Jackson State University

Assessment Manual

For Degree Programs, Academic Support and Student Service Programs

Assessment Manual

Jackson State University

Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment

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Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment

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Our Goal

To create a culture of assessment in Jackson State University degree programs, academic support and student life programs.

Culture of Assessment*

An environment in which continuous improvement through assessment is expected, occurs, and is valued is indicative of an assessment culture.

Assessment Defined

An ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning describes assessment. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. – *Tom Angelo, AAHE Assessment Forum (1995)*

Assessment's Importance

Assessment is not going away, because of

- Pressure to produce evidence of student learning (external mostly)
- Accreditor requests for documentation (external)
- Intermittent Federal interest (external)
- Perceived faculty ambivalence about a process seen as "external" and "administrative" (internal)

**This definition and other assessment-related terms are presented in the JSU Assessment Glossary on the Assessment Web site.*

Assessment
Objectives and Roles

Assessment has a long-standing history at JSU; however, as public demands for accountability increase, Institutional Research Planning and Assessment will continue the efforts of creating an ongoing assessment atmosphere by doing the following:

- To coordinate and document the assessment process for degree programs, academic support and student service departments.
- To assure that measurable objectives and student learning and program outcomes are established and appropriately published.
- To assist in identifying relevant assessment methods and tools.
- To develop and document assessment plans and schedules for degree programs, academic support and student service departments.
- To serve as a resource on assessment-related matters.
- To facilitate peer review, communication and sharing relative to assessment-related matters.

University Assessment Team's Roles and Performance Expectations

In Fall 2016, representatives form each academic college and student service areas were appointed to serve on the University Assessment Team. The following roles and duties of the team members have remained constant since their inception:

- To serve as Assessment Team liaison for departments and programs in your college/division.
- To assist in assessing the appropriateness and measurability of current objectives and student learning outcomes in academic/student life units.
- To facilitate the development, coordination and documentation of assessment plans and schedules for units in each respective college/division and for the Office of Academic Affairs and Student Life.
- To assist in identifying assessment instruments for departments and programs in each respective college/division.
- To provide peer review to other members of the Assessment Team.
- To attend and participate in scheduled meetings.

Shared Responsibilities of the Assessment Center and the Assessment Team

In order for a culture of assessment to be developed and successful at JSU, the Assessment Center staff and Assessment Team members must work collaboratively to achieve university, academic, and student service goals and objectives. Specifically, together both must

- Understand and promote the importance of the role of assessment in student learning.
- Periodically inventory current assessment activities.
- Disseminate information to campus constituents about assessment theory, practices, and activities.
- Promote faculty and academic support staff professional development in the area of assessment.
- Advocate for resources to create and maintain a culture of assessment.
- Review annual assessment reports and provide feedback to departments/program.
- Ensure improvement through the appropriate use of assessment results.

University Wide Shared Responsibilities

Understand and promote the importance of the role of assessment in student learning
- Periodically inventory current assessment activities
- Disseminate information to campus constituents about assessment theory, practices, and activities
- Promote faculty and academic support staff professional development in the area of assessment
- Advocate for resources to create and maintain a culture of assessment
- Review annual assessment reports and provide feedback to departments/program.
- Guide improvement through the appropriate use of assessment results.

Statement of Assessment Expectations

Following is Instiutional Research, Planning, and Assesment official statement of expectations for key individuals in the assessment process.

Responsibilities of Administrators

Responsibility for assessment is an institution-wide process that is shared by faculty, administration and staff. While the primary responsibility for classroom and discipline outcomes assessments rests with faculty, administrators' role in management and delivery of resources makes them central to effective responses to challenges identified through assessment activities:

1. Encourage and support outcomes assessment at all levels including faculty and discipline and program planning and development efforts.
2. Facilitate faculty, discipline and program changes as designed by faculty in response to classroom and discipline assessment findings.
3. Encourage cross-division dialogues and activities supporting development of assessment efforts and faculty skills across the curriculum.
4. Amplify and support curriculum changes in classrooms, disciplines or programs where challenges have been identified through institutional assessment activities.

Responsibilities of Full-Time Faculty

Since the purposes of assessment are to understand and improve the educational outcomes of our efforts, it is in the interest of faculty to assure quality instruction through professional development and responsible outcomes assessment of their actions. Outcomes assessment is first and foremost a faculty responsibility. In support of these ideals, faculty members are to be active in assessment through the following activities:

1. Conduct classroom assessments in order to focus student learning and implement instructional strategies supportive of improving student learning outcomes.
2. Report utilization of classroom assessment in order to share ideas and strategies with colleagues and support institutional documentation and accreditation efforts.
3. Participate in planning and conducting discipline and/or program assessment and then work with colleagues to improve discipline and program outcomes.
4. Cooperate with college-wide assessment efforts through active support of general education, transfer and other college-wide assessments (e.g. UEPE, CLA, NSSE).
5. Support through actions the assessment activities of the Assessment Team and respond to challenges as identified by those efforts.

Responsibilities of Part-Time Faculty

Since part-time faculty share professional commitments with full-time faculty, many of the assessment activities are similar. However, in recognition of their limited availability, part-time faculty is not expected to be as active in planning and implementing assessment activities at the discipline, program and institutional levels. In support of these ideals, part-time faculty is to be active in assessment through the following activities:

1. Conduct classroom assessments in order to focus student learning and implement instructional strategies supportive of improving student learning outcomes.
2. Report utilization of classroom assessment in order to share ideas and strategies with colleagues and support institutional documentation and accreditation efforts**.**
3. Participate in planning and conducting discipline and/or program assessment and then cooperate with colleagues to improve discipline and program outcomes.
4. Cooperate with college-wide assessment efforts through active support of general education, transfer and other college-wide assessments (e.g. UEPE, CLA, NSSE).
5. Respond to challenges as identified by assessment activities of the Assessment Team as appropriate at the classroom level.

Student Responsibilities in Assessment

Students must be active participants in assessment. Assessment results that demonstrate student learning begin with the students themselves. The basic responsibility of our students is to participate in both the direct assessment activities (e.g. tests, activities, projects, portfolios, etc.) and indirect assessment activities (e.g. interviews, surveys, focus groups, etc.). Other roles that students can assume in assessment follow:

1. Participate in institutional exams, surveys, and focus groups
2. Take standardized tests or locally developed exams for which they are not receiving a grade.
3. Participate in focus groups and surveys in their major and minor departments and programs, and later as alumni of the university, college, departments and/or programs.
4. Participate in national surveys of student learning and satisfaction as requested.
5. Provide feedback and comments on activities.
6. Facilitate assessment activities by acting as assessors themselves. (Examples: Critique' class projects and presentations of other students, evaluate group work, conduct campus surveys, etc.)

ASSESSMENT MANUAL

Jackson State University

Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment

Section 2

Assessment Plan and Report

- Assessment Plans
  - Effective Program Assessment
  - 10 Characteristics of Successful Assessment Programs
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  - Should Assessment Be Conducted Every Year?
- Assessment Annual Report
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  - Faculty Points of Progress
  - Academic Program Productivity
- Where Do I Begin?
  - Student Learning Outcomes
  - What is Assessment of Student Learning?
  - Building a Culture of Evidence
- Developing the Assessment Plan and Report: The Steps
- Summary of Assessment Plan Elements (Academic Programs)
- Summary of Assessment Plan Elements (Academic and Student Service Support Programs)

Assessment Plans

Every JSU degree program and academic support department must have a written assessment plan, which is comprised of four parts: (1) Descriptive information about the program; (2) Program mission and objectives; (3) Student learning objectives and expected learning outcomes; (4) Program performance objectives and expected outcomes; (5) Direct and indirect assessment methods, protocols, and benchmarks; and, (6) Name and title of the report writer.

The Plan must be submitted using a standardized template, which can be found on the Office of Academic Affairs Assessment website: www.jsums.edu/assessment.

Effective Program Assessment Answers These Questions:

1. What are you trying to accomplish with reference to student learning and program performance?
2. How is effectiveness demonstrated relative to student learning outcomes and program performance?
3. How, using the answers to the first two questions, can you improve what you are doing?

10 Characteristics of Successful Assessment Programs

1. The assessment program is driven by values.
2. The unit makes a long-term commitment.
3. Instructional leaders understand and believe in the value of assessment.
4. Faculty and staff lead the program and own the results.
5. Technical expertise and support are provided.
6. Learning outcomes are defined programmatically.
7. Measurement tools align with outcomes.

8. A viable research design and methodology are used.
9. Results are used by faculty & staff to improve learning and/or the learning environment.
10. Assessment is linked to college/division and departmental planning.

Source: Presentation by Wes Payne. The Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools: July 30-August 2, 2006.

Evidence of Program Assessment SUCCESS

Sincerity means people trust the process.
Usefulness means the process helps people.
Clarity means people understand the process.
Commitment means people believe the process works to their advantage and leaders support the process.
Enthusiasm means the people want to do it.
Systemic and Sustainable means everyone is continuing to use it.
Support means people are not on their own.

Source: Presentation by Julia Pet-Armacost. The Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation. The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. July 30 – August 2, 2006.

Should Assessment Be Conducted Every Academic Year?

Assessment in academic and support units should be ongoing. The frequency of the assessment should reflect a commitment to the assessment process.

Assessment reports are requested every year, but the timetable for doing assessments should be established by the academic and support units' STUDENT LEARNING AND OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN. The Assessment Plan may be established so that some assessment methods are conducted in alternate years or some assessment methods take several years to complete. Academic and support programs with very small enrollments may benefit from assessment plans that are established with alternate- or multiple-year timetables for implementation.

Assessment Annual Report

Instructions for preparing the Annual Report are distributed by the Assessment Center each academic year. The due date for submitting the report (typically mid July) is also publicized at the same time. The report includes data for the period July 1 through June 30 (i.e. second summer session, fall and spring semesters).

The Annual Report is comprised of three major parts:

1. Student Points of Progress, which includes the Assessment Annual Report
2. Faculty Points of Progress
3. Academic Program Productivity

Efforts are made by the Assessment Center staff to request information and data from the departments that is not available from other sources.

The indicators that are used to assess departmental performance each academic year are categorized as follows:

STUDENT POINTS OF PROGRESS

1. Pass rate on national standardized and licensing exams
2. Enrollment in online courses
3. Pass rate on common exams
4. Pass rate on graduate comprehensive exams
5. Pass rate on English Proficiency Exam (first sitting)
6. Number of academic departments using student portfolios
7. Number engaged in service-learning
8. Number completing internships
9. Undergraduates completing major research projects
10. Number of first-time freshmen in one or more intermediate courses
11. Number of students on academic probation
12. Student achievement of knowledge/skills that comprise the expected learning outcome*
13. Student outcomes based on established goals*

FACULTY POINTS OF PROGRESS

1. Number of peer reviewed articles by faculty member and department
2. Number of non-peer reviewed articles by faculty member and department
3. Number of papers presented by faculty at regional and national conferences by faculty member and department
4. Total dollar value of awards for research and sponsored projects
5. Number of published research by faculty member with student(s) by faculty member and department

ACADEMIC PROGRAM PRODUCTIVITY

1. Six-year cohort graduation rate
2. Number of baccalaureate graduates obtaining employment or admission to graduate/professional schools within 12 months of graduation.
3. Fall-to-fall cohort retention rate in years 2 and 3
4. Headcount enrollment and FTE
5. Number of undergraduate students 25 years and older
6. Number of MS public community college transfer students
7. Number of undergraduate minority students (ethnicity and gender)
8. Number of graduate minority students (ethnicity and gender)
9. Number of first-time students with ACT score of 18 or above
10. Number of degrees by level in natural sciences, mathematics, computer science, engineering, allied health sciences, teacher education and accounting
11. Number of degree programs accredited by a national professional accrediting agency
12. Number of full-time faculty who hold doctorate or first professional degree
13. Ratio of full-time faculty to FTE students
14. Number of classes taught by part-time faculty
15. Number of written formal partnership agreements with public and private sector entities
16. Number of full-time minority faculty (ethnicity and gender)
17. Number of courses with global emphasis

_____

*New indicators added in AY06.

WHERE DO I Begin?

Begin by …

- Defining learning expectations.
- Taking inventory of what you already do.
- Defining the measurement selection process.
  (One approach is to develop selection criteria and selection matrices)
- Procuring and/or developing instrumentation and approaches.
- Pilot testing and refining.
- Implementing.
- Reflecting on results, reconsidering and changing current approaches as necessary, and starting the next assessment cycle.

Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes encompass a wide range of student attributes and abilities, both cognitive and affective, which are a measure of how their college experiences have supported their development as individuals. Cognitive outcomes include demonstrable acquisition of specific knowledge and skills, as in a major; what do students know that they didn't know before, and what can they do that they couldn't do before? Affective outcomes are also of considerable interest; how has their college experience impacted their values, goals, attitudes, self-concepts, world views, and behaviors? Has it developed their potential? How has it enhanced their values to themselves, their families, and their communities? (Fry, 20-21)

What is Assessment of Student Learning?

Faculty members are asked to describe explicitly the knowledge, skills, and values that a student should have to graduate from the program. Assessment efforts are directed toward answering three questions:

1. What do we want students to learn?
2. How well are they learning what they need?
3. How can we help them learn more effectively?

The third question exemplifies the ongoing nature of the assessment process; it does not involve assessing an outcome but rather the progress being made toward intended objectives. The most important step in assessment is the use of the results to create and implement a plan for improving student learning.

The term "assessment" is used to describe evaluation of student learning at the ***program*** level, rather than the evaluation of individual students at the class level. Faculty members evaluate students through testing and grading; however, these evaluations are restricted to learning that occurs within a single course. The curriculum of an academic program consists of numerous courses as well as other learning opportunities such as field experiences, internships, or service learning projects. Students are expected to develop knowledge, skills, and values as a result of this combination of experiences. Thus the assessment of student learning focuses on this "macro" level rather than the "micro" level of an individual student. [Adapted from Eastern Illinois website] Because student learning assessment is so closely linked to the curriculum, faculty must play a principal role in the assessment process. That is,

- *Faculty* establish the student learning objectives for the department/program;
- *Faculty* select the methods and measures for evaluating the objectives;
- *Faculty* determine appropriate performance standards; and

- *Faculty develops and implement* program changes based on assessment data

Building a Culture of Evidence

Each academic discipline establishes principles of evidence, which are used to evaluate the quality of scholarly work. As scholars, it is known that evidence is used to assert that a conclusion is valid.

What is Evidence? (Adapted from Peter Ewell, NCHMS; WASC Evidence Guide)

The following five characteristics define evidence:

- Evidence is *intentional and purposeful*. It is used to answer deliberately posed questions of interest to the department or program.
- Evidence involves *interpretation and reflection* to support a conclusion. Data by themselves are not useful; it is their interpretation and the resulting actions that shape the direction of the department or program that are meaningful.
- Evidence is *integrated and holistic*. This means that multiple pieces of evidence are used and evaluated for common themes to support a conclusion.
- Evidence can both be *quantitative and qualitative*. Each department/program is in the best position to select what it deems to be the most appropriate forms of evidence.
- Evidence can be either *direct or indirect*. Direct evidence is performance-based, while indirect evidence looks at student satisfaction, perceptions, and values. Both kinds of evidence are necessary and important. Each department/program should carefully examine existing sources of evidence as well as consider new approaches and how they can be used to assess student learning.

The assessment plan provides the framework to implement an evidence-based examination of student learning. It serves as the tool that guides the department in building a culture of evidence from which informed decision-making, planning, and improvement can take place.

DEVELOPING THE ASSESSENT PLAN AND REPORT

The Steps

Student Learning Assessment Plan

(See the Appendices and the JSU Assessment Web site for the template.)

Student learning assessment is a continuous and dynamic process consisting of a series of steps, each of which is dependent on the information gathered from the previous step. The process is recursive; as one cycle of steps is completed, another cycle begins. Regardless of the program or department being assessed, the process includes the following steps:

1. Define the mission statement of the department or program.
2. Define the goals and student learning objectives for the department or program.
3. Identify and describe methods used to assess student learning.
4. Establish a timeline.
5. Analyze, summarize, and report the assessment data.
6. Describe how the results will be used to improve student learning.

Once the cycle has been completed, the process begins again. Student learning goals and objectives and assessment methods are reviewed and revised, if necessary. New data are collected analyzed and changes are implemented to improve student learning. The remaining pages describe the elements of an Assessment Plan and are presented to assist departments/programs in developing their plans. While each department may select a format for presenting its plan, it must contain all the elements described below.

Step 1. Define the mission statement of the department or program.

The mission statement is a brief statement of the values and philosophy of the department/program. It should guide decision-making about the curriculum and provides a framework for setting goals. It should also be aligned with the University mission.

Example 1: The mission of the Department of Biology is to prepare its graduates to engage in scientific inquiry, to communicate scientific information clearly, and to acquire basic biology knowledge and skills that prepare them for employment and /or continuing education in the life sciences. [Adapted from department of Biological Sciences, Rutgers University, Campus at Newark]

Example 2: The mission of the College of Agriculture is to provide students with the educational experiences and environment that promote discipline competence; the capacity to attain career success in agriculture, food, or related professions; and a sense of civic responsibility. [University of Minnesota, from Diamond, 1998; Designing & Assessing Courses and Curricula: A Practical Guide, p. 72]

Step 2. Define the goals and student learning objectives for the department or program.

Goals are statements of broad, long range intended outcomes of the program and the curriculum. They describe the knowledge, skills, and values expected of graduates. Goals flow from the mission statement and provide a framework for the objectives. It is suggested that from three to five goals be written for a department or program, although there is nothing special about this number. Limiting the number of goals will assist with writing overarching statements and creating an assessment plan that is both meaningful and feasible to implement.

Effective goals are:

- Broad statements of meaningful expectations
- Clearly written
- Achievable
- Assessable through related objectives
- The framework for writing objectives
- Consistent with the mission statement

Objectives are brief, clear statements of learning outcomes that flow from the goals. They should be written using action words that specify observable and measurable behaviors.

Effective objectives:

- Tell us how we know when a goal has been achieved
- Use action words that specify observable behavior
- Are realistic and achievable
- Are measurable
- Use simple language

The following table presents some relevant verbs that may be useful for writing objectives. Each column represents one of the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: [Gronlund, N.E. (1991). *How to write and use instructional objectives* (4th Ed.), New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.]

Knowledge	**Comprehension**	**Application**	**Analysis**	**Synthesis**	**Evaluation**
Define	Classify	Apply	Analyze	Arrange	**Assess**
Identify	Describe	Compute	Calculate	Construct	**Estimate**
Indicate	Discuss	Construct	Categorize	Create	**Evaluate**
Know	Explain	Demonstrate	Compare	Design	**Discriminate**
Label	Identify	Illustrate	Contrast	Formulate	**Judge**
List	Locate	Interpret	Determine	Organize	**Interpret**
Name	Review	Investigate	Differentiate	Plan	**Rate**
Select	Summarize	Predict	Distinguish	Prepare	**Revise**
Underline	**Translate**	**Use**	**Relate**	**Produce**	**Support**

[Note: See p. 24 of this manual for "weasel words and phrases" to avoid when writing assessable goals and objectives.]

Two examples of a clearly stated goal with its associated objectives:

Example 1:

Goal 1:	Be familiar with major writers, periods and genres of English and American Literature and be able to place important work and genres in their historical context. [Taken from CSU San Bernardino]
Objective 1.1	Compare two or more works and authors in English and/or American Literature, for example, analyze the character of Satan in Milton's "Paradise Lost" and compare it to other satanic characters in literature.
Objective 1.2	Analyze a novel, short story, poem, play or significant piece of prose showing familiarity with the techniques and literary contexts of the particular genre being examined
Objective 1.3	Describe the historical context or literary period of the work or author being examined, for example, a discussion of Crane's Maggie as an example of American Naturalism.

Example 2:

Goal 1:	Use concepts and principles of ecology to explain the interactions of organisms with their environments and with each other. [Adapted from Department of Biological Sciences, Rutgers University, Campus at Newark]
Objective 1.1	Describe ecosystems as consisting of populations of organisms plus abiotic inputs, nutrient cycles, energy cycles, and limiting factors
Objective 1.2	Explain how species and populations interact in a dynamic fashion in communities.
Objective 1.3	Propose one or more hypotheses that plausibly suggest how different species can occupy the same ecological niche.

Step 3. Identify and describe the methods to be used to assess student learning.

Departments may find it useful to create an Objective by Course matrix to determine where in the curriculum each objective is being met before beginning to identify methods for assessing student learning. This process of curriculum mapping ensures alignment of goals and objective with the curriculum. The table below is one example of a matrix. [Adapted from PACT Handbook, January, 2001; CSU Bakersfield]

Course	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5
Course 200	I			I	I
Course 300	P		I		
Course 350			P	P	
Course 400	P		P	P	
Course 490	R		R	R	

I=Introduce; P = Practiced; R= Reinforced

Note: This matrix indicates that the program did not include Objective 2 in the curriculum. Thus, the faculty must discuss whether Objective 2 is important to the program and embed it in several courses in the curriculum. Objective 5 is only introduced; thus graduates may not master it. Student learning should be measured using both direct (e.g., portfolios, papers, projects, internships, performances, standardized tests) and indirect (surveys, focus groups, interviews) evidence. Multiple measures should be employed and assessment should take place throughout the students' program. It is suggested that at least two assessment methods be used for each objective, at least one of which must provide direct evidence of student learning. To increase feasibility of assessment, consider using methods that can evaluate more than one objective. Specify where in the curriculum the assessment will take place.

Examples:

1. Completion of Senior Project in Comparative Lit XXX consisting of a portfolio of four papers and reflective essay indicative of competence in several knowledge and skill objectives of the department. A departmental committee will review and evaluate the portfolios using a 5-point scoring rubric developed and approved by department faculty. [Direct Evidence]
2. A graduating senior survey will be used to examine students' perception of competence regarding all department goals/objectives. [Indirect Evidence]
3. A national field test in Psychology will be given to students in Psych XXX and Psych YYY to examine pre/post changes in knowledge of several cognate areas of psychology. [Direct Evidence]

Assessment Methods

The table below describes several methods of assessment. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. While this list is not exhaustive, it represents a variety of approaches to assessment. Select the methods that are most appropriate for the assessment of departmental student learning goals/objectives, faculty time, and faculty resources. In the case of a very large department, samples of student work might be selected to represent the larger student population. Remember that assessment should be meaningful, manageable, and sustainable.

*Additional assessment methods are provided on pages 25 through 27 of this manual.

Method	Definition	Direct or Indirect Evidence
Capstone Course	Assesments take place in a capstone course that can be program-based or required of all students. Assignments are directly related to student learning objectives	Direct
Embedded Questions	Questions related to program learning objectives are embedded within an exam taken by all students. Faculty member grades exams as usual for course grades but responses to the embedded question are aggregated and scored with a common rubric.	Direct
Exit Interviews	Graduating seniors are interviewed to obtain feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the program in regard to student learning objectives.	Indirect
Focus Groups	A series of planned discussions for 6-10 students who are asked a series of open-ended questions related to student learning objectives.	Indirect
Portfolios	A compilation of a student's work throughout the program. Evaluated by a team of faculty using a common scoring rubric.	Direct
Scoring Rubrics	A numerical range used to evaluate the quality of a project, paper, etc. in relation to student learning objectives.	Direct
Standardized Test	Department administers a national test to all students. [Be certain that test items measure student learning objectives for department]	Direct
Survey [of students, alumni, employers]	National or locally-developed survey to measure student's satisfaction, perceptions, values, in relation to student learning objectives.	Indirect

Step 4. Establish a timeline for the assessment plan.

The development and implementation of student learning assessment is a process that takes time, particularly if the intent is to conduct meaningful, manageable, and sustainable plans for improvement of student learning. To achieve “best practices” in student learning assessment departme.nts/programs should “start small, but think big.” Good assessment should focus on things that matter. Begin the process by developing measurable objectives for one or two goals faculty deem most important to student learning. Then develop the methods for measuring these objectives. Build on assessment success by gradually examining other goals. Remember that all goals do not have to be assessed each year.

Step 5. Analyze and summarize the assessment results.

Describe the timeline and process used to analyze and summarize the results.

Example:

Assessment Method	Time Line	Process
Senior Project	Each Semester	A faculty committee will meet each semester to evaluate the protfolios using a department approved scoring rubric. A summary report of Senior Projects for fall and spring semesters will be submitted to the department chair each June.
Graduating Senior Survey	Bi-Yearly	Data will be analyzed and a summary report will be submitted to the department chair in June of the data collection year. Responsibility for this task will be assumed by the department assessment coordinator.
Field Test	Yearly	Data will be analyzed and a summary report will be submitted to the department chair each June. Responsibility for this task will be assigned to a faculty member (on a rotating basis).

Step 6. Describe how the results will be disseminated and used for program improvement.

Example 1: [Description of a plan to examine evidence, when no assessment has yet taken place.]

A faculty retreat will be held in the week prior to the beginning of classes for the fall semester. The department chair will send the summary assessment reports to the faculty prior to the retreat for their review. Discussions of the results regarding implications for curricular change or assessment plan adjustments will be used to guide the assessment activities for the next academic year.

Example 2: [Description of a plan for curricular change that is based on interpretation of assessment evidence.]

A faculty retreat was held on August 28, 2002 to discuss the assessment results obtained during Academic Year 2001-2002. Student writing was evaluated using both direct [senior project] and indirect [senior survey] evidence. These assessment methods indicated that students' actual and perceived ability to organize their thoughts clearly and coherently was less than adequate. The faculty decided to implement three strategies for improvement of student writing. First, staff from the Center for Teaching and Learning will be asked to provide a department workshop on feasible strategies for increasing student writing in classes. Second, additional student writing will be required in two core

courses. Third, an assessment of student writing will take place in Course XXX, a gateway course required in the junior year. In Academic Year AY__, student writing will be examined using both the senior project and the graduating senior survey to determine the effectiveness of these strategies in improving student writing.

It should be noted that if the assessment results dictate a change in assessment instruments or protocol, the assessment plan should be updated and re-filed in the JSU Assessment Center.

Summary of Assessment Plan Elements (Academic Programs)

Program Mission/Goal(s)	What is the stated function/purpose of your program within the college/division? What contribution does your program make to the institution's mission?
State measurable objectives of your unit	STUDENT LEARNING: In measurable terms, what impact does your unit intend to have on student learning and professional development? What knowledge, skills and values/attitudes will students attain through matriculation in and graduation from your program? PROGRAM PERFORMANCE: In measurable terms, how will you grow the program through recruitment, retention, graduation, student placement, research, etc.?
Expected outcomes/Benchmarks	At what level should students' knowledge, skills, values/attitudes be displayed by virtue of their participation in and graduating from your program? By what specific level of performance (i.e. benchmark) will each objective be measured? With reference to program performance, how many students will you recruitment/admit annually, what retention and graduation rates do you consider acceptable, how many research publications are considered enough, etc.?

Assessment Methods	DIRECT MEASURES: How will you assess that students have learned the information, skills, and behaviors that you taught? Will you use exams, surveys, observation, external reviewers, training modules, etc.? INDIRECT MEASURES: How will program performance be assessed? Will institutional research data or departmental files be used, satisfaction surveys, student tracking, program awards, etc.?
Frequency of and Responsibility for Assessment	How often will assessment be conducted and by whom?
Assessment Results	Collect, analyze, and discuss the assessment data and findings.
Use of Assessment Results	How will the assessment loop (i.e. use of data to enhance programs and services) be closed?

Instructions for completing assessment plans can be found here:
http://www.jsums.edu/jsuoaa/assessment/web2010_2/templates.html

Assessing Academic and Student Services Support Programs

Like academic programs, academic and student services support programs may have a combination of learning outcome and program performance objectives. The missions of academic and student support programs are disparate while serving the same purposes – supporting the academic and personal development of students. A summary of Assessment Plan Elements for academic and student services support programs follow.

Summary of Assessment Plan Elements
(Academic and Student Services Support)

What are the mission/goals of your program?	What is the stated mission of the program within the university/division/college?
State measurable objectives of your unit	What impact does your unit intend to have on student development and/or the services provided to them?
Expected outcomes	Describe the knowledge, skills and values/attitudes expected of students participating in the training programs, workshops, seminars, etc. provided by your unit. Separately state the administrative objectives of the student services that your unit provides.
Expected Performance Levels	At what level should students' knowledge, skills, values/attitudes be displayed after your training, seminars, etc.? By what specific level of performance (i.e. benchmark) will each objective be measured? With reference to administrative services, what is the specific level of performance expected of your unit?

Assessment Methods	How will you assess that students have learned the information, skills, and behaviors that you tried to convey in your training? Will you use presentations, surveys, observation, external reviewers, training modules, etc.? How will administrative services be assessed? Will volume of activity, measures of efficiency, service quality, client satisfaction surveys, comparisons to peer institutions, focus groups, etc. be used?
Frequency of and Responsibility for Assessment	How often will assessment be conducted and by whom?
Assessment Results	Collect, analyze, and discuss the assessment data and findings.
Use of Assessment Results	How will the assessment loop (i.e. use of data to enhance programs and services) be closed?

Instructions for completing assessment plans can be found here:
http://www.jsums.edu/jsuoaa/assessment/web2010_2/templates.html

ASSESSMENT MANUAL

Jackson State University

Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment

Section 3

Resources

- Writing Assessable Goals and Objectives
- Determining Assessment Approaches/Methods
- Pros and Cons of Assessment Methods
- Sources of Information about Student Learning
- Online Resources

Writing Assessable Goals & Objectives

Avoid Weasel Words and Phrases:

Be aware of
Have an awareness of
Be conversant with
Be familiar with
Display a broad and full grasp of
Develop awareness (understanding)
Have a (firm) grasp of
Have a (an in-dept) knowledge of
Be prepared for a variety of
Have a (good) sense of
Understand
Have an (a broad) understanding of

Use Action Verbs:

Add	Design	List	Restate
Advance	Determine	Locate	Reveal
Alter	Differentiate	Make	Revise
Analyze	Discriminate	Manipulate	Section
Annotate	Dissect	Match	Select
Apply	Distinguish	Mobilize	Separate
Appraise	Divide	Modify	Show
Arrange	Draw	Multiply	Sift
Assign	Earn	Name	Sketch
Assay	Employ	Negotiate	Solve
Assess	Estimate	Offer	Sort
Calculate	Evaluate	Omit	Speak
Canvass	Exercise	Operate	Specify
Change	Exert	Perform	Spell
Check	Expand	Pick	State
Choose	Extrapolate	Plan	Strike
Classify	Find	Point	Subtract
Collect	Form	Predict	Summarize
Combine	Generate	Produce	Support
Compare	Give	Project	Synthesize
Compose	Hold	Propose	Take care, teach
Contrast	Identify	Quality	Tell
Convert	Illustrate	Quantity	Test
Create	Include	Quote	Touch
Criticize	Integrate	Rate	Transfer
Dance	Interpolate	Read	Transform
Deduce	Interpret	Recite	Translate
Define	Judge	Referee	Use
Demonstrate	Justify	Repeat	Weigh
Derive	Label	Reproduce	Write

Gardiner, Lion F. (1989). *Planning/or assessment: Mission statement, goals, and objectives.* Trenton, NJ: Distributed by New Jersey Department of Higher Education, 256.pp.

DETERMINING ASSESSMENT APPROACHES/METHODS

When considering how to assess student learning (i.e. How do we know that our students have learned what we expect them to?), you may wish to consider the following:

1. **What particular learning objectives are addressed?**

    - Courses
    - Programs
    - Services
    - Internships
    - Community service projects
    - Work experience
    - Independent study
    - Undergraduate research

2. **What approaches will you use to assess learning outcomes?**

    - Exams – major field exams, GRE, LSAT, MAT
    - Embedded classroom assessment
    - In-class writing sample
    - In-class analysis of a problem
    - In-class collaborative problem solving project
    - Portfolio
    - Performance
    - Simulation
    - Focus group
    - Capstone course

3. **Are you using direct or indirect measures to assess learning outcomes? Are you using qualitative and/or quantitative measures?**

DIRECT methods of evaluating student learning are those that provide evidence of whether or not a student has command of a specific subject or content area, can perform a certain task, exhibits a particular skill, demonstrates a certain quality in his/her work (e.g. creativity, analysis, synthesis, or objectivity), or holds a particular value. ["Student learning Assessment: Options and Resources," Middle States Commission on Higher Education]

- Comprehensive exam
- Writing proficiency exam
- National exam
- GRE subject test
- Major Field test

- Certification exam
- Licensure exam
- Local pre-test and post-test
- Performance assessment
- Video/audio tape evaluation
- Senior thesis/major project
- Portfolio evaluation
- Capstone courses designed to evaluate performance in program

INDIRECT methods of evaluating student learning involve data that are related to the act of learning, such as factors that predict or mediate learning or perceptions about learning but do not reflect learning itself. ["Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources," Middle States Commission on Higher Education] Such methods are typically used to assess program performance.

- Comparison with peer institution
- Job placement
- Employer survey
- Graduate school acceptance rates
- Performance in graduate school
- Graduation/retention rates
- Exit interviews
- Student satisfaction survey
- Student course evaluation
- Internship evaluation
- Focus group evaluation
- Alumni survey
- Tracking alumni honors/awards

Assessment methods should reflect the type of learning or performance to be measured. The student learning outcomes must govern the choice of measures. A combination of assessment approaches can be the most effective way to measure student learning and program performance. Assessment tools should be chosen so that students and programs are given multiple ways to demonstrate their learning and performance, respectively. Visit www.apa.org/ed/eval strategies.html or see page 32 for pros and cons of using specific assessment measures.

4. Who are you going to assess?

- All students
- Student cohorts, such as: At risk students
- Students with ACTs over 18
- Juniors
- Graduating seniors
- Random sample

5. What is your schedule for assessing learning outcomes?

- Upon matriculation
- At the end of a specific semester
- At the completion of a required set of courses
- Upon program completion
- Upon graduation
- Upon employment
- A number of years after graduation

Adapted from materials provided by Kent State University

PROS AND CONS OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

Some good resources are:

- Palomba, C.A., & Banta, T.W. (1999). Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- American Psychological Association: "Evaluating Assessment Strategies" site: http://www.apa.org/ed/eval strategies.html

- Solomon, David J. (2001). Conducting web-based surveys. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation,* 7(19): http//pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7& n =19

- William M. K. Trochim: Plus and Minus of Survey Methods: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/survaddi.htm

- Bridgewater State College, Assessment Guide Book, Chapter 5: http://www.bridgew.edu/Assessment Guidebook/chapter5.cfm

Sources of Information/ Example Assessment Methods	Pros of Method	Cons of Method
From course work (embedded, course-based) (direct assessment methods)	*In general, students take embedded course work seriously; therefore, work has a good chance of reflecting actual abilities. * Reflects program or department's course and curriculum, and program outcomes	*In general, biases of the data over years, instructor or departmental differences can influence the results. *Reluctance of faculty to share results with entire faculty membership.
Tests, including pre-post, entry and exits	*Inexpensive *Comprehensive *Pre-post testing allows for "value added" assessment	*Developing appropriate test questions that reflect leaning outcomes and complex levels of learning takes time and skill. *For pre-post testing: difficult to design tests that are comparable at different times.
*Graded Homework	*Reflects students' ability when they have access to resources	*Does not assess students' ability or overall learning as typically defined.
*Ratings or Rubrics judging quality of papers, reports, projects	*Can be used by others besides instructor, to assess quality	*Developing accurate rubric dimensions that reflect learning outcomes and levels of learning takes time and skill.
Tests, rubrics on paper, projects from capstone course experience	*Allows for assessment of higher cognitive abilities such as synthesis and evaluation of knowledge *Can assess in-depth knowledge *Allows creativity * Assessment of intergrading of learning.	*Labor intensive for both faculty and students *Because course and project are high-stakes, it may produce student anxiety that may result in assessment reflecting lesser ability than actual ability.
*Concept mapping or knowledge mapping	*Unique technique to understand connections of concepts within students' knowledge-base *Assessment of complex relationships	*Difficult to compare across students *Difficult to obtain objective judgment on abilities.
Expert's judgment of performance (e.g., art, drama, healthcare	*Improves face validity of assessment activities	*Obtaining appropriate experts' time
*Criteria, rating, rubrics, judging thesis, dissertation work	*Allows for judgment about overall graduate program across several students	*Difficult to define rubric dimensions that relate to multiple theses or dissertations
Qualifying exams for graduate work	*Developing exam questions across several graduates allows for better assessment of the graduate program.	*Oral presentations may be a challenge for those with language difficulties *Difficult to define questions that relate to several students
From longitudinal, cross-sectional or cross-course comparisons including student portfolios (direct assessment methods)	*In general, shows longitudinal trends with rich detail *Assessment becomes an integral part of students' learning process	*In general, validity depends on how work is collected *Can overload assessment committees with too much information
*Rubrics judging quality of work across time, sections or courses	*Highlights students' strengths and weaknesses in comprehensive manner	*Developing accurate rubric dimension that reflects learning outcomes and levels of learning take time and skill *Content may vary widely by students

*Comparison of best examples of student learning	*Students do the work of providing the assessment "data" by supplying their best examples	*Students' judgment of "best examples" may not actually reflect faculty's judgment of "best examples"
*Reflections by students about their learning	*Provides opportunity for students to synthesis own work; *Identifies strengths and weaknesses	*Difficult to judge objectivity
*From internships/coop experiences	*Supervisors typically provide feedback to students anyway	*Ratings and criteria of supervisor may not reflect program outcomes
*Surveys completed by intern/coop advisors/faculty about student's abilities (direct assessment method)	*Based on actual work experience that may reflect future career	*May obtain information only on a small number of outcomes *Limited observation time
*Survey, interview, focus groups about satisfaction with student's performance (indirect assessment method)	*Provides information about other outcomes besides competencies such as attitude	*Satisfaction with performance may not be reflective of student's ability
From employers/potential employers	*In general, improves face validity of assessment activities	*Difficult to identify where alumni are employed *Sensitive information for both employer and program/department
*Surveys to employers about student's abilities (direct assessment methods)	*Provide information about student's abilities needed by employers	*Difficult to get direct supervisors to respond to surveys
*Survey of those who interview for employment purposes about perceived students' abilities	*Best person to compare quality of one institution's graduates to other institutions' graduates	*May only be able to assess a small number of general outcomes such as communication skills
From outside evaluations Experts judge overall major/program quality of students' abilities (direct assessment methods)	*Improves face validity of assessment activities	*Obtaining appropriate experts' time
*Information about student's satisfaction, attitudes(indirect assessment method)	*Important to hear from student's viewpoint *Conduct comparison of different groups of students on same outcomes/questions	*In general, students' perception of their ability may not relate to their actual ability *In general, alumni are more satisfied than graduating seniors who tend to be more satisfied than sophomores, etc.
*Surveys about satisfaction with learning environment, faculty, courses, curriculum, their learning, equipment/tools from prospective, current, graduating, withdrawn students and alumni	*Easy to administer *Low cost *Nationally or commercial surveys have reliability and validity information	*Usefulness is based on good design of survey questions

*Interviews or focus groups about satisfaction with learning environment, faculty, courses, curriculum, their learning, equipment/tools from prospective, current, graduating, withdrawn students and alumni	*Can provide rich data, personal perspectives; can go into depth about a particular aspect or factor *Other factors may arise that relate to academics such as pedagogy, class size, etc., which are not expected or asked about	*Those who participate tend to have either very positive or very negative opinions which is selection bias *Fear of retributions may bias respondents' answers
*Inventories about students' attitudes; monitor attitude changes over time	*Commercially available instruments provide reliability and validity information	*Usefulness depends on how related to program outcomes
*Information about Faculty's satisfaction (Indirect assessment method) through survey, interviews or focus groups	*Important to hear from faculty's view *Factors may arise that relate to academics such as pedagogy, class size, etc.	*Usefulness is based on good design of questions

Sources of Information about Student Learning

Prepared by Joni E. Spurlin, Ph. D., University Director of Assessment, NC State University Updated: August 2006

Jackson State University

ONLINE RESOURCES

JSU Assessment Information, http://www.jsums.edu/assessment

ETS Major Field Test, http://www.ets/org/portal/site.et.menuitem

Designing Viable Assessment Plans, http://www.a[a.org/ed/eval strategies .htm1

Inventory of Higher Education Instruments, http://www.stanford.edu/group/ncpi/unspecified/assessment states/instrument.hrm1

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA): http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org/

Digital Measures: http://www.jsums.edu/digitalmeasures

Qualtrics: http://www.jsums.edu/qualtrics

Templates:

Annual Report Templates:
http://http://www.jsums.edu/dpa/forms/

Step By Step:
http://www.jsums.edu/dpa/developing-an-assessment-plan/