The goal of this newsletter is to promote better awareness and understanding of assessment, and to keep Concord faculty, staff, and students informed on important and relevant information related to assessment and accountability.

What's Happening in Assessment

Program Assessment Plans: Building a Foundation for Meaningful Data

All academic programs are asked to submit their updated or newly developed Program Assessment Plans by April 2026. These plans are a cornerstone of Concord University's commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring that program outcomes are being intentionally assessed and that data is used to strengthen student learning.

Program Assessment Plans should include:

- Clearly articulated Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
- A curriculum map linking courses to each outcome
- Direct and/or indirect assessment tools
- Target benchmarks and data collection methods
- A strategy for closing the loop, using results to drive change

A Program Assessment Plan Template has been developed to assist you in organizing and documenting your plan. This template is available for download on the University Assessment webpage and aligns directly with the updated Assessment Handbook.

Need help navigating the template or selecting appropriate tools? See Chapter 2 of the Assessment Handbook or contact Dr. Amanda Sauchuck for one-on-one or departmental assistance.

2025–2026 Assessment Initiatives

This year's institutional priorities reflect a focus on relevance, reflection, and results. Here's what's ahead:

- Support Development of Program Assessment Plans
  Provide tools, templates, and direct support for high-quality plan submission by the April deadline.
- Expand Co-Curricular Assessment Efforts
  Partner with non-academic units to define and assess learning aligned with Concord's institutional goals.
- Deliver Timely, Impactful Feedback on Reports
  Streamline review of annual reports with clearer criteria and faster turnaround.
- Increase Assessment-Focused Faculty Development
  Offer new CTL workshops on best practices, rubric aligning assignments with outcomes, and using assessment for course redesign.
- Encourage Data-Driven Conversations
  Promote department-led "data dialogue" meetings to interpret assessment results and plan next steps.
- Explore AI and Its Implications for Assessment
  Continue discussions and support for authentic, AI-resilient assessment strategies that reflect student learning and academic integrity.

Faculty-Tested Tips for Efficient Assessment

Turning Data into Insight: Best Practices for Faculty Analysis of Assessment Results

As assessment data accumulates across courses and programs, its true value is unlocked when faculty actively engage with it, interpreting patterns, asking critical questions, and using evidence to refine instruction. Below are evidence-informed strategies and practical steps faculty can use to meaningfully review and analyze assessment data.

1. Start with a Key Question or Focus

Before diving into spreadsheets, clarify what you want to learn. Possible guiding questions include:

- Which learning outcomes show consistent strength or weakness?
- Are there patterns by cohort, instructor, section, or modality?
- Do subgroups (e.g., first-gen, transfer, demographically defined) show performance gaps?
- Did interventions or curricular changes correlate with shifts in outcomes?

By anchoring your analysis to one or two questions, you make data use manageable.

2. Ensure Data Quality and Cleanliness

Garbage in, garbage out: flawed data undermines reliable interpretation. When reviewing data:

- Confirm that all artifacts are scored using the same rubric and scale.
- Check for missing or incomplete submissions.
- Remove or flag outliers or anomalies (e.g. blank submissions, improperly formatted work).
- Verify consistent coding of categorical fields (e.g. section names, demographic labels).

Institutions often struggle with data integration, access, and quality control, which can limit meaningful analysis (APLU, 2023).

3. Disaggregate and Compare

Aggregate averages can mask important variation. Disaggregate your data by including course section or instructor, student demographics (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation status), delivery mode (e.g. online, hybrid, face-to-face). Comparing across slices can reveal where targeted improvement is needed or interventions are effective.

4. Use Visuals to Recognize Trends

Human eyes are good at spotting patterns visually. Use line graphs to show trends across semesters or sections and bar charts to compare outcome scores by subgroup. Visualization helps faculty see where performance is consistent or diverging.

5. Apply Simple Statistical Checks

You don't need advanced statistical training to glean insights. Some useful techniques:

- Descriptive statistics: Means, medians, standard deviations.
- Cross-tabs/contingency tables: Check how categorical variables relate (e.g. performance by delivery mode).
- Effect size/practical significance: When comparing two groups, consider whether the difference is meaningful, not just statistically significant.
- Trend analysis: Look at whether changes over time are steady or erratic.

Even basic statistical checks can show whether differences are likely to be noise or meaningful.

6. Contextualize with Qualitative Evidence

Numbers don't tell the full story. Pair your quantitative data with student reflections and feedback, open-ended questionnaire responses, instructor notes or observations, peer reviews of student work. Qualitative data can explain *why* trends emerged and help guide targeted improvements.

7. Engage in Collective Data Review ("Data Dialogues")

Bringing faculty together to interpret data leads to richer insights and shared accountability. In your meeting:

- Share data visualizations
- Pose guiding questions: What surprises you? What patterns seem meaningful? What hypotheses might explain differences?
- Brainstorm possible instructional or curricular changes
- Document agreed-upon actions and responsible parties

When faculty own data conversation, closing the loop becomes more sustainable.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Contact

Dr. Amanda Sauchuck
asauchuck@concord.edu

8. Link Insights to Action & Re-Assess

Data without action is incomplete. For each insight:

- Determine a plausible instructional change (e.g. assignment redesign, scaffolded feedback, grouping strategies).
- Implement the change in the next iteration.
- Reassess the same outcome to see if the change yielded improvements.

This cycle of data → action → assessment embodies assessment best practices.

9. Document and Report Thoughtfully

When reporting assessment results:

- Include narrative interpretation, not just charts.
- Highlight both strengths and areas needing improvement.
- Note any limitations (small sample size, anomalies, rubric inconsistencies).
- Connect recommendations back to learning outcomes and institutional goals.

Transparent reports help align faculty, departments, and administration in continuous improvement.

References

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. (2021). *Data analytics: Uses, challenges, and best practices at public research universities*. https://www.aplu.org/wp-content/uploads/data-analytics-uses-challenges-and-best-practices-at-public-research-universities.pdf APLU

Echtenbruck, M. M., Fühles-Ubach, S., Naujoks, B., & Kaliva, E. (2025). A data literacy competence model for higher education and research. *arXiv preprint*. https://arxiv.org/abs/2504.15690 arXiv+2arXiv+2

Fitsilis, P., Damasiotis, V., Dervenis, C., Kyriatzis, V., & Tsoutsa, P. (2024). Effective data stewardship in higher education: Skills, competences, and the emerging role of open data stewards. https://arxiv.org/abs/2410.20361

Hackl, V., Müller, A. E., & Sailer, M. (2025). The AI Literacy Heptagon: A structured approach to AI literacy in higher education. *arXiv preprint*. https://arxiv.org/abs/2509.18900

Navigating AI in Course & Program Assessment

AI systems, especially generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude), are reshaping how students approach assignments and how faculty design assessments. While some view AI as a threat to academic integrity, others see opportunities to rethink assessment in ways that leverage AI carefully and ethically.

Challenges and Cautions

- AI-detection tools have limitations
  Research has shown that generative-AI detectors can be circumvented or produce false positives/negatives. Overreliance on detection is unlikely to be effective long term. (Ardito, 2023)
- Black-box AI systems risk opacity
  When AI assists grading or feedback, it's often unclear how the algorithm arrived at its conclusions, which can raise concerns about fairness and transparency. (Luo et al., 2025)
- Ethical and policy ambiguity
  Faculty and students often differ in perceptions of acceptable AI use. Clear guidelines and shared discussions are essential. (Sajja et al., 2025)

Promising Practices

1. Design AI-transparent tasks
   Ask students to submit AI-generated drafts along with their own revisions and a reflection on how they used (and critiqued) the AI output. This centers on the process, not just the final product. (UIC model)
2. Use multimodal assessments
   Incorporate oral exams, in-class sketches, or timed writing segments where AI can't intervene—especially in foundational skill courses. (Times Higher Education guidance)
3. Train students in prompt literacy
   Teaching students how to craft effective prompts and how to evaluate AI outputs builds their agency rather than leaving them passive consumers of AI. (Columbia Digital Futures)
4. Keep humans in the loop
   Even when using AI for feedback or grading, ensure a human review of edge cases, appeals, or ambiguous responses.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Contact

Dr. Amanda Sauchuck
asauchuck@concord.edu

Implications for Program-Level Assessment
- Use AI-supported rubric scoring for initial passes, followed by faculty review to validate results.
- When collecting large-scale assessment artifacts (e.g., from multiple sections), AI tools may help sort or flag unusual patterns, but interpretive responsibility should remain with humans.
- Build in reflection components where instructors comment on AI-assisted scoring anomalies or trends when reporting assessment results.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Contact

Dr. Amanda Sauchuck
asauchuck@concord.edu

References
Ardito, M. (2023). Contra generative AI detection in higher education assessments? https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.05241
Furze, J., Hegarty, B., & Docherty, P. (2024). The AI Assessment Scale (AIAS) in action: A pilot implementation of GenAI supported assessment. *arXiv preprint*. https://arxiv.org/abs/2403.14692
Luo, T., Gierl, M. J., & Martin, B. (2025). Design and assessment of AI-based learning tools in higher education: a systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 22*(1), 45. https://educationaltechnologyjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41239-025-00540-2
Sajja, G., Menon, R., & Douglass, R. (2025). Evaluating AI-Powered Learning Assistants in Engineering Higher Education: Student Engagement, Ethical Challenges, and Policy Implications. https://arxiv.org/abs/2506.05699
University of Illinois Chicago. (2024). *Assessment and generative artificial intelligence in higher education*. UIC Academic Affairs. https://cms.ahs.uic.edu/inside-ahs/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2024/04/Assessment-and-Generative-Artificial-Intelligence-in-Higher-Education.pdf
Times Higher Education. (2023). AI and assessment: New guidance for universities. *THE Campus*. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/ai-and-assessment-higher-education
Teachers College Columbia University. (2024). *Thinking about assessment in the time of generative artificial intelligence*. Digital Futures Institute. https://www.tc.columbia.edu/digitalfuturesinstitute/ai-in-education/thinking-about-assessment-in-the-time-of-generative-artificial-intelligence