Northern Michigan University

Assessment Planning Guide

Fall 2023

Brief outline, followed by detailed form

1. **Establish a Core Team; could include:** 
   1. Lead person or chair
   2. Department Head
   3. Assessment or curriculum committee or faculty members of a related committee
   4. Interested (or willing) faculty members
   5. Student
   6. External person
2. **Create and use foundational elements**
   1. Before you can assess student learning, you need to establish and clearly state your Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
   2. Curriculum Map: Where in your program is each outcome introduced, reinforced, and mastered? (Mapping can be flexible; if these three developmental levels are not perfect for your context, support in finding a good fit for you is available.)
3. **Plan a Feasible Project** 
   1. Manageable scope
      1. Focus on one or two of anything – outcome, type of evidence – at a time
      2. Consider sampling students (census for a small program, but anything over ~40 graduates per year you can randomly sample students to get a representative picture of achievement)
      3. Use existing work (e.g., student learning products that are done for courses, *not* specially for assessment)
      4. Use technology (Google drives, google forms, EduCat, etc.)
   2. Consider starting with a pilot project (test measures, try different evidence capture methods, refine rubrics, establish baselines, etc.)
4. **Involve Students** 
   1. Student(s) on the assessment team
   2. Students as a reporting audience
   3. prospective, current, and former students’ understanding of your program can be beneficial to them
5. **Involve All Program Faculty. Not everyone has to do all the work, but:** 
   1. Program faculty agree on PLOs, curriculum map, and research questions before starting
   2. Activities during department meeting or other interactions to update and inform broadly
   3. Faculty members submit performance data/evidence of student achievement
   4. Faculty members collaborate on use of report
6. **Assessment Planning Template & Timeline**

Use or adapt this template after the department/program develops learning outcomes and identifies the learning opportunities (i.e., activities, projects, courses) that help students meet your program’s expectations.

Assessment Plan Template[[1]](#footnote-1)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Department |  |
| Program |  |
| Department AoL Liaison/ Assessment Coordinator |  |
| Department Head |  |
| Person submitting this project plan |  |
| Date updated/submitted |  |
| List attachments (must include PLOs and curriculum map; may include other program background documents) |  |

**Help is available for any of these steps!** Contact the AoL Committee Chair (Lex van Blommestein, [lvanblom@nmu.edu](mailto:lvanblom@nmu.edu)) and/or Director of Institutional Accreditation & Assessment (Dan Cullen, [dcullen@nmu.edu](mailto:dcullen@nmu.edu)).

1. **Assessment Question(s) and/or Goal(s) of Assessment Activity.**

Given the outcome(s) being assessed, what do program faculty want to find out? Create a question(s) that is:

* 1. An answerable evaluative research question,
  2. Meaningful to faculty members or intended users

1. **Primary Audience of the Assessment Results**

List the primary users of the assessment results. Who will be acting on the findings of the study?

1. **Intended Purpose for the Assessment Results**

List the intended uses for the assessment results such as the specific actions that might be taken if the criteria for success are not met.

1. **Method(s) to Collect Evidence**

Brief description of what evidence of student learning will be collected, how, and by whom. Only decide on collection of evidence after carefully planning your research question. What can you observe that indicates how your students are performing? After you determine what you want to investigate, which program objective you are assessing, figure out what evidence aligns with that goal.

(For example, if you want to investigate how well your students are developing the ability to write in the structure of technical communications in your disciple, you can collect the primary course papers required for completion of their capstone course for summative assessment or papers 2nd- or 3rd-year students write in a 300-level course for formative assessment. In contrast, loosely-structured reflection papers in those courses, papers they submit in EN 211, scores on standardized multiple choice exams, or many other potentially available artifacts would not be well aligned with this question.)

1. **Method to Analyze/ Evaluate**

Brief description of how the evidence will be analyzed or evaluated and by whom. (When applicable, include the scoring criteria or rubric with this plan. Support on rubric development, norming exercises, or other related help is available if that would be useful.)

Examples of methods to analyze or evaluate evidence (some are stronger than others, but your evaluative needs should dictate what you use): apply a rubric (for example, to a capstone paper), score a multiple-choice test, report external evaluation by national testing agency, analyze interview transcripts, score performance on a practice exercise, summarize survey responses.

1. **Program Size and Sampling Technique**
2. State the number of students in the program and the number who graduate each year. (Contact the [Institutional Effectiveness](http://www.nmu.edu/ie) office if you need data.)
3. If evidence will be collected from a subset of students (i.e., a sample), describe the sampling technique to be used (most programs will sample instead of collecting and evaluating evidence from every student).
4. **Criteria for Success.**

State the target or the minimum results needed to indicate program success on this outcome or assessment question. (E.g., 90% will receive a “4” or “5” score on the Oral Presentation Rubric.) Or, indicate that results will serve as baseline data.

*When you’re getting started with this work:* Use the first assessment project to establish a baseline. You are better off spending time working on establishing a baseline than picking an arbitrary target just to pick a target. If you don’t have a good basis for selecting a target, do exploratory work first and hold off on specific targets until later in your assessment work.

1. **Assessment Team members[[2]](#footnote-2)**

List the name(s) of those who will oversee each of the following:

1. collecting evidence,
2. analyzing evidence,
3. reporting findings, and
4. using results.

Specifically address how you will include students in this work, or, if you have chosen not to include students, what the justification is for their exclusion.

1. **Timeline**

List the date or month/year in which the following assessment activities will take place:

1. Creation of foundational documents (PLOs and curriculum map)
2. Refinement of research question
3. Data collection
4. Data analysis
5. Presentation, discussion, and interpretation of results
6. Use of results
7. **This is a new approach to this work at NMU. This process should work for you! Please submit to the AoL Committee feedback on this template**
8. How did you modify this template if there were ways you found it could work better for you?
9. What was helpful about this template?
10. What suggestions can you offer to improve this template?

**Notes:**

The goal is to continuously make progress in this work. The year that your detailed assessment report is due, you should complete the portions of this template that are appropriate for your current work.

The assumptions should *not* be that the department’s AoL Liaison is the one to submit all program reports across the entire department. Faculty closest to the work for any given program should lead the assessment work, with support from the Department Head, the AoL Liaison, the AoL Committee, Institutional Effectiveness, and Academic Affairs.

Sampling is good practice; it is essential to sample *across the full range* of the population. Consider stratified random sampling if you have small subgroups that you want to make sure you include in your study. See <https://conjointly.com/kb/probability-sampling/> or contact [Institutional Effectiveness](http://www.nmu.edu/ie) for help.

1. All parts of this template can be modified. Add rows to the table if that would be helpful. Change or adjust questions. Include additional information beyond what is covered in the questions. Adapt to meet your needs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In order for AoL work to be effective, to be worth doing, it needs to be collaborative. One person in the department “taking care of that obligation” isn’t going to result in work that actually helps the department improve student learning. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)