



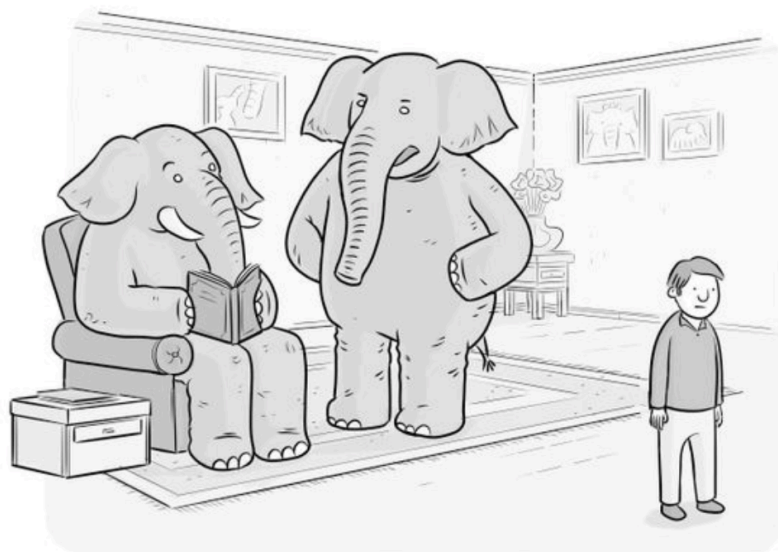
# Assessment Refresher for Undergraduate Programs

Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness

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1

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*"It's time we talked about the Carl in the room."*

Source: Huffpost [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/cartoonist-ellis-rosen\\_n\\_5979e678e4b0da64e8770071](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/cartoonist-ellis-rosen_n_5979e678e4b0da64e8770071)

2

*“We got 10 years from WSCUC,  
so why are we still talking about assessment?”*

*“What guarantee do I have that you will not use  
assessment data against me?”*

*“We are in the middle of a global pandemic.  
Stop adding more to our workload!”*

3

## **What is not assessment**

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- Assessment ≠ Accreditation
  - Accreditation requires assessment, but is not the primary purpose for assessment
- Assessment ≠ Evaluation
  - Assessment is faculty-controlled, reflective, and aimed to increase (not judge) quality of teaching and learning
- Assessment ≠ Lots of extra work
  - Assessment can be done with existing, embedded measures that do not require a new set-up

4

## Assessment for improvement

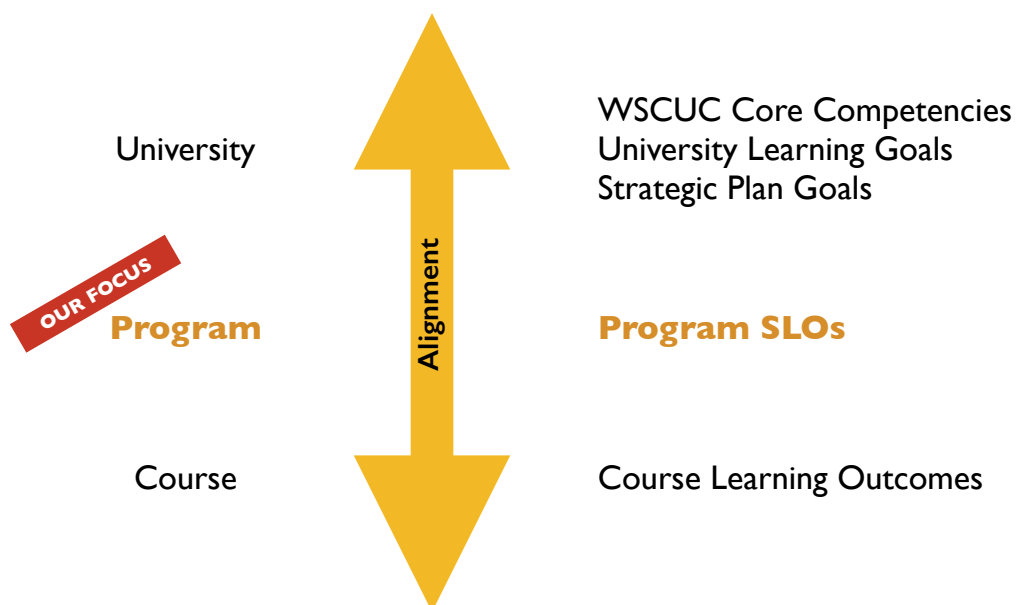
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- Assessment = Getting evidence-based answers to the questions that matter to us
  - *“Without data, you are just another person with an opinion.” (W. Edwards Deming)*
- Assessment = Improving teaching and learning
  - Assessment helps identify areas for improvement in student learning, and ways to improve them
- Assessment = Demonstrating effectiveness
  - Assessment showcases the positive impact of our hard work on student learning and success

5

## Three levels of assessment

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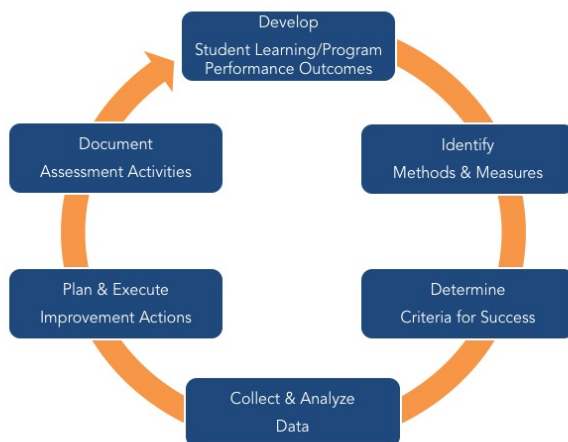
6

# Six-step assessment process\*

What do we want our students to learn and/or our units to accomplish?

How are we documenting the assessment AND improvement activities/results?

What changes are we making?  
Are the changes working?



How are we doing?  
How do we know?

What evidence do we need to know to determine whether we are successful?

How do we use data to confirm/improve our practices?

\*AEEC Spring 2014

7

# Annual assessment reporting and review

Unit Planning Summary	Outcomes (Step 1)	Methods and Measures (Step 2)	Data Collection and Analysis (Step 4)	Improvement Actions (Step 5)
✓ PO-01: Sustainable university-wide assessment process	1	1	1	1
✓ PO-02: Assessment training and professional development	1	1	1	1
✓ PO-03: External compliance support	1	1	1	1
✓ PO-04: Analytical Studies support	1	1	1	1
✓ PO-05: Institutional Research	1	1	1	1
✓ PO-06: Quality Assurance	1	1	1	1
✓ PO-07: Data Governance	1	0	0	0
✓ PO-08: Assessment and QA dissemination	1	1	1	1

- Assessment management system (AMS) available year-round for documentation
- Annual report collection (Nov.15)
- Assessment liaisons review to provide feedback

8



## Step 1: Develop student learning outcomes

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- A statement
- Significant and essential learning that students achieve at the end of a program
- What students should be able to accomplish at the end of a course, curriculum, or any educational experience

9

## SLO at different levels

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**WSCUC**

Quantitative Reasoning

**University**

Graduates are able to apply quantitative reasoning to real-world problems.

**OUR FOCUS**

**Program**

Students are able to use statistical tools to interpret data from research studies.

**Course**

Students are able to calculate and interpret a variety of descriptive and inferential statistics.

10



## Start with a good SLO

### Knowledge

Facts  
Concepts  
Theories  
Principles

### Skill

Critical thinking  
Communication  
Teamwork  
Quantitative reasoning

### Attitude

Civic engagement  
Cultural competency  
Professionalism  
Life-long learning

- Learner-centered, not instructor-centered
- Simple language
- Specific, clear and concise
- Demonstrable and measurable
- Discrete (no “double-barrel” statements)
- Manageable (more is not better)

11



## Common issues with SLOs

Criteria for good SLOs	Example SLO needing improvement
Learner-centered, not instructor-centered	Students will be provided with at least 2 internships to apply the skills in the field.
Simple language	Students demonstrate thorough and competent understanding of original texts, which is reflected in sound arguments to support assertions that are supported by careful presentation of evidence and include thoughtfully constructed refutations of the opposing view.
Specific, clear and concise	Students acquire the accumulated essential knowledge so that they can apply the knowledge to clinical issues in graduate school or in their work settings.
Demonstrable and measurable	Students demonstrate leadership skills by organizing and implementing projects in the community.
Discrete (no “double-barrel” statements)	Students understand and apply critical race theory and research methods demonstrated through independent research using standard English grammar and coherent written organization.
Manageable (more is not better)	5-7 SLOs

12



## Step 2: Identify methods & measures

- We are *already* and *always* assessing student learning
- The measure already in place is NOT always the best place to start
  - Does the measure address the SLO?
  - What is the action verb in the SLO?
- Use curriculum map to determine where to collect evidence for program level assessment

13

## Curriculum mapping

Course	SLO1	SLO2	SLO3	SLO4	SLO5
100	Introduced		Introduced		
101		Introduced			Introduced
200	Developed			Introduced	
230			Developed		
300	Developed	Developed			Developed
350		Mastered			Mastered
401	Mastered		Developed; Mastered		

- Program assessment is focused on student competency “near or at graduation”

- Focus on courses where SLOs are “mastered”

14



## Direct vs. Indirect

**Direct**  
 Student behaviors or products that demonstrate their mastery of SLO

Exam/Quiz  
 Paper/Presentation  
 Project/Portfolio  
 Recital/Exhibition  
 Peer evaluation  
 ...

**Indirect**  
 Reported perceptions about student mastery of SLO

Self-reflection essay  
 Self-report survey  
 Interview  
 Focus group  
 Report by alumni, employer, etc.  
 ...

Use as **supplemental evidence**

**Direct evidence helps tell us “what”, and indirect evidence helps tell us “why”.**

15



## Embedded & Value-added

**Embedded**

Measures integrated into the regular curricular process

Can be used to judge individual student performance in a course, AND can be aggregated to demonstrate mastery of SLOs for a program

Prioritize embedded measures

**Value-added**

- Measures designed to capture the increase in students' learning during a course or program
- More indicative of the contribution an institution/program/course make to student learning
- Advanced practice (not required)

16





## Choosing the right measure

- **Valid:** Are you measuring the outcome?
- **Reliable:** Are the results consistent?
- **Actionable:** Do the results clearly tell you what students can or cannot do?
- **Triangulation:** Are there multiple lines of evidence for the same SLO?
- **Meaningful and engaging:** Are faculty engaged? Do students care?
- **Sustainable:** Can the process be managed effectively within the program context?

17



## Common issues with measures (part I)

Criteria for good measures	Example measures needing improvement
Valid	1. To measure students' "global competency that allows students to conduct business with people in different global regions", students are asked to answer a final exam question in an elective not required for majors.
	2. To measure students' competency in performance, faculty track the length of time taken to achieve the next level of performance.
Reliable	1. To measure students' professional skills in the clinical settings, the internship site supervisors are asked to provide a brief holistic evaluation of students' professional skills.
	2. To measure students' written communication skills using a culmination exam while the exam is going through major revision.
Actionable	1. To measure students' understanding of major theoretical development milestones in the discipline, the faculty use a rubric to score student assignment. The rubric rates students' knowledge using a 5-point scale from "poor" to "excellent" without detailed descriptions.
	2. To measure students' application of key concepts and skills relevant to the discipline, an objective content test is administered in a 400 level course. The total score is used to determine student competency.

18



## Common issues with measures (part 2)

Criteria for good measures	Example measures needing improvement
Triangulation	1. To measure students' ability to collaborate with others, a survey is administered to the students asking whether they worked with others in the course, and if so, how well the group worked.
	2. To measure students' critical thinking ability, multiple measures are used including a short-answer assignment, project customer evaluation, and student project self-reflection. They yield different results, but no connections are drawn.
Meaningful and engaging	1. To measure students' problem solving ability, students are invited to take a 2hr standardized test that is not part of the course or program. Students receive \$50 for participation.
Sustainable	1. The program coordinator asks every course that is aligned with a program SLO to submit assessment data every semester to capture all relevant data. The coordinator will then go through all the data to determine whether the SLO is met.
	2. A program collects 50 student written samples from 200, 300 and 400 courses every year. The samples are scored by a committee of faculty in the summer.

19



## Step 3: Determine criteria for success (CFS)

- A performance standard
  - What level of performance is good enough?
  - Pre-determined!
  - Supported by historical data, reasonable expectations, theoretical frameworks...
- Can assume multiple formats
  - Average
  - Distribution pattern
  - Change from previous year/cycle
  - Difference from peers or other comparison groups
  - Can be qualitative depending on the corresponding measure

20



## Common issues with CFS

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- Some measures lack CFS
  - Every measure needs a corresponding CFS
- Focus on average and ignore score distribution
  - Average can be easily skewed
  - Distribution is often more telling, and helps pinpoint areas for improvement
- Inappropriate CFS
  - **Too high** (e.g. 100% students score in the “excellent” category on all of the rubric criteria.)
  - **Too low** (e.g. Students score at the national average level.)
  - **Ceiling effect** (e.g. Client evaluation rating improves by 10% every year.)
  - **Use average or “rate” when sample size is small** (e.g. 75% students receive a score of 80% or higher, when the cohort size is typically less than 10.)

21



## Step 4: Collect and analyze data

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- Same as what we do in a research study
  - Why collect the data (see step 1 - SLO)
  - What data to collect (see step 2 - measures)
  - Where to collect data (reference curriculum map)
  - Who to include and how many
  - How the data are analyzed
- Sampling!
  - Relevant, Representative, and Reasonably sized
  - Determined by the outcome and program context
  - Moderate sample size is sufficient (e.g. “50-80” rule; 20-30%).
    - Very large sample size is rarely needed.
    - If homogenous student population, small samples are sufficient

22

# Common issues with data collection and analysis



- No data
  - Expectation: 1 SLO per year
- Misalignment between steps
  - Data collected do not match measures
  - Data analysis does not reference or match CFS
- Insufficient description of data collection or analysis
  - Where did the data come from
  - Who and how many students were included
  - How were the data collected and analyzed
  - How did the data compare with CFS
  - How did the data compare to prior years
- No reflection on how data relate to practice
- No connection between data from multiple sources

What would you like to see in a student research paper?

23

# Step 5: Plan and execute improvement actions



- Review the assessment findings
- Types of changes:
  - Curriculum
  - Pedagogy
  - Faculty support
  - Student support
  - Resources
  - Assessment plan
- Don't forget to re-assess the improvement actions!

*Small changes matter*

Weigh the pig

Feed the pig

Weigh the pig

NILOA (2014)

24



## A good example for improvement actions

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- For the “**Written Communication**” SLO, the *Business Communication* program scored student writings in a case analysis using an existing validated rubric, and found that students had the greatest deficiencies in the “Strategy” rubric criterion.
- For improvement, the program:
  - collected additional demographic data to narrow down the student population that needed the most help;
  - offered faculty development workshop on case analysis;
  - emphasized use of topic sentences and supporting evidence;
  - provided sample professional documents for use in classroom and homework exercises.
- The program reassessed after 3 years:
  - Writing communication scores improved 17% between 2009 and 2012

25



## Common issues with improvement actions

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- Improvement actions have no connection to the data
- Improvement actions are vague
  - “*The curriculum committee will review the results and determine the next steps.*”
  - “*We will continue to monitor student performance and make changes to the curriculum.*”
- Improvement actions do not have any follow-ups
  - Are the improvement actions from previous year/cycle implemented?
  - What is the impact of the improvement actions from the previous year/ cycle?
- Overemphasis on methodology (e.g. always focus on the measures)

26



## Step 6: Document assessment activities

Nuventive Improve AA - Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness

AA - Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness > Home

Unit Planning Summary

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✓ PO-06: Quality Assurance		1	1	1
✓ PO-07: Data Governance		1	0	0
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Document any time

Tell a coherent story

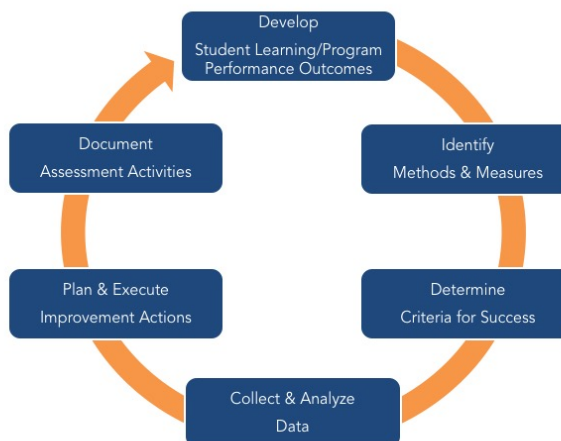
Weigh the pig AGAIN

27

## Adjust assessment for virtual instruction

- Choose an SLO that is least impacted by the modality
- Measure a previously assessed SLO again to see impact of virtual instruction
- Develop a new SLO specific to the virtual instruction setting

- Document throughout the year
- If you cannot carry out assessment, tell us why and what you will do next year to continue
- Reflect on the implication for online teaching
- Change what you can - small changes are fine



- Prioritize embedded measures
- Indirect measures may be particularly telling
- Take advantage of technology to collect student artifacts
- Find creative use of discussion boards
- Avoid artifacts that may not represent individual students' work
- Adjust CFS to virtual settings
- Keep the same CFS to allow for comparison b/w virtual and F2F

- Sampling
- Use historical data (e.g. combine multiple years)
- Target specific student population (e.g. concentration, level, demographic groups...)

28

## Build a faculty community through assessment

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*“Wisdom is needed throughout the entire process of assessment for all levels of students - from the articulation of outcomes statements to the selection and application of assessment measures to the ever-difficult loop-closing activities for improving student learning.”*

- Timothy Reese Cain



29

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30