



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
College of Arts and Sciences

November 9, 2016

**TO: CAS Department Heads**  
**FROM: Ian F. McNeely, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education**  
**CC: Ron Bramhall, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Excellence**  
**Lexy Wellman, CAS Curriculum Coordinator**  
**RE: Assessment activities for 2016-17**

This year's assessment activities require each UO unit to assess 1-2 of its previously-established learning outcomes and submit a 2- to 3-page report on the results by June 16, 2017. As an interim step, I ask you to submit a brief (1-2 paragraph) plan of action to me at [adue@uoregon.edu](mailto:adue@uoregon.edu) by January 23, 2017.

UO has made many false starts on assessment in the past, in part by trying to do too much, too fast. The aim, starting this year, is to begin again with a small step, make it meaningful, and build on it in future years.

The attached memo from Associate Vice Provost Ron Bramhall outlines the tasks required. If appropriate, you may refer this to the faculty member and/or committee in your department charged with overseeing the undergraduate curriculum. Preferably, the same individual or group will take the lead on assessment for several years running, even though all faculty should be involved.

All CAS departments have already established learning outcomes for their undergraduate majors. These are collected at the website below. Please note that minors and graduate degrees do not need to be assessed.

<http://cas.uoregon.edu/learning-outcomes/>

If, in the course of reviewing your unit's learning outcomes, you wish to make any changes, you are free to do so; please send an explanation of the proposed changes, and the rationale for them, to me at [adue@uoregon.edu](mailto:adue@uoregon.edu).

Attached please find, in addition to (1) AVP Bramhall's memo, (2) guidelines on designing assessment plans and (3) a template for the June 2017 report. The Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs will be making other resources available soon, including sample rubrics, student survey data, and suggestions for the types of assignments departments might want to assess. Ron Bramhall can be reached at 346-3028 or [rcb@uoregon.edu](mailto:rcb@uoregon.edu) for consultations on how to design and implement assessment plans.

**COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

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## MEMORANDUM

November 6, 2016

**TO:** Department and Program Heads

**FROM:** Ron Bramhall – Associate Vice Provost for Academic Excellence

**RE:** Unit Assessment Plans

**CC:** Deans of each School/College

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In September of 2016, Provost Coltrane convened a meeting of the assessment coordinators from each school and college. The purpose of the meeting was to solidify our campus approach to creating program and degree level plans for assessment of student learning. Although this is tied to our required accreditation review, it is also part of our overall plans to promote student success and enhance the student experience. A plan was outlined for getting assessment plans in place for each unit, and for regular reporting on those plans to the Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs.

As a campus, we've been inconsistent in this area for too long and we have to remedy that. Systematic assessment of student learning is one more step in our shift to a more systematic use of data to drive decisions about programs and curriculum. Assessment of student learning is also a critical component of our plans to improve student 4-year graduation rates. Your help with this process is greatly needed and very much appreciated.

The following timeline for unit assessment plans was agreed on.

January 23, 2017	Submit assessment plans to school/college assessment coordinator
Winter/Spring Term 2017	Each unit to begin the assessment cycle for 1-2 learning outcomes
June 16, 2017	Submit Annual Assessment Report to school/college assessment coordinator

We are not mandating any particular approach to assessing student learning outcomes. While we are able to help units use Canvas as one simple way to accomplish some assessment goals, each unit should design an assessment approach that best fits program needs, making sure that the approach includes the following elements:

1. Identification of 3-5 key student learning outcomes for each degree
2. A systematic plan to collect information on 1-2 outcomes per year. The plan should identify where the outcomes will be assessed (e.g. student assignments in specific

courses, exam questions, portfolios), how the outcomes will be assessed (e.g. common rubrics, faculty review and scoring of portfolios) and indicators of desired student performance (e.g. rubric scores, exam subset scores).

3. Process for analyzing and discussing information gathered (e.g. curriculum committee, faculty meetings)
4. Process for curricular revisions as a result of faculty analysis and discussion (e.g. curriculum committee).

Our advice is to keep this simple and focused on the goal of improving student learning. Select outcomes you want to know more about in terms of student learning, and design an approach that incorporates as much as possible what faculty in your department already do to evaluate student learning.

In terms of annual reporting on assessment activity, we aren't looking for long narratives and spreadsheets of data. We simply need to capture the ongoing activity happening in departments around student learning and ongoing curricular improvement. A 2-3 page report that describes how units completed the steps of the assessment plan above, and their next steps will suffice. In addition, we'd like to see brief descriptions of other qualitative approaches to curricular improvement. For instance, if a faculty discussion around some curricular issue results in curricular revisions, the report should briefly describe that. The Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs is providing a guide for creating assessment plans and a template for annual reporting on those plans.

Finally, we'll support you in any way we can. This can take the form of workshops, facilitation of faculty meetings, advice on assessment plans, or help setting up and using Canvas for assessment. Contact Ron Bramhall ([rcb@uoregon.edu](mailto:rcb@uoregon.edu) | 346-3028) to discuss how we can support your efforts.

We will be publishing resources and examples on the Academic Affairs website, including a template for the annual report, plans from other units, rubrics that could be repurposed, and an outline for assessment planning. On that webpage we will also post assessment plans, annual reports and related documents for each unit so that we have a central repository of this information and can more easily track activity over time. In the meantime, Ian McNeely, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education in CAS, has been instrumental in consolidating resources and CAS department learning outcomes and curriculum maps. You can find that page here: <http://cas.uoregon.edu/learning-outcomes/>.

Thank you again for your help with this important work and please let me know how we in the Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs can assist in your efforts.



Ron Bramhall  
Associate Vice Provost for Academic Excellence

## **Unit Assessment Plan Guidelines**

### *Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs*

In Designing your department's assessment plan, consider and include the following.

#### **Learning Goals and Objectives**

**List 3-5 learning goals** for each major (whether you call them goals, objectives or outcomes does not matter for now). What will the student in the major know, value and be able to do upon graduation? Consider using Appendix 1 to guide development of an assessment process, and the "Goal Definition Worksheet" in Appendix 2 to guide your conversation about learning goals.

#### **Assessment Methods**

By what measure(s) will you know that students are meeting departmental learning objectives? How will learning outcomes be assessed (rubrics, test questions, portfolios, etc.)? From whom, and at what points, will you gather data? Note that not every student needs to be assessed – you can sample student work. How will the information be collected?

#### **Assessment Processes**

When will you conduct the assessment of each learning objective? Who will be responsible for each component? What is the overall timeline for the assessment plan? Consider using something like the simple table below to map out when each learning objective will be assessed. In this example, each learning objective would be assessed at least once every 5 years. Let your findings guide this plan and update it as needed. For instance, you might revisit a challenging learning objective sooner if you've made changes to improve the outcomes.

Learning Objective	AY 16-17	AY 17-18	AY 18-19	AY 19-20	AY 20-21
LO1 – Students will...	X		Revisit		
LO2	X				
LO3		X			
LO4		X			Revisit
LO5			X		

#### **Status, Outcomes and Results**

How will you report and discuss your findings in your unit?

#### **Decisions, Plans and Recommendations**

Describe a general process for transforming analysis into action plans for improvement. Describe how action plans will be revisited and evaluated at some future date.

## Appendix 1

### Basic Approach to Assessment of Student Learning

The information below is adapted from Barbara Walvoord's book: *Assessment Clear and Simple*. The book provides a straightforward approach to assessment and at most you can read two chapters, and save yourself a lot of stress. If you'd like a copy of the book for your department, please contact Ron Bramhall in the Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs.

Here is the "Most Basic, Minimal System, Based on Faculty Oral Reports" (Walvoord, 2010; pg 59-62)

1. **List 3-5 learning goals** for your program (whether you call them goals, objectives or outcomes does not matter for now). Consider using the "Goal Definition Worksheet" in Appendix 2 to guide your conversation about learning goals.
2. Conduct a meeting with your faculty. During the meeting ask them to **comment on the students' strengths and weakness related to the above learning goals** prior to graduation. Take notes while faculty give you an "off the cuff" oral report of their experiences with student work. Discuss the collective strengths and weaknesses that have been listed. Take a vote on the one weakness from this list to pursue for the following year. Document the result of the vote.
3. Assign a committee to **investigate further** (perhaps ask the students for their input via a survey or discussion; look at some student work for examples etc.) and **propose an actionable change to be put in place during the following year** in an attempt to improve student learning in this area. Have the committee document their investigation and their recommendation. **Curriculum mapping** can also be a useful tool to help identify gaps in the curriculum related to learning goals.
4. One year later, conduct another meeting with your faculty. **Discuss whether the faculty noted any changes in the students' learning based on the changes implemented during the past year.** Take notes. Discuss whether to implement further changes related to this weakness for an additional year, or to select a new weakness to address. It is completely reasonable to spend 2-3 years monitoring the same weakness and making changes to address it.
5. **Continue the above year after year**, and document what you do along the way. This a simple example of an Assessment plan, which identifies the learning **goals**, collects **information**, takes **action**, and is appropriate for a Program Review self-study, or University Accreditation.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Goal Definition Worksheet**

Each faculty member in the department should complete a copy of this worksheet. Arrange a time for all of you to sit down together to compare notes and discuss results. The final product of this exercise should be a list of three to five broad goals that describe what department faculty believe should be characteristic of graduates in the major.

1. List any department learning outcomes or goals that you know. This information can most likely be found in the course catalog, program brochure, or department mission statement. Some units have already identified learning outcomes and can find those on department or school/college websites, such as in CAS at <http://cas.uoregon.edu/learning-outcomes/>.

2. Describe your ideal student in terms of strengths, skills, knowledge and values, and identify which of these characteristics are the result of the program experience.

3. Keeping this ideal student in mind, ask what the student

- a. knows
- b. can do
- c. cares about

4. What program experiences can you identify as making the most contribution to producing and supporting the ideal student?

*Adapted from OAPA Handbook PROGRAM-Based Review and Assessment • UMass Amherst*

*First Version-11/2016*

## Annual Departmental Assessment Report

**Department or Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Year of Report:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department Contact Person for Assessment:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for this Report

For each major in the department, list the learning objectives that were assessed during this period.

*[Major 1]*

1. Learning Goal 1
2. Learning Goal 2
3. etc.

*[Major 2]*

1. Learning Goal 1
2. Learning Goal 2
3. Etc.

### Section 2: Assessment Activities

For each learning outcome, describe what information was collected, how it was analyzed and discussed, and the conclusions that were drawn from the analysis. In the narrative, reference all relevant means of collecting information about learning goals, including direct measures (e.g. assessment of student assignments), indirect measures (e.g. overall grade patterns in a particular course, student reflections on learning, SERU data), and qualitative information (e.g. faculty observations, student input). While the choice of which assessments are most meaningful is up to the department, a mix of direct and indirect measures is requested.

### Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis

For each learning goal assessed for each major, describe any actions taken as a result of assessment information, or plans to take action during the next academic year. Describe how the actions or action plans are meant to address the issues arrived at through the assessment activities in Section 2.

### Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience

Briefly describe other continuous improvement efforts that are not directly related to the learning goals above. In other words, what activity has the department engaged in to improve the student educational experience? This might include changes such as curriculum revisions, new advising approaches, revised or new co-curricular activities, etc. Describe the rationale for the change(s) and any outcomes resulting from the change(s).

### Section 5: Plans for Next Year

Briefly describe tentative assessment plans for the next academic year. Which goals will be assessed and how? What actions will be taken as a result of this years' analysis of assessment information? What other plans does the department have to improve the student educational experience? What are the budgetary implications of any proposed actions? How will those be addressed?