linked to PLO)
 - b. Assessment Method
 - c. Expected Outcome
1. PLO 3:
 - a. Student Learning Outcome (linked to PLO)
 - b. Assessment Method
 - c. Expected Outcome

Results and Continuous Improvement

Results - include actual results, how these results were used and shared, and how the unit plans to make data-based decisions from results for continuous improvement.

1. SLO 1
 - a. Actual Results
 - b. Use of Results
 - c. Plans for Continuous Improvement (note if this includes a revision to curriculum, i.e. Add or remove required course, change prerequisites, add internship; pedagogical adjustments, i.e. change to course assignments, textbooks, peer assisted learning; assessment methods adjustments, etc.)
 - d. Implementation timeline for continuous improvement
 - e. Evidence of implementation (Canvas screenshots from changes in courses from semester to semester; revised test questions; curriculum forms; assignment revisions; etc.)
2. SLO 2
 - a. Actual Results
 - b. Use of Results
 - c. Plans for Continuous Improvement (note if this includes a revision to curriculum, i.e. Add or remove required course, change prerequisites, add internship; pedagogical adjustments, i.e. change to course

assignments, textbooks, peer assisted learning; assessment methods adjustments, etc.)

d. Implementation timeline for continuous improvement

e. Evidence of implementation (Canvas screenshots from changes in courses from semester to semester; revised test questions; curriculum forms; assignment revisions; etc.)

3. SLO 3

a. Actual Results

b. Use of Results

c. Plans for Continuous Improvement (note if this includes a revision to curriculum, i.e. Add or remove required course, change prerequisites, add internship; pedagogical adjustments, i.e. change to course assignments, textbooks, peer assisted learning; assessment methods adjustments, etc.)

d. Implementation timeline for continuous improvement

e. Evidence of implementation (Canvas screenshots from changes in courses from semester to semester; revised test questions; curriculum forms; assignment revisions; etc.)

Administrative Assessment Template

AY 2023-2024

Due August 9, 2024

Name of Administrative Office (Unit):

Direct Report Units (Any areas that are under this unit):

Unit Assessment Contact (name, title, email):

Unit Mission Statement:

Unit Goals, Evaluations, Expected Results, and Strategic Plan Alignment

Goals – Use SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely) and link to the unit’s mission statement and to a specific institutional strategic goal. This may include administrative and/or student learning outcomes.

Target/Measure - Identify how you plan to know if you are achieving your goal/outcome

Expected Results – Note what is the expected outcome of the goal.

Strategic Plan Alignment – Align each unit goal with one of the University’s Strategic Plan goals.

1. Unit Goal 1:
 - a. Goal
 - b. Evaluation
 - c. Expected Results
 - d. Strategic Plan Alignment
2. Unit Goal 2:
 - a. Goal
 - b. Evaluation
 - c. Expected Results
 - d. Strategic Plan Alignment
3. Unit Goal 3:
 - a. Goal
 - b. Evaluation
 - c. Expected Results
 - d. Strategic Plan Alignment

Results and Continuous Improvement

Results - include actual results of the goals (was the target achieved?), how these results were used and shared, and how the unit plans to make data-based decisions from results for continuous improvement.

1. Unit Goal 1
 - a. Actual Results
 - b. Use of Results (what actions will be taken; what is the activity timeline for actions; who is responsible for actions)
 - c. Plans for Continuous Improvement (note if this includes policy, process, and/or service redesign)
2. Unit Goal 2
 - a. Actual Results
 - b. Use of Results (what actions will be taken; what is the activity timeline for actions; who is responsible for actions)
 - c. Plans for Continuous Improvement (note if this includes policy, process, and/or service redesign)
3. Unit Goal 3
 - a. Actual Results

- b. Use of Results (what actions will be taken; what is the activity timeline for actions; who is responsible for actions)
- c. Plans for Continuous Improvement (note if this includes policy, process, and/or service redesign)

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