UTTyler
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Assessment Handbook

2025-2026

Table of Contents

Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Planning

> **Effective institutions demonstrate a commitment to principles of continuous improvements, based on a systematic and documented process of assessing institutional performance with respect to mission in all aspects of the institution. An institutional planning and effectiveness process involves all programs, services, and constituencies; is linked to the decision-making process at all levels; and provides a sound basis for budgetary decisions and resource allocations. (SACSCOC, 2024)**

In *A Practitioner's Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation*, James O. Nichols identifies the common components of institutional effectiveness as:

- A sharpened statement of institutional mission and objectives.
- Identification of intended departmental/programmatic outcomes or results
- Establishment of effective means of assessing the accomplishment outcomes and results.

Using assessment results for continuous improvement is implicit within these elements. Moreover, Nichols states that while student and educational outcomes assessment is the most visible central focus of assessment, a sustainable effort is best achieved by integrating a culture of institutional effectiveness at the campus level (Nichols, 1995). This is the intention and ambition of assessment efforts at The University of Texas at Tyler (UT Tyler).

The **Mission** of the UT Tyler Office of Continuous Improvement and Accreditation (OCIA) is to ***lead assessment support and collaborative continuous quality improvement in partnership with the UT Tyler Assessment Team (ATeam) and in collaboration with all internal and external stakeholders.*** The OCIA mission aligns with and supports the UT Tyler Mission, Vision Statement, and Values and with the UT Tyler Strategic Plan priorities Student Success, Teaching Excellence, and Serve East Texas.

UT Tyler Continuous Improvement Framework

The UT Tyler framework for planning and evaluation focuses on institutional improvement through an ongoing, comprehensive, integrated, research-based, and systematic process that includes both "macro" and "micro" level activities. Macro-level actions establish university priorities through its mission, vision, and strategic plan. Micro-level activities include unit-by-unit assessment and planning processes.

Unit-level assessment and planning processes involve the following: identifying outcomes in alignment with the mission and strategic plan of the university, measuring and collecting the supporting results, and engaging in ongoing improvement planning through evaluation of the results and operational planning. The macro-level strategic planning thus guides the micro-level, and the micro-level provides support for operational planning and evidence of effectiveness.

Figure 1.1 Effectiveness and Planning Framework

The UT Tyler ATeam and OCIA identify **Values** that undergird all assessment practices as:

- **Integrity**
- **Transparency**
- **Continuous Quality Improvement**
- **Student Learning**
- **Accountability**

Assessment planning occurs at many levels across an institution, both in and outside the classroom. A successful assessment process involves the support of faculty, staff, and administration. Assessment is also the formal process that documents continuous and ongoing improvement planning for accrediting bodies and external constituents.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Expectations

UT Tyler is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degrees. The University may also offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of UT Tyler may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website .

External Accreditation Compliance Reports are maintained and updated on a continuous basis to ensure that policies, practices, and procedures are in alignment with the SACSCOC. In *The Principles of*

[Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#) (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2024), emphasis is given to the importance of continuous improvement and institutional planning:

> **Core Requirement 7.1** The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission. *(Institutional planning)*

> **Standard 7.3** The institution identifies expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved. *(Administrative effectiveness)*

> **Core Requirement 8.1** The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success. *(Student achievement)*

> **Standard 8.2** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:
> **a.** student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs, *(Student outcomes: educational programs)*
> **b.** student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs, *(Student outcomes: general education)*
> **c.** academic and student services that support student success. *(Student outcomes: academic and student services)*

Principles of Good Assessment Practice

The UT Tyler ATeam adopted the American Association for Higher Education's *Nine Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Student Learning* to synthesize and guide all assessment efforts (Astin, et al., 1996). These principles provide a framework for assessment processes and purpose in campus discussions and planning.

> ***Principle One: The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.***

> > Assessment is not an end in itself but a method for improvement. Educational values should drive what and how we assess. When educational mission and values are bypassed, assessment loses its purpose of leading to improvement.

> ***Principle Two: Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.***

> > Learning is a complex process, involving not only knowledge but also values, attitudes, and "habits of mind" that affect academic success as well as performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect this by employing a diverse array of methods,

including authentic student work or performance, and aim to have a more comprehensive picture of learning.

Principle Three: Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.

Assessment is goal-oriented; therefore, having clear goals will make assessment useful and focused. Assessment encourages attention on how and where program goals will be taught.

Principle Four: Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.

To improve outcomes, knowledge about student experience along the way is essential. Assessment can help understand what efforts lead to particular outcomes, which students learn under what conditions, and under what conditions students learn best.

Principle Five: Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.

Assessment is an ongoing process; the purpose is to monitor progress toward intended outcomes for continuous improvement. This may mean evaluating the assessment process and refining as new insights emerge.

Principle Six: Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.

Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility. Assessment is not a task for one office or small group, but a collaborative activity. The aim is for better-informed decisions impacting student learning by all constituents.

Principle Seven: Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.

Assessment approaches should produce evidence that is relevant, credible, and applicable. Thinking of how the information will be used and by whom is essential. The purpose of assessment is not to gather data but is a process that involves data-informed decisions for continuous quality improvement.

Principle Eight: Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.

Assessment alone will make little change but, on campuses where quality of teaching and learning is valued, it will be central to planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions.

Principle Nine: Through assessment, educators fulfill their responsibilities to students and to the public.

Colleges have a responsibility to the public that support and depend on them to establish and report on meaningful goals and expectations for students, and to strive to continually improve student learning.

UT Tyler Assessment Review Process

Assessment Leadership Team

The UT Tyler ATeam is comprised of full-time assessment professionals who report to the dean or associate dean in each college/school. Initially, the ATeam led the annual assessment plan reviews, updates, and reports for each program and academic/student support service units in the college or school. Over time, their roles have expanded to include external and internal program evaluations, institutional and professional accreditation reporting, and collaborating with faculty to plan new programs or changes to existing programs. ATeam members serve as the QEP Assessment Subcommittee, participate in all QEP juried assessment panels, and serve on their respective College or School QEP Leadership Teams.

Assessment Types

UT Tyler identifies four units that are assessed in compliance with SACSCOC standards: administrative departments, academic and student support services, academic programs, and the Core curriculum (general education). The process for each of these units is described in more detail in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

The Assessment Process

Faculty and staff collect assessment data in a systematic process:

- results are **documented** and **analyzed** in comparison to a pre-determined success criterion;
- the analysis of results informs **action plans** that are created for the upcoming assessment cycle; and
- progress on action plans from the previous cycle(s) is reported in the form of **closing-the-loop statements**.

Deadlines for each unit to submit assessment updates are identified below:

Academic Assessment Plans	Assessment Report Deadline	Friday preceding Thanksgiving
	Review Rubrics Deadline	May 31
	Provost Review	August 31
Core Curriculum Assessment Plans	Assessment Report Deadline	May 31
	Review Rubrics Deadline	August 31
	Provost Review	September 30
Non-Academic Assessment Plans	Assessment Report Deadline	October 31
	Review Rubrics Deadline	March 31
	Provost Review	May 31

Figure 1.2 Assessment Cycle Timeline

ATeam members complete initial reviews of the annual assessment plan updates with the program coordinators and unit/department directors using the UT Tyler Assessment Plan Review Rubrics. The

rubrics are reviewed by the ATeam annually each summer to revise as needed based on use and feedback from campus stakeholders. Rubrics are specific for Undergraduate Academic Programs, Graduate Academic Programs, Academic and Student Service Units, and Administrative Units.

ATeam members prepare a biennial *College/School Assessment Report* shared with the Dean and Provost that includes discussion of the continuous improvement priorities identified in each college or school based on assessment results. Reports are due in the spring of even-numbered years.

Educational Program Assessment Overview

Program-level assessment is a cyclical process, the goal of which is continuous improvement in the pursuit of UT Tyler's mission and goals.

First, faculty in each program of study define their mission and goals in relation to those of their college and UT Tyler. The next step is for faculty to use the program's mission and goals to establish discipline-specific Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)/Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) based on what successful completers are expected to know, think, or do. In the third step, faculty develop valid, reliable, and feasible measurements to assess the extent to which students achieve the outcomes. The fourth step involves analysis of annual results. This analysis is used to look backward at the previous action plan to determine the effectiveness of steps taken (also known as "closing the loop"). Analysis of results is also used to develop and implement action plans during the next assessment cycle.
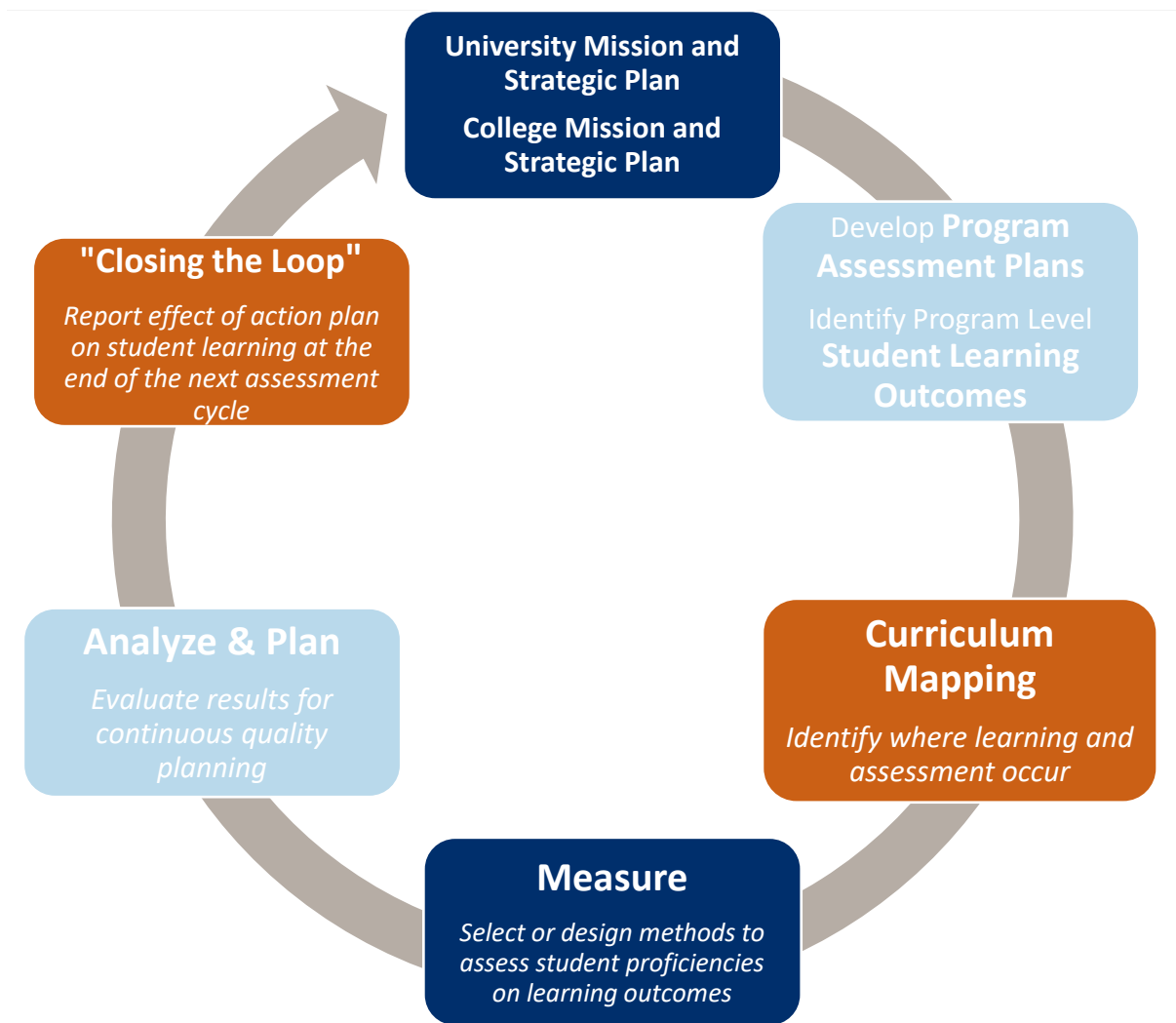

Figure 2.1: Assessment Cycle for Programs

Faculty and the ATeam collaborate to evaluate the program outcomes, success criteria, and assessment methods to strengthen the assessment process at appropriate intervals.

Aspects of Assessment Planning and Assessment

Define Mission and Program Goals

A mission statement is a clear and concise description of a program's purpose. Institutionally, it aligns with the mission statements of the College and University; on the program level, it is the ultimate source of goals and learning objectives.

Identify Student Learning Outcomes

SLOs specifically state what a student will know, think, and/or do as a result of successfully completing a program. Publishing clearly defined learning outcomes benefits all stakeholders. Students know what they will learn and how they will be expected to demonstrate that learning. Faculty have guidance for curriculum sequencing, course planning, and assignment creation. Finally, administrators and accreditors are able to see how the program's mission is being achieved and how the University's mission is being supported.

Figure 2.2. Bloom's Taxonomy Revisited ((Oregon State University eCampus, 2024)*).*

Faculty identify five to six measurable and observable SLOs based on the mission statement and goals (sometimes more if required by a professional accreditor). These are the crucial learning objectives that set this program apart from others at the institution. When creating SLOs, it is helpful to refer to Bloom's Taxonomy (see Figure 2.2), which provides action verbs to describe what students are learning. More detailed information on creating SLOs may be found in Appendix A.

Curriculum Mapping

A curriculum map is a representation—usually in the form of a table—of each course in the program and where particular SLOs are emphasized in the curriculum. Thus, a curriculum map is an at-a-glance representation of where learning and assessment occurs in the curriculum (see Appendix B for an example). Curriculum maps are, moreover, living documents to be developed and revisited annually. Systematic review of curriculum maps for program cohesiveness and logical content sequence ensures not only student success, but also that all critical content areas are sufficiently addressed.

Curriculum maps may also be used to designate SLO assessment for embedded certificates within a degree program. If possible, assessment results for the identified courses are disaggregated between degree-seeking and certificate-seeking students. Faculty analysis of the results ensures that certificate-seeking students attain equivalent proficiency levels for success.

At UT Tyler, curriculum maps have one row for each SLO and one column for each required course. Each column and row should identify at least one course in which the SLO is assessed. If a required course does not align with any of the program's SLOs, then faculty should begin the process of determining if course content needs to be revised or if the course is no longer relevant to the program and should be replaced. Likewise, if a program SLO is not assessed in any required course, then faculty must begin the process of deciding whether the SLO needs to be revised, replaced, or included in a current course with related content.

The level of assessment is also included in a curriculum map using a structured system. Most curriculum maps use a three-tiered system consisting of "introduced," "reinforced," and "mastered"; however, some curriculum maps instead used "formative" (introduced/reinforced) and "summative" (mastered).

In addition to providing evidence of where SLOs are assessed and the expected level of proficiency, curriculum maps help faculty plan how best to scaffold student learning across courses laterally and vertically in order to best promote academic success.

Assessment Methods

Once SLOs are identified and mapped, the assessment method or measurement must be devised. To ensure valid and reliable data, and to indicate student proficiency growth, each SLO is typically assessed using one to three measurements.

Assessment methods are as varied as the SLOs they are meant to measure, but there are some general categories that can provide an overview of the concept. The first category has already been mentioned: formative and summative. Formative assessments provide opportunities for feedback to students and for improvement in student performance. Summative assessments, on the other hand, do not provide these opportunities and generally consist of course-level comprehensive final exams and external licensure/certification board exams.

The second category of assessment methods is direct or indirect assessment. A direct method measures original student deliverables that incorporate the essential components of the learning construct(s) for the aligned SLO such as course assignments or external exams. An indirect method measures student beliefs or thoughts about their own learning experience such as self-reflection essays or surveys. Because indirect methods typically assess perceptions or values, they are often used to augment direct methods; therefore, at least one measurement for each SLO must be direct. However, including *both* direct and indirect methods strengthens the assessment plan by giving a fuller picture for ongoing improvement. Examples of direct and indirect assessment methods are provided below in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Examples of direct and indirect assessment methods.

Direct Assessment	Indirect Assessment
Comprehensive Exams	Surveys
Pre-test/Post-test	Exit Interviews
Course-Embedded Projects	Focus Groups
Portfolio Evaluations	Course Evaluations
Oral Presentations	Reflection Papers
National Achievement Tests	
Licensure Exams	
Written Assignments/Papers	
Capstone Courses	

To ensure that direct methods are used for each SLO, UT Tyler has adopted the "Signature Assignment" system. In each required course, the program coordinator and faculty identify a "Signature Assignment" that aligns with the expected proficiency level of students. This course-embedded student work is an original deliverable that is both observable and measurable, making the "Signature Assignment" a powerful tool for assessing student learning.

Rubrics

Rubrics are scoring guides used to evaluate the quality of student work, establish criteria, and operationalize definitions. Holistic rubrics use a single grading scale and score, while analytic rubrics are multi-component and require multiple scores for each area (See Appendix C for an example of each).

Either holistic or analytic rubrics are useful guides for scoring students on performance outcomes. They provide a shared set of criteria, helping faculty members collaborate and share results on the learning outcomes. Rubrics are also highly adaptable giving faculty the freedom to create their own at the program level or adopt/adapt externally created ones. For example, the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) created sixteen different VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics, which, as of July 2025, have been downloaded over 830,000 times by individuals at nearly 3,000 colleges and universities in 159 countries (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2025).

Analysis of Results and Reporting Results

Analysis of assessment results should offer meaningful insights into the strengths and areas for improvement within a program. Adapted from *Busy Chairperson's Guide to* Assessment, below are just

some of the questions good data and analysis can help answer (Southeastern Missouri State University, 2017).

- What does the data say about students' mastery of the material?
- In what area(s) are students performing remarkably?
- What area(s) are they underperforming?
- What do the results say about students' preparation for taking the next step?
- Are there areas where performance is adequate, but not outstanding?
- Are graduates of the program getting good jobs, being accepted to post-bachelor programs?

Effective reporting connects assessment results to the program's intended goals and learning outcomes, aiding faculty in making informed decisions about curriculum and instruction. As noted by Thomas E. Grayson, the goal of analysis is to "weave the data together... into a cohesive answer to an evaluation question" (Grayson, 2012). Assessment data is only useful when it helps faculty better understand their programs and student performance.

Results and supporting artifacts should be recorded in Watermark Planning and Self-Study by the academic unit's Assessment Professional.

Using Results for Improvement and Closing the Loop

The purpose of assessment is continuous improvement of the student learning experience. Program faculty develop continuous improvement plans based on assessment results and analysis. Action items should be informed by analysis of the data and align specifically with the SLO and assessment results. Student-focused continuous improvement changes typically include updating course content or curriculum and might include adjusting the assessment method or instrument as well.

- Drill down to class structure: did students perform better in one format versus another, or better at one location than another?
- If a rubric was used, break out results by rubric category to get more granular insights.
- In what areas did students perform better? What were the weakest areas?
- Review performance levels and criteria: was the bar set too high or too low?
- Evaluate the accuracy of the assessment methods and instruments: did the assessment method measure what it was intended to measure?
- Involve other program faculty and stakeholders in planning: insights are often the product of collaboration.

Actions for ongoing improvement should be updated in Watermark Planning and Self-Study by the academic unit's Assessment Professional.

The final step is to close the loop, which involves looking back at previous planning and evaluation cycles to document the changes and their impact. Some planning activities may take more time to put into practice than one cycle, and this can also be recorded in the closing-the-loop statements.

The purpose of UT Tyler Core Curriculum assessment is to evaluate student attainment of the UT Tyler Core Curriculum student learning outcomes (SLOs) using well-defined assessment methods with identified success goals for each method and valid assessment instruments. The Texas Core Curriculum objectives serve as the UT Tyler SLOs for collegiate-level general education competencies of all undergraduate degree programs. The UT Tyler student learning outcomes are:

- SLO 1, Critical Thinking: Students will be able to analyze and evaluate information within a discipline-specific context.

- SLO 2, Empirical and Quantitative Skills: Students will be able to analyze numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.

- SLO 3, Personal Responsibility: Students will be able to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

- SLO 4, Communication: Students will be able to develop and communicate ideas effectively in written, oral, aural, and/or visual modes appropriate to the subject and audience.

- SLO 5, Teamwork: Students will be able to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

- SLO 6, Social Responsibility: Students will be able to synthesize knowledge of civic responsibility, intercultural knowledge, and global awareness skills that promote responsible citizenship in a global society.

The Core is assessed on a biannual cycle, represented below in Table 3.1. Core assessment is supported by the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Senior Assessment Coordinator, who collaborates with Core Curriculum Instructors of Record (IORs) to create assessment plans, collect student artifacts for assessment, and provides reports of aggregate assessment results to faculty for analysis and continuous improvement planning.

Table 3.1. Core Assessment Reporting Schedule

Core SLO	Cycle 1 SLOs	Cycle 2 SLOs
SLO #1/4	Critical Thinking	Communication
SLO #2/5	EQS	Teamwork
SLO #3/6	Personal Responsibility	Social Responsibility

Aligning Course Outcomes and Assignments with Core SLOs

Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Rule 4.28, section (b)(3) establishes the specific Core objectives that must be addressed by courses in each discipline-based Foundational Component Area (FCA). All Core courses must teach and assess Critical Thinking and Communication, along with other objectives depending on FCA as identified in the Component Area Map.

UT Tyler faculty initiate the addition of courses to the UT Tyler Core by submitting a proposal in the UT Tyler IQ Curriculum Management System Portal. The IOR develops local course SLOs that support the required Core objectives and align with the current Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) lower course guide, the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM). The ACGM serves as

the official list of courses approved for transfer to public universities by public community, state, and technical colleges in Texas. Courses are listed alphabetically and include a brief course description, co- and pre-requisite courses, and learning outcomes.

To ensure that course learning outcomes and content are aligned with the relevant Core objectives, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (AIE) developed Assessment Plan forms for each FCA that identify the required Core objectives. The IOR reviews the course documentation with the CAS assessment coordinator (Coordinator) to ensure that the course is foundational and not too narrowly focused on a skill or discipline, determine the appropriate FCA and Core objectives, and complete the assessment plan form. The syllabus and assessment plan are then presented to the Core Curriculum Committee to approve inclusion in the UT Tyler Core Curriculum.

Core Assessment Process

UT Tyler Core Curriculum assessment follows a juried assessment process. Assessment Plan forms for each course are reviewed and updated annually to ensure collection of the appropriate signature assignment. The Coordinator has approval by the deans and IORs to view and download student artifacts in the Canvas LMS; when student artifacts are not available in Canvas, faculty collect and share with the Coordinator for coding. The Coordinator selects a random sample, assigns an artifact code to each artifact and redacts all identifying information to allow for a blind assessment and to ensure later identification of the course, section, and delivery modality, as well as student classification, major, admit type, and demographic information including ethnicity, gender, Pell-eligibility and First-Generation Status.

The faculty scoring teams are recruited and selected annually by the Core Curriculum Department Chairs and consist primarily of faculty who teach in the Core. Many faculty participants volunteer from year to year. In addition to conferring with peers for interrater agreement, faculty who are new to the scoring process may meet individually with the Coordinator. Some departments have opted to recruit graduate students to serve on the scoring teams.

Once scoring teams are established, Coordinator creates OneDrive folders for each faculty rater that includes their assigned artifact sample, links to Qualtrics forms with the rubric dimensions, and guidelines for scoring with VALUE rubrics. Faculty are given a two- to four-week scoring window. Once all scores are submitted, the Coordinator prepares assessment reports which are shared with the faculty for analysis and planning.

All Core objectives are assessed using selected VALUE rubrics. The VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics were developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and released in 2009. The VALUE Rubrics consist of the critical dimensions of achievement for each student learning proficiency in the left-most column, with the performance levels across the top descending from Capstone (4) to Benchmark (1). The performance levels generally align with the progression described by Bloom's taxonomy, from knowing and comprehending to applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and creating. When scoring a piece of student work, the evaluator must determine the level of proficiency demonstrated by the student's work for each dimension of the rubric. A score of "zero" is an option, which should be considered as the absence of evidence of student learning for that specific dimension.

The selected VALUE rubrics for each Core SLO are listed below:

- Critical Thinking: Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric.
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills:
  - Quantitative Literacy VALUE Rubric: Mathematics, Social and Behavioral Sciences
  - Problem Solving VALUE Rubric: Life and Physical Sciences
- Personal Responsibility:
  - Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric: American History, Communication/Human Expression, Government/Political Science, and Language, Philosophy, and Culture
  - Lifelong Learning VALUE Rubric: Communication (Composition and Rhetoric)
- Communication:
  - Written Communication VALUE Rubric
  - Oral Communication VALUE Rubric
- Teamwork: Teamwork VALUE Rubric
- Social Responsibility: There is not one specific VALUE rubric that defines "social responsibility" and operationalizes dimensions. How Social Responsibility is defined in the context of student learning depends largely on the discipline.
  - Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric: American History, Government/Political Science
  - Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric: Creative Arts, Language, Philosophy and Culture
  - Global Learning VALUE Rubric: Social and Behavioral Sciences

In addition to the VALUE Rubrics, AAC&U has developed VALUE Assignment Design and Diagnostic (ADD) Tools for Critical Thinking and Written Communication. The VALUE ADD tools are intended to aid faculty and instructional designers in creating assignments designed to elicit evidence of student attainment of the learning outcome.

Administrative and Academic and Student Services Assessment Overview

Administrative units are those that lend administrative support services to the campus, helping support the mission of the institution in a more indirect way than educational programs or Academic and Student Services. These units include areas such as Student Business Services, Human Resources, and Information Security, among others.

Academic and Student Services units may provide direct support to faculty and students or indirect support for student learning. Examples of these units include PASS Tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, and Academic Advising, among others. See Appendix D for a flow chart to identify if an assessment unit is categorized as Administrative or an Academic and Student Support Service.
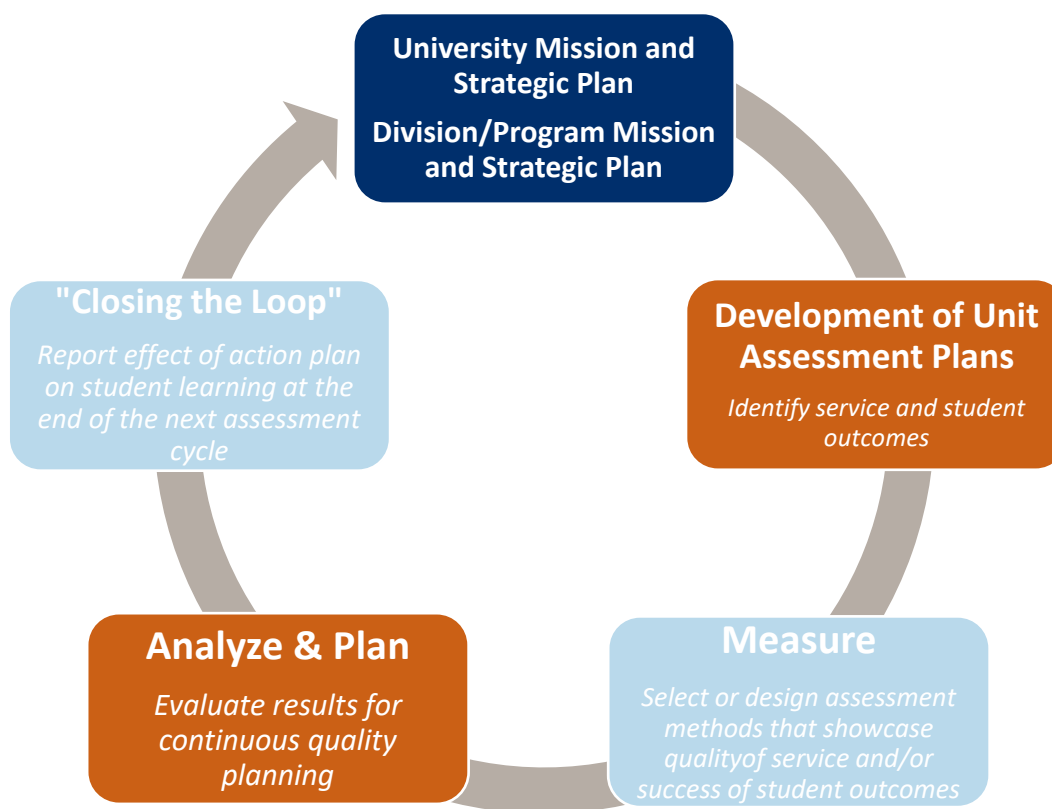
Figure 4.1 Assessment Cycle for Administrative and Academic and Student Services

Aspects of Assessment Planning and Assessment

Define Mission and Program Goals

A mission statement should provide a clear and concise description of the purpose of the administrative department or academic and student service and align with the mission statements of the Division and University. At the program level, the mission statement is the ultimate source of goals and service/student outcomes.

Outcomes and Assessment Methods

Administrative and Academic and Student Services should identify operational/service outcomes and performance/task-based outcomes. Assessment of services might include efficiency and quality of service, quantity or completion, timeliness of process, or satisfaction of services.

Academic and Student Service units support faculty and students by contributing directly to academic programs, enhancing student learning through indirect means, or advancing co-curricular initiatives that enrich the college experience. These units should include student outcomes that are student-focused and address the populations served by the unit. Guidance from SACSCOC states that:

> Student outcomes—both within the classroom and outside of the classroom—are the heart of the higher education experience. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support appropriate student outcomes for its educational programs and related academic and student services that support student success. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution is always asking itself whether it has met those goals, and how it can become even better. (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2024)

Academic and Student Service units may also develop student learning outcomes (SLOs) like those of educational programs. A guide for creating SLOs can be found in Appendix A, and a summary of Bloom's Taxonomy can be found in the previous chapter in Figure 2.2. Identified student learning outcomes must include at least one direct assessment measure in which students demonstrate their learning through tangible, observable deliverables.

Once service and student outcomes are identified, program staff determine appropriate assessment methods to accurately measure the outcomes. Service outcomes assessments might show quality, efficiency, and/or quantity of services provided. Student outcomes assessments might include direct student learning outcomes or measures that capture student's perceptions of learning. See Appendix E for more information on identifying outcomes and assessment methods for administrative and academic support units.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) provides relevant standards and practices to guide educators within higher education. Comprised of fifty standards that each address a functional area within higher education, the *CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education* also lists six main learning outcomes that address the whole student (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2015). These include:

1. Cognitive Complexity
2. Knowledge Acquisition
3. Interpersonal Development
4. Intrapersonal Development
5. Local and Global Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement
6. Practical Competence

CAS also provides Self-Assessment Guides (SAGs) to help direct the self-study process for program evaluation. These guides give a recommended plan for self-assessing, with rubrics covering twelve components of common criteria, referred to as the "general standards."

Analysis and Reporting of Results

Analysis of assessment results should offer meaningful insights into both the strengths and areas for improvement within a program. Effective reporting connects these findings to the program's intended goals and learning outcomes, helping faculty and staff make informed decisions about curriculum and instruction. (See Analysis of Results and Reporting Results in Chapter Two for more information on this topic).

Results and supporting artifacts should be recorded in Watermark Planning and Self-Study.

Using Results for Improvement and Closing the Loop

The purpose of assessment is continuous improvement of the student learning experience. Program staff development continuous improvement plans based on assessment results and analysis. Because they are data-driven, action items should align specifically with the outcome and assessment results. Student-focused continuous improvement changes typically include updates to programming or services and might include adjusting the assessment method or instrument as well. Consider the following when reviewing results for planning:

- Review performance levels and criteria: was the bar set too high or too low?
- Drill down to location: was feedback from one location or modality better than another? was this adequately assessed?
- What services were rated higher and lower? Was the assessment instrument granular enough to identify strengths and weaknesses?
- For student outcomes, how did students perform or what were student perceptions of services/programs?
- Evaluate the accuracy of the assessment methods and instruments: did the assessment method measure what it was intended to measure?
- Involve other program and unit stakeholders in planning: insights are often the product of collaboration.

Once actions for ongoing improvement have been identified, they should be documented in Watermark Planning and Self-Study.

The final step is to close the loop, which involves looking back at previous planning and evaluation cycles to document the changes and their impact. Some planning activities may take more time to put into practice than one cycle, and this can also be recorded in the closing the loop statements.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) specify what students will know, think, or do following completion of a program, course, or project. Effective outcomes describe expected student behavior, the conditions under which the behavior will occur, and the standards used to evaluate performance. Outcomes should be written from the student's perspective using observable verbs that reflect the intended level of performance. Each outcome should be specific, measurable, and aligned with the program's mission and goals to support continuous improvement.

Guidelines for Writing Effective, Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Effective, measurable SLOs should:

- Be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
- Frame outcomes from the student's perspective by starting with phrases like "The student will be able to…"
- Consist of two parts: an action verb and a content area. The action verb (e.g., "analyze," "design", "evaluate) specifies an observable student deliverable, followed by a clear description of the content or skill to be demonstrated.
- Be concise and focused on a single learning objective to ensure clarity and ease of assessment.

SLO Do's and Don'ts:

Below are four example SLOs from an imaginary Widget Studies program. The first three contain language that makes insight or data analysis difficult. The final one is measurable, useful, and uses active verbs.

Table A.1. SLO Do's and Don'ts		
DO:	**DON'T:**	**Observation**
The student will be able to explain the role of marketing in the widget industry.	Students will appreciate the importance of marketing in the world of widgets and feel confident about their ability to contribute creatively to discussions on widget strategies.	A student's appreciation or confidence level is subjective and not directly observable.
The student will be able to identify key innovations in widget design.	Students will learn about widget innovations and understand strategies that position widgets within competitive marketplaces.	The focus here is on what students know, not what they can do, produce, or demonstrate.
Students will be able to develop effective strategies to position widgets within competitive marketplaces.	Students will show growth in their ability to communicate and market widget innovations by developing and executing strategies that position widgets within competitive marketplaces.	Growth is not a useful metric. A student who progresses from Fs to Ds, for example, shows growth but does not meet any competency outcomes of a rigorous academic program.

Adapted from [Program Learning Outcomes: Guidelines for Writing Effective, Measurable Program Learning Outcomes](#), (California Polytechnic State University, n.d.).

Marketing (MARKBBA) CURRICULUM MAP

Outcomes (1 - 6 of 6)	Courses (1 - 7 of 28)						
	ACCT 2301	ACCT 2302	BLAW 3301	COSC 1307	COSC 3333	FINA 3311	GENB 2300
Discipline Knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Written Communication		✓		✓			
Oral Communication				✓		✓	
Problem Solving	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Social Responsibility			S A				
Marketing Discipline Knowledge							

Key: ✓ Aligned **F** Formative (Introductory) **AC** Academic Certificates **S** Summative (Mastery) **A** Assessment Activity

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Page 1 of 4

Outcomes (1 - 6 of 6)	Courses (8 - 14 of 28)						
	MANA 1300	MANA 3170	MANA 3300	MANA 3305	MANA 3311	MANA 3312	MANA 3370
Discipline Knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Written Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	S A
Oral Communication	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	S A
Problem Solving	✓	✓	S A	✓			
Social Responsibility				✓	✓	✓	✓
Marketing Discipline Knowledge							

Key: ✓ Aligned   **F** Formative (Introductory)   **AC** Academic Certificates   **S** Summative (Mastery)   **A** Assessment Activity

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Marketing (MARKBBA)

Outcomes (1 - 6 of 6)	Courses (15 - 21 of 28)						
	MANA 4395	**MARK 3311**	**MARK 3325**	**MARK 3350**	**MARK 4300**	**MARK 4305**	**MARK 4325**
Discipline Knowledge	S A	✓	✓	✓			✓
Written Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	AC	AC	
Oral Communication	✓		✓	✓			
Problem Solving	✓		✓	✓	AC	AC	
Social Responsibility							
Marketing Discipline Knowledge		✓	✓	F A	AC	✓	✓

Key: ✓ Aligned   **F** Formative (Introductory)   **AC** Academic Certificates   **S** Summative (Mastery)   **A** Assessment Activity

Office of Continuous Improvement and Accreditation   23

Marketing (MARKBBA)

Outcomes (1 - 6 of 6)	Courses (22 - 28 of 28)						
	MARK 4340	MARK 4345	MARK 4350	MARK 4355	MARK 4360	MARK 4365	MARK 4380
Discipline Knowledge		AC			✓	AC	AC
Written Communication			AC	AC	✓		AC
Oral Communication		AC	AC				AC
Problem Solving	AC	AC	AC	AC	✓	AC	AC
Social Responsibility							
Marketing Discipline Knowledge	AC S A		AC	AC	✓		AC

Key: ✓ Aligned   **F** Formative (Introductory)   **AC** Academic Certificates   **S** Summative (Mastery)   **A** Assessment Activity

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Holistic Rubric

Rubric for Case Studies	
20 points	• Clear point of view • Strong argumentation • Multiple and relevant connections with course readings • Exhibits a tone of respect for other points of view (does not preclude disagreement) • Follows the instructions • Proper citations
19-18 points	• Clear point of view • Good argument • Some connections with course readings • Exhibits a tone of respect for other points of view (does not preclude disagreement) • Follows the instructions • Proper citations
17-16 points	• Point of view may not be clear • Argument may be weak or missing • Possibly only one connection with course readings • Exhibits a tone of respect for other points of view (does not preclude disagreement) • Follows the instructions except for maybe in one case • Proper citations
15-14 points	• Point of view may not be clear • Argument may be weak or missing • Possibly only one connection with course readings • Exhibits a tone of respect for other points of view (does not preclude disagreement) • Follows the instructions except for maybe in one case • Proper citations

13-1 point	• Point of view may not be clear • Argument may be weak or missing • No connections with course readings • May not exhibit a tone of respect for other points of view • May not follow the instructions • Citations may be absent
0 points	• Plagiarism or no submission

Analytic Rubric

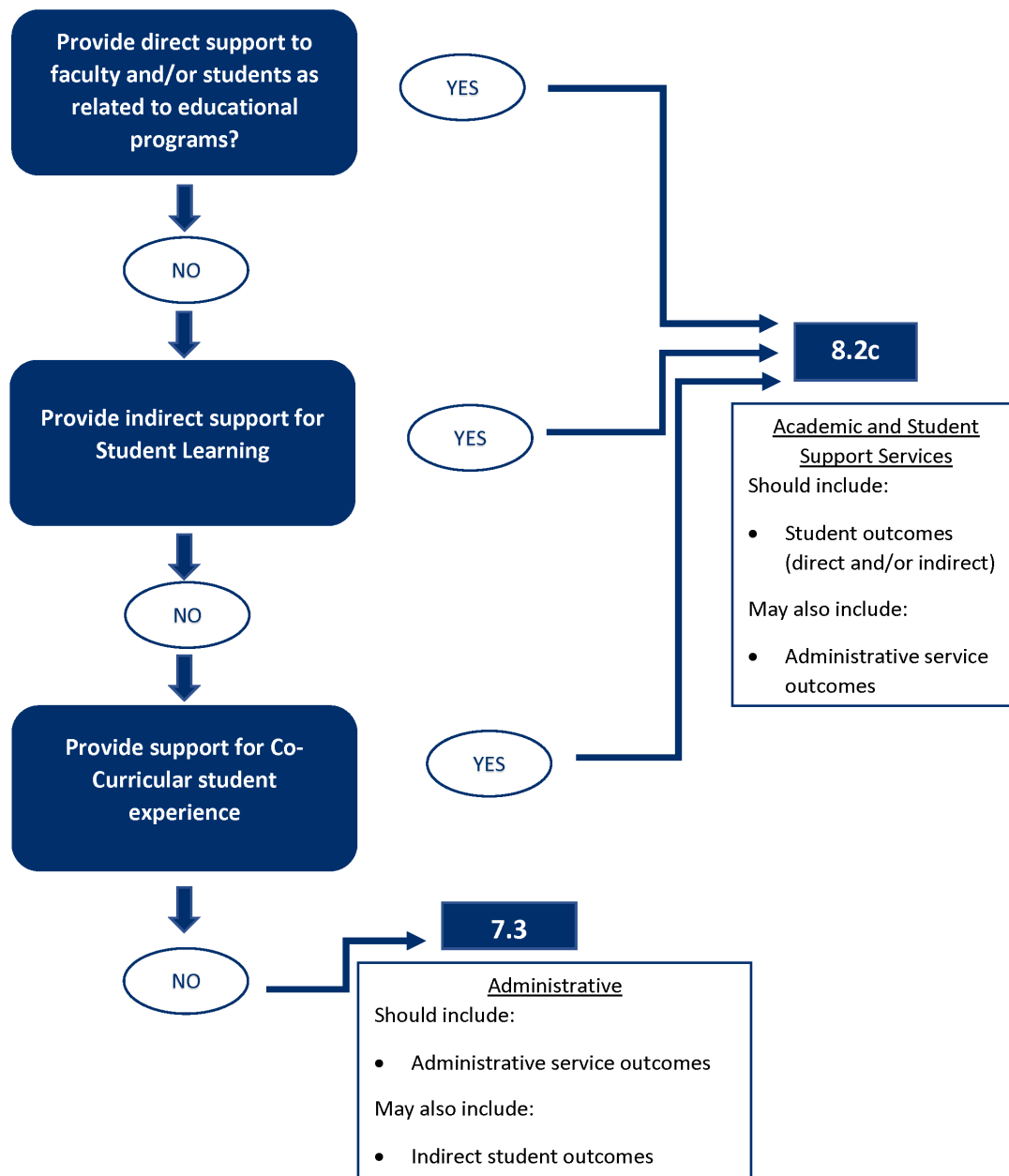| Written Communication Assessment Rubric for Chemistry Core Courses					
	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)	Below Benchmark (0)
Context of and Purpose for Writing: Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s).	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s).	Begins to show awareness of context, audience, purpose or lacks focus on the assigned task(s).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, or wanders from assigned task(s).	Demonstrates no attention to context, audience, purpose, or does not address the assigned task(s)
Content Development	Illustrates mastery and understanding of the subject using appropriate, relevant, and compelling content throughout the whole work.	Explores ideas within the context of the discipline using appropriate, relevant, and compelling content throughout the whole work.	Develops and explores ideas using appropriate and relevant content through most of the work.	Develops simple ideas using appropriate and relevant content in some parts of the work.	Does not use appropriate or relevant content to develop even basic ideas.

Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.	No attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Concisely uses language and presents data that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and is virtually error free.	Adequately uses language and presents data in a way that generally communicates meaning to readers with minimal errors.	Uses language and presents data that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity.	Uses language and presents data in a way that sometimes impedes meaning due to errors, inappropriate usage or being overly verbose.	Fails to use language or present data in way that conveys meaning.

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Office of Continuous Improvement and Accreditation
Non-Academic Assessment Flowchart

Does the program or unit….

Provide direct support to faculty and/or students as related to educational programs?

YES

NO

Provide indirect support for Student Learning

YES

NO

Provide support for Co-Curricular student experience

YES

NO

8.2c

Academic and Student Support Services
Should include:

- Student outcomes (direct and/or indirect)

May also include:

- Administrative service outcomes

7.3

Administrative
Should include:

- Administrative service outcomes

May also include:

- Indirect student outcomes

The best approach is to begin "with the end in mind," so before writing outcomes, take an inventory of things that your program/outcome does and review your mission (Covey, 2013). Outcomes become more meaningful when they are closely connected to what you do as a program/unit. Having meaningful outcomes is essential as it will likely make assessment data more useful to you, increasing your capacity to make data-informed changes/improvements.

Using your mission as a guide, decide what aspects of the management of your program you would like to measure. There are four core areas where you can collect data: resources, activities/services/products, impacts, and learning.

Once you know what aspects you want to measure, you will need to determine the types of outcomes you want to measure. There are several types of outcomes that can be measured singularly or in combination with each other:
- efficiency (resource use, cost)
- quality
- delivery/completion
- perceptions/behaviors (client/student)
- satisfaction (client/student)
- university environment/achievement
- knowledge/skills (client/student)

It is important to note that outcome types are tied to different aspects of program management, so not all types are appropriate for a particular aspect.

Next, choose the subject of the outcome. If your outcomes are internal (e.g. quality, delivery/completion, efficiency), the subject of the outcome will be the program. If your outcome is external (e.g. perceptions/behaviors, satisfaction, knowledge/skill), the subject of the outcome will be students, staff, and/or faculty outside your program. With external outcome types, the subject may also be the University or another community.

As you craft the outcome itself, keep verbs and key words in mind. For outcome types related to impacts and learning, action verbs that convey meaning are crucial. For quality and delivery/completion outcomes, describe what they mean for your program, being sure to return to key word or phrases.

Writing Outcomes

Management Area	Resources	Activities/Services /Products	Impact	Learning*
Outcome Types	Efficiency	Quality Delivery/ Completion	Perceptions/Behaviors Satisfaction University Environment/Achievement	Knowledge/Skills
Verbs	Reduce Maximize Minimize Maintain	Increase Enhance Improve Develop Expand	(see key ideas)	Apply Critique Compare Connect Describe Explain Evaluate Identify Integrate Recall Synthesize
Key Ideas	Faster Less Cost "__per__"	Quality #	Feelings Beliefs Being satisfied Actions of others Achievements of others	

Measuring Outcomes

Management Area	Resources	Activities/ Services/ Products		Impact	Learning
Outcome Types	Efficiency	Quality	Delivery/Completion	Perceptions/ Behaviors Satisfaction University Environment/ Achievement	Knowledge/ Skills
Measures	• Delivery • Impact Outcomes • Resources o Funding o Number of Staff, programs, events o Number of materials (amount, type) o Space (amount) o Professional development (amount, type)	• Number of errors/issues/ complaints • Survey satisfaction & feedback • Interviews, focus groups • Rubrics and checklist reflection • Content/ records analysis • Observations (real or role-play) • External standard comparison	• Contact/service hours/ time to completion • Frequency of activity (how often) • Number of participant/clients/ people contacted • Number of items distributed/ created	• Surveys • Interviews, focus groups • Student records data • University records • Content analyses • Rubrics and checklists • Observations • External standard comparison	• Writing (retell/recall, reflection, essay, summaries) • Surveys (open-ended questions) • Rubrics and checklists • Test/quizzes • Presentations • observation

Sources: (Baruch College, 2008, Berman, 2006; Bresciani, Gardner, & Hickomott, 2009/2010; Henning & Roberts, 2015/2016; Krist et al., 2008, Lee & Novel12015; Nichols & Nichols, 2000; Schuh, Biddix, Dean & Kinzie, 2016; Tucker, 2014)

Presented by Dr. Melissa Ray, The University of Texas at Dallas at 2018 TxAHEA Conference

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