CONCORD UNIVERSITY

2004-2005

Assessment Handbook
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* see website link for documents
Dear Faculty,

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide for Concord University’s assessment process. It, by no means, covers all of the information available on assessment. The public is uncertain about the value of higher education and wants evidence that college graduates do have the abilities claimed by their degrees. As a result our accrediting agencies, The North Central Association, the State Legislature, and the University System are requiring evidence of student learning (i.e., achievement of intended outcomes) and institutional effectiveness. Assessment at Concord University has two important roles to fill: program improvement and accountability. In order for us to fulfill our commitment to program excellence, an update of our assessment initiatives is essential.

The purpose of this report is to document the progress on assessing student outcomes based upon your program assessment plan, determine program effectiveness, not evaluate individual students or individual faculty, and to help you improve your program. The report for each program is due in the Assessment Office by April 1. The University Assessment Committee (UAC) will review the report and provide feedback on each program. It is imperative that each program be honest in its assessment efforts and in the preparation of this report. Only with careful scrutiny of our programs can we hope to improve.

I hope that you will find this handbook to be a helpful tool. If you have any questions regarding this assessment guide, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Brewster, Ed.D.
Director of Assessment
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Assessment Basics

What is assessment?

Purposes of assessment

Components of effective assessment

Levels of assessment

The assessment process is not an end in itself, but is a process for educational improvement. An effective assessment program can be used to improve student learning, facilitate instructional/academic improvements, and validate institutional effectiveness. Concord University's commitment to assessment is grounded in its mission to provide a quality, liberal arts based education.

What is Assessment?

Although assessment generally refers to the evaluation of student learning, it can also be used to refer to the evaluation of institutional effectiveness. Whereas faculty members assess what their students know and are able to do within a course or academic program, a Registrar’s Office might assess the effectiveness of the registration process.

Assessment is a process.

For continuous improvement to occur, major processes should be assessed after delivery. Then, assessment findings are evaluated and recommendations for improvement are fed into subsequent planning.
Assessment of student learning is a systematic attempt to...

- understand what students are/aren't learning
- provide feedback to reinforce student learning
- investigate and improve teaching strategies
- improve student learning!

Assessment of institutional effectiveness is...

- the process of setting goals, measuring performance, and using data in a cycle of planning and evaluation
- measuring an institution's ability to meet its stated goals and outcomes

Assessment is NOT...

- Solely an administrative activity.
- A means of punishment. It is for improvement only!
- An intrusion into a faculty member’s classroom or an infringement on academic freedom.

Purposes of Assessment

Although there are various purposes for assessment, a central function is to improve student learning, which is important for all educational institutions. In addition, assessment efforts are typically mandated by accreditation criteria, governing bodies, and college administration due to an increased need for accountability of educational institutions. As a consequence, a culture of assessment is rapidly growing on college campuses as institutions reap its benefits.

CU's Mission Statement: Assessment should relate to the Institution’s mission, goals, and objectives. Student learning is the central issue posited in Concord University's mission statement; consequently, assessment efforts at CU stem directly from its mission:

“The mission of Concord University is to provide a quality, liberal arts based education, to foster scholarly activities, and to serve the regional community.”

Accountability: Institutions of higher education are under increasing scrutiny from governing bodies and stakeholders to provide evidence of effectiveness. Assessment is the best means of providing such information.
Accreditation: Assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness is also a key component to all accreditation criteria. According to the Higher Learning Commission:

…Assessment of student academic achievement is fundamental for all organizations that place student learning at the center of their educational endeavors… An organization’s commitment to and capacity for effective assessment of student learning will figure more prominently than ever in the accreditation relationship established between the Commission and that organization.

Decision Making: Assessment results can be used to improve decision-making processes. For example, a program could use its assessment data to support requests for budget increases, curricular changes, changes in procedures, etc.

Institutional Improvement: Simply put, the purpose of assessment is improvement: improvement of student, academic programs, and University processes.

Components of Effective Assessment

First and foremost, a successful assessment program requires dedication from a University’s faculty, staff, and administration and a commitment to student learning; however, commitment and dedication must also be tempered by proper planning. Although volumes of books and scores of conference presentations have centered on the making of an effective assessment program, there are a few key points they generally have in common.

- Assessment efforts must stem from the University mission statement and be driven by goals and objectives.
- Assessment must be founded on a plan that is continuously evaluated and revised.
- Assessment must be faculty driven (or unit-driven when assessing institutional effectiveness) and be sustained by administrative commitment.
- Assessment results must be used to document outcomes, make improvements in teaching or curriculum, and assist with planning/budgeting decisions.

Levels of Assessment

Assessment of student learning occurs within three levels: course, program, and institution.
I. **Institutional-Level Assessment** involves assessing students across an institution on common learning objectives. For instance, the Academic Profile is used by CU to assess students across all programs on General Studies learning goals, such as writing and math skills.

II. **Program-Level Assessment** involves assessing student learning within a department or unit. For example, certification tests can be used to gauge student learning/readiness upon program completion.

III. **Course-Level Assessment** involves assessing student learning within a single course (usually across multiple sections). For example, Developmental English may be assessed to ascertain how well students are learning grammar and writing skills using a pre-test at the beginning of the semester and a post-test at the end.

**Program-Level Assessment at Concord University**

One important step in the development of an institutional assessment plan is the establishment of program-level assessment plans. Program assessment can be used to determine if intended outcomes are being achieved and how programs can be improved.

**Effective program assessment provides answers to three questions:**

1. What is the program trying to accomplish?
2. How well is the program accomplishing its intended outcomes?
3. How can the program improve?
Planning is the first step toward the development of a successful assessment program. **Assessment efforts must be driven by stated goals and objectives** in order to understand how assessment efforts coincide with Concord University’s mission, to know what is being measured, and to determine whether findings are acceptable. The assessment plan serves as a road map to guide a college’s assessment endeavors.

**Developing an Assessment Plan**

Although the development of an assessment plan isn’t quite this easy, here are five quick steps toward developing an assessment plan.

1. Establish goals tied to University mission and purposes.
2. Create specific objectives to measure each goal.
3. Select assessment tools (multiple methods) for each objective.
4. Collect and analyze the data to evaluate whether objectives and performance criteria were met.
5. Use the findings to facilitate continuous improvement, assist with decision making, provide a basis for evaluation, and make recommendations for improvement(s).

**Constructing Goals and Objectives**

Successful assessment begins with a clear sense of what the program/unit intends to accomplish. To begin, program goals and objectives must be defined. Once these are identified, assessment can begin to determine how well these goals and objectives are
being met. Keep in mind, different disciplines use different terminology to label goals and objectives. The concept, not the label, is what is most important.

**Goals** are broad, long-range statements about the general purpose of instruction or a department. Goals are primarily used in policy making and general planning. Typically, three to five goals per program are acceptable. Both academic and non-academic programs should refer to Educational Goals of Concord University when establishing program area goals (see Chapter 5).

Where do you start? Consider these steps to assist with creating goals.

- What should students know and be able to do upon completion (of course, program, etc.)?
- Describe the ideal student or graduate in your program (or the ideal process).
- Describe the ideal process (registration, accounting, student services, etc.).
- Review how the program is described in existing college statements (catalog, brochures, accreditation reports, course syllabi, etc.)?
- For what do you want your department to be known on campus?

### Examples of Goals

**Student Learning Goal:** Students will master skills required to function as a professional in their field of study.

**Student Learning Goal:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of the important concepts and methods in the sciences.

**Institutional Effectiveness Goal:** Student enrollment will increase.

**Institutional Effectiveness Goal:** The campus technology system will be expanded.

**Objectives** are brief, clear statements that describe desired outcomes in relation to broader goals. Objectives specify what is expected and describe what should be assessed. Keep in mind that objectives state your desired outcomes. If these desired outcomes are not met, be prepared to follow-up with an improvement plan or recommendations for change.
**Before writing objectives, ask yourself:** For each goal, what are the specific behaviors, skill, or abilities that would identify if the goal is being achieved?

**Writing Objectives… Objectives should:**
- use simple terminology to describe intended outcomes
- be realistic and achievable
- use action verbs to describe definite, observable actions
- include the actions and behaviors being assessed
- include a description of the conditions in which the action takes place
- include the criteria for assessment (what is the expected level of performance?)
- describe the target group (who is being assessed?)

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**Examples of Objectives**

**Student Learning Objective:** Students’ pass rate on the Academic Profile Assessment test will meet or exceed the national norm for each sub-test.

**Student Learning Objective:** Students’ mean scores will be at least a 3.0 on a 4-point scale on the final project in their capstone course, as assessed by the departmental rubric.

**Institutional Effectiveness Objective:** The official duplicated yearly headcount of credit students will increase by at least 20% over the previous year.

**Institutional Effectiveness Objective:** 100% of all deadlines for HB2224 will be met.
Assessment Tools

What is Being Assessed?
Assessment Tools
Strengths and Weaknesses for Common Tools
Guidelines and Tips
Creating Rubrics

Once goals and objectives have been established, the next step is to identify appropriate assessment tools to measure the stated objectives. Various assessment tools are available and the strengths and weaknesses of each should be weighed in relation to the needs of the department. Upon selection, these tools should be described, along with any pertinent rationale, in the assessment plan.

What is Being Assessed?

- **Student learning** (knowledge of the discipline, skills, and values)

- **Student/Client Attitudes and Perceptions** (topics: advising and registration, campus facilities, course scheduling, curriculum, support services, campus climate, teaching, student activities, preparation for work or graduate school, etc.)

- **Program Processes and Services** (Are students/clients being served efficiently and effectively?)
## Assessment Tools

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### Strengths and Weaknesses for Common Tools

**SELF-REPORTS:**  
**Surveys** (a series of questions used to obtain feedback from target group)  
Strength: quick to administer and can provide immediate feedback  
Weakness: difficult to create effective survey and to obtain honest, helpful responses

**Focus groups** (orchestrated discussions with target groups to obtain feedback)  
Strength: provides a wealth of information  
Weakness: may be difficult to analyze information obtained, time consuming, and may be difficult to obtain honest answers
ACHIEVEMENT/KNOWLEDGE TESTS:

**Embedded questions on exams** (key questions are inserted into a course exam and later extracted for assessment purposes)
- **Strength:** students are motivated to perform because items are graded
- **Weakness:** locally-developed tests are not always considered “valid”

**Instructor-designed exams/tests**
- **Strength:** items can be created to match assessment needs and can be implemented departmentally across different sections and instructors
- **Weakness:** locally-developed tests are not always considered “valid”

**Pre- and Post-Tests**
- **Strength:** can provide a measure of progress or growth in student learning across a semester or a program
- **Weakness:** similarity of questions is needed for comparison purposes, danger of “teaching to the test”, and test/re-test issues

**Standardized or certification exams** (national exams)
- **Strength:** provides normative data for comparisons and provides a beneficial benchmark for students
- **Weakness:** may or may not fit with learning objectives

STUDENT ACADEMIC WORK:

**Capstone Course Products** (a culminating product of student work)
- **Strength:** excellent source for program-level assessment data
- **Weakness:** may result in small sample sizes

**Portfolios** (collections of student work, usually rated with a rubric)
- **Strength:** assessing several samples of work provides more valid data than assessing performance at one point in time
- **Weakness:** obtaining objective evaluations of work (creating rubric and training raters)

**Course assignments** (oral presentations, papers, lab assignments that would be rated with a rubric)
- **Strength:** existing assignments make assessment easier and more pertinent
- **Weakness:** obtaining objective evaluations of work

CAMPUS DATA:

**Archival data** (pre-existing or post-hoc data, such as grades in previous or subsequent courses, retention and enrollment data, graduation statistics)
- **Strength:** can provide a wealth of background data
- **Weakness:** may or may not be a direct measure
Guidelines and Tips

Guidelines for Choosing Assessment Tools

1. **Tools must relate to goals and objectives:** Data collected should provide evidence of whether or not objectives were met.

2. **Use multiple methods:** In order to obtain valid results, important goals/objectives should be assessed using more than one measure. Use both direct/indirect and qualitative/quantitative measures (see glossary).

3. **Choose tools that will be useful:** The point of assessment is to use the data to improve processes and student learning, so choose useful tools.

4. **Keep it simple:** Good assessment doesn’t have to be complicated or overwhelming.

5. **Use existing tools:** When possible, use or adapt assessment measures that are already being used. The most effective assessment plan is one that uses available information and resources!

Using Direct and Indirect Tools

Assessment tools are labeled as either direct or indirect:

- **Direct tools** refer to objective measures of knowledge or ability, such as students’ scores on a national standardized exam, student performance on a final paper, or the number of applicant inquiries received after a recruiting visit.

- **Indirect tools** refer to subjective measures of attitude, perception, or belief such as a questionnaire to assess students’ perceptions of their knowledge or a survey of the effectiveness of a recruiting visit.

Both direct and indirect assessment tools are invaluable for assessing either student learning or institutional effectiveness. For example, when assessing student support services it is important to have direct measures of the number of students served and the outcome of these services, but it is equally valuable to gather indirect data to obtain students’ evaluation of the services received.

It is important to have a balance of both direct and indirect tools in your assessment plan. An assessment plan without indirect tools does not provide data on the opinions and perceptions of its clients/students. Similarly, an assessment plan without appropriate direct tools does not provide data on actual processes or student learning.

Tips for Academic Program-Level Assessment Tools

Program-level assessment should provide data on the culmination of student learning within academic programs. Assessment measures can be used to
compare entering students with advanced students in order to examine learning over time. Or, assessment measures can be used to examine the level of knowledge and skills attained by program graduates by assessing advanced students in comparison to a stated level of competence.

**Tips for Academic Course-Level Assessment Tools**

Course-level assessment should provide the instructors with information on student learning within an individual course to assist with academic planning, curriculum issues, and teaching revisions. Assessment can either be performed within a single instructor’s classroom or applied across all sections and all instructors for a particular course. The latter method improves validity of the data and can often increase the consistency of teaching across multiple sections.

The syllabus is an important resource for course-level assessment. Instructors should begin by reviewing the course goals stated on the syllabus to choose appropriate assessment tools. One popular tool for course-level assessment is the pre-/post-test. This method involves creating a test that assesses the most important course goals and administering this test one the first and last day of the semester. This method provides a measure of knowledge gain and can be used in combination with an item analysis to determine students’ strong and weak areas. Instructors might also consider using a final paper, project, or presentation to assess student learning in a course. In such cases, a rubric can be used to assess the student academic work.

**Creating Rubrics for Assessing Student Work**

Rubrics are an effective way to assess students’ ability on qualitative measures, such as portfolios, papers, oral presentations, etc. A rubric is simply a set of scoring guidelines used to evaluate student work. It consists of a set of categories to outline levels of competence (such as excellent, good, fair, poor). These categories are used to evaluate the important components of the work being assessed. For example, an oral presentation might be assessed on the student’s organization, delivery style, and content of the speech (see example in Appendix).

**Why are rubrics effective? Rubrics...**

- make grading more consistent & fair
- set standards for student work
- clarify expectations
- help students to evaluate their own work
- form the basis for assessment
Constructing a rubric

1. **Determine what components or essential traits will be used to evaluate student work.**
   - On what do you base your grades?

2. **Determine how many levels of competence (criterion) to measure.**
   - Four levels are the most commonly used and are easier to distinguish when rating (see examples below)
     1. Exemplary, Proficient, Marginal, Unacceptable
     2. Advanced, Proficient, Novice, Beginner
     3. Strong, Acceptable, Weak, Not Acceptable
     4. Advanced, Mastery, Aware, Unaware
     5. Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor

3. **For each level of competence, provide a clear description of expected performance.**
   - Use objective descriptors, not value statements
   - Include both qualitative & quantitative differences

4. **Try it out! Revise!**
   - Test your rubric on sample work to look for possible “kinks”
   - Think about loopholes (such as late assignments, wrong format, wrong assignment, plagiarism, etc.)
Implementation

Collecting data and analyzing results
Closing the feedback loop

The final step occurs in three parts: 1) collecting the necessary data, 2) analyzing the results to determine if objectives were met, and 3) using the results to make decisions and changes in order to improve student learning and/or institutional effectiveness.

Data analyses do not need to be overly complicated. Their purpose is to provide useful information on whether or not objectives were met. Data can be misleading, so be sure to discuss data in relation to goals and objectives. For instance, capstone courses are commonly used to identify strengths and weaknesses in student learning across the entirety of the program. These data should not be used to evaluate the performance of the capstone course instructor.

Collecting Data

**Data for Institutional Effectiveness:** Data collection for institutional effectiveness purposes tends to be straightforward and simple. **The stated goals/objectives should outline the necessary data to be collected.** For example, student services might have an objective to increase the number of students who receive tutoring services by 5% over the previous year. Consequently, the necessary data would be the number of students who received tutoring during the previous and current years in order to determine the percentage change. **Reviewing your objectives with data collection in mind can help determine if they are adequately specific and measurable.**
**Data for Academic Assessment:** Data collection for academic assessment is more complex and often depends on the assessment tool being used. Use the following chart as a reference for data collection based upon common academic assessment tools. The lists provided do not include all possible forms of data collection, but are a starting point for commonly used methods.

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<th>Data Collection &amp; Statistics</th>
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<td></td>
<td>- overall mean score and range</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- sub-test mean scores and range (if available)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- comparative data (national or regional means)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-/Post-Tests</strong></td>
<td>- number of students (only students who took both tests)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- mean score for pre- and post-test and range</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- mean change score</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- item analysis comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructor-Designed Exam Questions</strong></td>
<td>- number of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(embedded, etc.)</td>
<td>- overall mean score and range</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student Academic Work</strong></td>
<td>- number of students</td>
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<td>(capstone project, portfolio, papers,</td>
<td>- overall mean rubric score and range</td>
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<tr>
<td>presentation, etc.)</td>
<td>- mean rubric score and range for each component</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Survey/Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td>- number of students</td>
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<td>(with multiple choice items)</td>
<td>- number / percent of students responding to each item (for each question)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey/Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td>- number of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(with a Likert scale)</td>
<td>- mean score for each question</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- overall mean score and range (if applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- mean score and range for sub-sections (if applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Survey/Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td>- number of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>(with short answers)</td>
<td>- either a listing of all comments or a narrative summary of</td>
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<td>qualitative data</td>
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Data Definitions and Examples

In case some of the terms in the previous chart are new to you, brief descriptions and examples are listed below.

- **Mean score** is the average of all scores in a given set and is calculated by dividing the sum of all scores by the number of scores. Mean scores are generally accompanied by the range.

- **Range** is the difference between the highest and lowest scores in a given set and is a measure of variability. For example, if the highest score on a given exam was 100 and the lowest score was 60, the range would be 40.

- **Sub-tests** are used to break one exam into smaller sections based on common learning goals. For example, a nursing exam might yield one overall score as well as sub-test scores on patient management, pharmacology, and ethical decision making.

- **Comparative data** is provided on standardized tests to allow comparisons with national or regional norms.

- **Mean change scores** are used to compare pre-test scores with post-test scores to show gains or losses. Two methods can be used: calculating the difference between the two mean scores or the percent change. For example, if the mean pre-test = 50 and the mean post-test = 85, the students improved by an average of 35 points on the post-test. Or the percent change would indicate that students had a 70% increase on the post-test. Remember, percent change = (post-test score – pre-test score) / pre-test score.

- **Item analyses** can be used on any instrument with multiple questions. An item analysis simply presents the mean scores (and any other needed statistics) for each question in addition to looking at the overall score. This procedure provides more depth to your data and allows the examination of high and low scoring areas.

- **Rubrics** (as described in Chapter 3) provide two main sets of scores. First, a mean overall score can be calculated to examine performance across all components. Second, mean scores for each component can be examined to add depth to your data and to examine strengths and weaknesses. For example, a rubric on writing might provide component scores on content, structure, and grammar.

- **Likert scales** are commonly used in surveys and questionnaires to elicit ratings from the respondent. The scale might ask the respondent to rate their agreement to a series of statements. Mean scores can be calculated from Likert scales, which is one of the benefits of its use. For example, students might be asked to rate their knowledge (excellent = 4, good = 3, fair = 2, poor = 1) of course objectives.
More Advanced Data Procedures

Once you’ve mastered the previous types of data collection and basic statistics, you might be interested in going further with your data. If so, here are some slightly more advanced methods to consider:

- Compare data across semesters! Collect data using the same tools over time to compare scores from year to year.
- Calculate standard deviations for your mean scores. Although they are generally not necessary for academic assessment, they provide a more accurate measure of the variability of scores (in comparison to the range).
- Compare scores obtained from different course sections (or compare day/evening sections or full-time/adjunct instructors).
- Correlate assessment data with students’ overall course grades.
- Compare assessment data to students’ placement scores.
- Compare assessment data to students’ prior coursework. For example, a Chemistry instructor might compare students’ assessment results based upon whether or not the students had taken College Algebra prior to Chemistry.

Analyzing Data

Collecting data is the first step, but analyzing the data is just as important. Once mean scores have been calculated and other types of data are presented, the data must be examined for “meaning.” More specifically, were your stated goals and objectives met? Did your assessment results meet your expectations?

Things to Consider When Analyzing Student Learning Data:

- What do the data indicate about students’ mastery of subject matter or skills?
- What do the data indicate about students’ ability after program completion (graduate school or employment)?
- Are there specific areas where student performance is outstanding? Weak?
- Are there indications that point to weaknesses in general education skills (research, critical thinking, writing, etc.)?
- Do you see specific areas where you would like or expect to see higher performance levels?
- What was the most valuable thing learned from the assessment results?
- Was the assessment tool sufficient, or does it need to be revised?

Things to Consider When Analyzing Institutional Effectiveness Data:

- What do the data indicate about the quality of services provided?
• What do the data indicate about the satisfaction of the client?
• Are there specific areas where performance is outstanding or weak?
• Do you see specific areas where you would like or expect to see higher performance levels?
• What was the most valuable thing learned from the assessment results?
• Was the assessment tool sufficient, or does it need to be revised?

Closing the “Feedback Loop”

Remember, one purpose of assessment is improvement. So, data should be analyzed with this in mind. In order for assessment to be meaningful, its data must be used to improve processes.

Things to Think About
• How could teaching, curriculum, and/or processes be changed to improve outcomes?
• How could this information be used to help students improve their own learning (by providing feedback)?
• Who else would benefit from or use this information (other faculty, students, administrative offices, etc.)?

How to Use Assessment Data

• Improve Processes: Make recommendations for ways to improve processes within the program. Faculty may consider trying new teaching strategies, revising curriculum, or increasing student support.
• Make Informed Decisions: Use the findings to support planning and budgetary decisions or to supplement existing program review processes.
• Share the Good News! Communicate findings with other campus programs or stakeholders.
• Plan for Next Year: Use the findings to create goals and objectives for the upcoming year.
• Improve Future Assessment: Consider ways to improve the assessment process (reflect upon the tools, target group, timing, objectives, etc.)
Assessment at Concord University

Contributing to the Institutional Assessment Plan

Status Reports

Concord University is taking steps to coordinate and improve its existing assessment program. In addition to assessing student learning within its academic programs, CU administrators and staff will also assess the effectiveness of its various units and departments. The lead supervisor for each program will be responsible for providing specific details regarding expectations and deadlines.

Contributing to the Institutional Assessment Plan

In order to establish an institutional assessment plan for Concord University, each program (academic or nonacademic) will need to submit an assessment plan. The assessment plan is a simple document used to organize assessment efforts across the college.

What Constitutes an Assessment Plan?

- **Program goals:** List the goals for each program in relation to the Educational Goals at Concord University.
- **Objectives:** List the objectives used to measure each goal.
- **Assessment tools:** List and briefly describe the assessment tools used to measure each objective.
Educational Goals at Concord University

All program goals should relate to one (or more) of Concord University’s goals that were revised in 2004. **On the assessment plan, each program should match its goals to the appropriate educational goal.**

The educational programs of Concord University are designed to foster **skills**, **knowledge**, and **attitudes** applicable across a wide range of academic fields and professional careers in a culturally diverse, perpetually evolving global community.

- The General Studies program provides opportunities to begin developing skills needed for addressing complex issues, to build a foundational knowledge base for lifelong learning, and to cultivate attitudes that promote personal and societal well-being and experiential enrichment.

- Building on the General Studies program, the baccalaureate degree programs provide opportunities for in-depth study in a student’s chosen field(s).

- Building on selected baccalaureate degree programs, the master’s degree programs provide opportunities for highly specialized research and professional development.

**Skills:** Proficiency in interpreting data, integrating information, formulating ideas, thinking critically, and communicating with others, as demonstrated by the following competencies:

1. Effective inter-communication skills and literacies, adapted as needed for the demands of various kinds of discourse:
   - listening and speaking
   - reading and writing
   - non-verbal communication
   - media and technological literacy

2. An ability to employ appropriate observational, logical, analytical, computational, creative, and critical thinking skills in problem solving

3. An ability to employ appropriate methods and technologies for conducting empirical and scholarly research, to interpret research findings, and to use insights gained from such research as a basis for informed decision making

4. An ability to analyze, synthesize, and integrate elements, information, and ideas

5. An ability to evaluate elements, information, and ideas on the basis of appropriate criteria
6. An ability to apply and to transfer academic and experiential learning appropriately from one context to another

7. An ability to learn and work effectively both independently and collaboratively

**Knowledge:** Familiarity with principles underlying academic discourse in various fields, as demonstrated by the following capabilities:

1. An ability to discern the reciprocal influences of environments, cultural beliefs, and attitudes on societal institutions and practices.

2. An awareness of the fundamental characteristics and properties of the physical universe

3. An ability to interpret events and trends within historical contexts

4. Acquaintance with principles underlying languages--for example, linguistic, mathematical, and computer language systems

5. A recognition of the complex interconnections between people and other organisms, including human beings, and their environments

6. An awareness of the aesthetic principles, methods, materials, and media employed in artistic performance and in the creation of works of art and literature

7. Self-knowledge, including awareness of one's own competencies, deficiencies, and optimal individual learning style(s)

**Attitudes:** Tendencies conducive to self-knowledge, personal growth and development, and responsible citizenship as demonstrated by the following:

1. Habitual reflection on ethical/moral implications of actions when weighing decisions and evaluating outcomes

2. Exercise of responsible leadership--including leadership by example--and of responsible followership

3. Respectful attentiveness to differing perspectives and willingness to engage in dialogue across differences in order to seek mutual understanding and equitable conflict resolution
4. Cultivation of and support for attitudes and practices that foster physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being

5. Appreciation for the creative process and for the rich diversity of artistic achievement

6. Commitment to social responsibility, including community service and civic engagement

7. Motivation to pursue lifelong learning and ongoing intellectual growth

When writing program goals, use these educational goals as a reference to ensure that your goals and objectives reflect the university mission and purposes. In addition, this will help with the compilation of an institution-wide plan.

**Status Reports**

By April 1, 2005, all programs will submit an assessment report to provide information on assessment data, findings, and recommendations in relation to stated goals and objectives. These reports will not become part of the University’s existing faculty evaluation process. They are for program improvement and to share our accomplishments with college stakeholders.

Again, the lead supervisor for each program will be responsible for providing specific details regarding expectations and deadlines. Once submitted to the Director of Assessment, these reports will be compiled into an Institutional Assessment Summary.

**What Constitutes an Assessment Plan?**

Building from the Assessment Plan, the updated Assessment Plan includes:

- **Assessment Data/Findings:** Provide any data collected (for example, the sample size, mean scores on assessment tools, enrollment figures, student use data, etc.)

- **Analysis/Evaluation of Data:** Provide an interpretation of the data. Were your goals/objectives met?

- **Recommendations:** Based on the assessment findings, what suggestions are made for change? How could the program or the assessment process be improved for the next year? How will the data be used and communicated to others?
Framework for Report

The information below has been adapted from materials distributed by Paul Cunningham, (June 1998, AAHE Assessment Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio).

A. Descriptive Status of Assessment Activities

1. What indicators of student outcomes are currently being used or developed? Capstone experience, portfolios, locally developed tests, internships, types of honors, graduate school acceptances, transcript analysis for course-taking patterns, academic performance (grade trends), review of curriculum materials, anecdotal records, logs, and journals for classroom assessment, and student club participation.

2. How are they being used? Link to measurement of Program Goals, learning outcomes, or curricular changes.

B. Accomplishments and Evaluation of Status, Appraisal of the Indicators of Student Outcomes Currently Being Used.

1. How well are the indicators working?
2. How does your Program faculty feel about its accomplishments using these indicators of student outcomes?
3. What kind of data do you have that shows an indicator to be a good assessment device?
4. How useful have these indicators been in assessing students’ achievement of Educational Goals at Concord University?
5. What indicators have been particularly useful in helping you use the results to improve teaching/learning in the classroom or to track students’ academic development through the program?

C. Problem Areas Encountered. Where are the gaps in assessment?

1. What problem areas have you encountered in using these indicators in assessing students’ achievement of academic goals?
2. What indicators have been particularly difficult to use effectively in helping you improve teaching/learning in the classroom or to track student’s progress through their programs?

D. Projections: Goals and Action Plans for Upcoming Year(s).

1. What indicators of student outcomes are currently “projects-in-progress” with the discipline?
2. What indicators would you like the Assessment Committee to help you develop in the future?
Examples of How Assessment Data Are Used to Develop, Maintain, or Revise Components of a Program.

1. **Adding a requirement or required course.**
   Example: Standardized test in capstone course
   
   **Assessment data indicated:** Example: poor performance on specific questions of the GRE that deal with specific topic(s).
   
   **Results of feedback into the curriculum:** Example: Student must take either a one course (specify which) or another course (specify which) as a requirement for the Major.

2. **Revising teaching strategy to improve achievement of educational objectives.**
   **Student outcome indicators used:** Secondary reading of scholarly research papers for critical thinking by faculty.
   
   **Assessment data indicated:** Group work enhances students’ ability to develop a significant research question and critically analyze the literature on a particular topic.
   
   **Results of feedback into the curriculum:** Teaching strategy was changed to permit students to work together on a research project.

3. **Revising course content to assure appropriate attention to areas that need increased attention.**
   **Student outcome indicators used:** Faculty survey; Course Evaluation
   
   **Assessment data indicated:** Some course areas are redundant.
   
   **Results of feedback into the curriculum:** Eliminated redundancy from courses.
Appendix

Goals and Objectives Worksheet
Sample Rubric (see websites link)
Blank Rubric (see websites link)
Blank Administrative Assessment Plan
Blank Program Assessment Plan
Resources
Assessment Terminology
# Goals and Objectives Worksheet

This worksheet may help to visualize and develop objectives to measure program goals. For each program goal, identify its related CU strategic goal in the column provided (write its number only). Remember that an objective is a brief, clear statement that describes desired outcomes in relation to broader goals.

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<th>Educational Goal</th>
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Resources


Stassen, M.L., Doherty, K., Poe, M. *COURSE-Based Review and Assessment: Methods for Understanding Student Learning.* University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Stassen, M.L., Doherty, K., Poe, M. *PROGRAM-Based Review and Assessment: Methods for Understanding Student Learning.* University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Additional Information

Assessment Resource Website (contains handbooks, links to college websites, rubrics, portfolio information, etc.)
http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) Higher Learning Commission Web-Site
http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/

Dr. James O. Nichols: Institutional Effectiveness Associates Web-Site http://www.iea-nich.com/
Terminology

**Accountability:** The demand by a community (public officials, taxpayers, etc.) for school officials to demonstrate that invested funds in education have led to measurable student learning.

**Assessment plan:** A document that outlines desired outcomes (student learning outcomes for academic programs), assessment tools (direct and indirect) used to measure the attainment of each outcome, goals or expected performance, data collection timelines and procedures, data analysis procedures, the individual(s) responsible for collection/review of data, and how the data will be communicated and used.

**Benchmark:** A performance standard used to measure competence and/or progress in relation to stated goals.

**Cohort:** A group whose progress is followed at different points in time.

**Commercial, norm-referenced, or standardized exams:** Tests that are purchased from a private vendor and administered to a large group of students. These “objective” tests are usually multiple-choice, and scores can be compared to a reference or norm group.

**Competency test:** A test that establishes whether a student has met a minimum standard of skills or knowledge. For example…

**Competency:** The level of performance that is considered to be acceptable.

**Criteria or performance criteria:** The standards by which performance is evaluated.

**Criterion-referenced test:** Tests that are designed to provide information on performance relative to a predetermined level or criteria (based on educational goals or outcomes), rather than comparing test performance to others (such as a reference or norm group).

**Direct assessment tools:** An objective measure of students’ knowledge, ability, or goal attainment.

**Embedded assessment:** A means of gathering assessment data that is built-in to the existing course or program. For example, a final research paper may be used for both a grade in a course and an assessment of students’ ability to locate and evaluate sources on the Internet.

**External validity:** The ability to generalize results of a study or test to other settings.

**Formative assessment:** Informal assessment of progress that is used to provide prompt feedback to improve teaching and student learning. Also called Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs), these tools are usually not graded or formally analyzed.

**Indirect assessment tools:** A subjective measure of students’ knowledge, ability, or attitude (such as surveys or opinion polls).

**Internal validity:** Internal validity refers to the ability of a test to assess what it is intended to measure (taking into account its design and possible confounding variables).

**Item analysis:** Analyzing each item on a test (the proportions of students who select each answer) in order to determine students’ strengths and weaknesses and possible problems with the test.

**Locally developed or instructor-developed exams:** Objective and/or subjective assessment tools designed by college faculty.

**Mean or average:** One of several ways of representing a group of responses with a single score (add up all the individual scores
in a group and divide by the number of people or cases in the group).

**Norm (ative):** An established standard of achievement that is commonly derived from the average performance of a large group.

**Norm-referenced test:** Tests that are designed to illustrate achievement differences between and among groups.

**Portfolio:** A collection of multiple student work samples that are generally compiled over time (within one course or across multiple courses) and are rated using rubrics.

**Qualitative assessment:** Measures that collect non-numerical data, such as interviews or short-answer questions.

**Quantitative assessment:** Measures that collect numerical data that can be analyzed statistically.

**Reliability:** The extent to which a test (or experiment) will produce the same results upon repeated trials.

**Rubrics:** A set of categories used to evaluate the important components of the work being assessed. Each category consists of levels of competence with a score to be assigned to each level and a clear description of what criteria must be met to attain each score.

**Stakeholder:** Anyone with a vested interest in the outcome of a program (such as faculty, students, administration, community members, and governing bodies).

**Status report:** A description of the implementation of the assessment plan, data analysis, how the data will be used in decisions or to improve student learning, and the results of previous changes.

**Summative assessment:** Assessment performed at the conclusion of a course or program of study in order to evaluate success or goal completion.
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<th>Degree Program:</th>
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### Administrative Program Assessment Plan Matrix

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“In an increasingly complex world, sometimes old questions require new answers.”