

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS HANDBOOK



INSTITUTIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

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Institutional Effectiveness Handbook

A Practical Guide for Planning and Assessing Effectiveness

Volume 1 Edition 1

Table of Contents

Page

Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	6
Purpose	6
UNCW Mission Statement.....	6
UNCW Policy: Guidelines for Annual Reporting of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and Academic Program Outcomes Assessment Activities.....	6
Audience	7
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Accreditation.....	7
Quality Enhancement Plan	7
Institutional Effectiveness at UNCW	7
The UNCW Assessment Council.....	8
Outcomes Assessment.....	9
Meaning and Purpose of Assessment	9
Assessment Cycle.....	9
General Education Outcomes.....	9
Academic Program Student Learning Outcomes.....	10
Operational/Program Outcomes (POs).....	10
Academic Units	11
Administrative Units	12
Types of Evidence for the Assessment Cycle.....	12
Assessment Planning.....	14
Program/Unit Mission Statement	14
Developing Outcomes	15
Assessment Methods/Measures.....	17
Criteria for Success.....	18
Student Success Metrics	18
Findings and Analysis.....	19
Interpreting Results	19
Tips for Summarizing Results and Data Visualization	20
Tips for Using Results to Seek Improvement.....	20
Data Quality and Confidentiality	21

Best Practices in Outcomes Assessment 22

 Understanding Sample Sizes..... 22

 Understanding Confidence Intervals and Levels..... 22

 Validity and Reliability 22

Institutional Effectiveness Tools 23

 Taskstream’s Accountability Management System (AMS) by Watermark 23

 Digital Measures (DM) by Watermark..... 25

 The IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction (SRI) 26

APPENDICES 27

 APPENDIX I UNCW Assessment Calendar 27

 APPENDIX II Continuous Improvement Assessment Cycle 27

 APPENDIX III Glossary of Terms..... 28

 APPENDIX IV Suggested Free, Web-based Resources 33

 APPENDIX V Five Principles of Good Evidence 34

 APPENDIX VI Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Revised 35

 APPENDIX VII FAQs 36

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“Often it is a question not of providing evidence that assessment is occurring, but rather of demonstrating in real, tangible ways that the assessments are actually being used to inform planning, decision making, and resource allocation at the institution.”

- Michael Middaugh

Planning and Assessment in Higher Education:
Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness.

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington's culture of institutional effectiveness, and specifically outcomes assessment processes that demonstrate that the university makes decisions based on evidence, and seeks improvement and movement toward its strategic priorities and institutional mission in a cyclical and systematic way. This handbook will showcase our institutional effectiveness blueprint, and answer the question, "How do you assess the effectiveness of everything that's going on, do it in such a way that internal constituencies trust that assessment and learn from it, and do it in such a way that external constituencies find that assessment compelling and authentic?"



UNCW Mission Statement

The University of North Carolina Wilmington, the state's coastal university, is dedicated to the integration of teaching and mentoring with research and service. Our commitment to student engagement, creative inquiry, critical thinking, thoughtful expression, and responsible citizenship is expressed in our baccalaureate and masters' programs, as well as doctoral programs in areas of expertise that serve state needs. Our culture reflects our values of diversity and globalization, ethics and integrity, and excellence and innovation.

UNCW [Policy](#): Guidelines for Annual Reporting of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and Academic Program Outcomes Assessment Activities

Learning outcome assessment is:

- establishing what students are expected to be able to do after completion of an identifiable educational entity (course, academic major, degree, certificate, minor, University Studies, learning community, internship program, honors program, distance learning program, etc.),
- formulating and implementing a plan for determining the extent to which those expected learning outcomes are being achieved by the students, and
- acting on the findings of assessment to make improvements in the educational enterprise.

Program outcome assessment is:

- establishing expected outcomes for what an administrative unit seeks to accomplish for each of its degree (and certificate) programs,
- formulating and implementing a plan for determining the extent to which those outcomes are being achieved, and
- using the results to make improvements.

Sometimes this process is called strategic planning and assessment, sometimes it's called institutional effectiveness. For an academic department, these expected outcomes would likely include expected outcomes for faculty recruitment, faculty development, faculty research productivity, faculty grant activity, faculty teaching performance, community engagement, recruitment and retention of majors, graduation rates, job

placement, advising, etc. The planning and assessment of program outcomes involve all the activities of the department.

Audience

This handbook was developed to serve as a guide for stakeholders engaged in outcomes assessment processes here at UNCW, which includes, but is not limited to, unit heads, directors, assessment coordinators, faculty, administrators, and members of the campus community who express an interest in our assessment perspective.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Accreditation

Federal law requires that a higher education institution undergoing regional accreditation provide evidence of “success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution’s mission.” (Principles for Effective Assessment of Student Achievement, July 19, 2013). The regional accrediting body for UNCW is the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). SACSCOC offers a [Resource Manual](#) which serves as a guide for the assessment activities highlighted in this handbook.

Quality Enhancement Plan

The primary purpose of UNCW’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to impact positively student learning through improved applied learning experiences in three areas: critical thinking, thoughtful expression, and inquiry. A secondary purpose is to enrich the environment supporting student applied learning. The QEP—eTEAL: experiencing Transformative Education through Applied Learning—promises not only to meet, but also to exceed goals in these three areas of student learning. Find more information in the QEP [here](#).

Institutional Effectiveness at UNCW

The institutional effectiveness (IE) process at UNCW involves all academic programs, key administrative services, and campus-wide constituencies. This process is linked to decisions made at all levels; and provides a sound basis for fiscal decisions and resource allocations. UNCW is committed to continuous improvement



efforts that are based on assessing institutional performance with respect to our mission. Because IE is not part of a specific academic department, our team brings an unbiased perspective to the assessment process. The area of IE focuses on the support of methodologically sound assessment techniques, appropriate use of data, and meaningful interpretation of assessment results. IE assessment encompasses defining clearly articulated outcomes, implementing strategies to achieve these outcomes, assessing

achievement of those outcomes, and using results to seek improvement in programs, units, services, learning, planning, resource allocation and decision making. Visit us on the web: www.IE.XXX

The area of IE at UNCW resides within the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, which is currently located in Hoggard Hall, Suite 102-111. We support the campus community with outcomes assessment, student evaluations, faculty activity reporting, select surveys, and rankings and recognition. The IE staff supports the institutional mission through a number of services including workshops, consultations, and accreditation activities, all of which inform our continuous improvement assessment cycle, as shown in Appendix II. More information can be found on our website: www.IE.XXX

The UNCW Assessment Council

It is the University Assessment Council's responsibility to monitor the institution's evaluation and planning processes and ensure that the results of the planning and evaluation processes are used for the improvement of both educational programs and support services. The Assessment Council is convened by the Associate Provost of Institutional Research and Planning to make recommendations concerning learning and administrative assessment and evaluation to the University Cabinet, the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Faculty Senate University Studies Committee and others as warranted. The Council is the coordinating body for learning and program outcomes assessment and evaluation efforts on campus, defined as the systematic collection, evaluation, and use of information for the purpose of improving student learning and enriching the student experience. The Mission of the University Assessment Council is available [here](#). The University Assessment Council dedicates one meeting per year specifically for the purpose of critiquing the assessment system. Important questions for this group include:

1. Who will see the assessment results?
2. Who will make recommendations based on these results?
3. Who will take action based on the recommendations?
4. How can we focus on improvement more and assessment less?

Meaning and Purpose of Assessment

Institutional effectiveness activities in higher education are intended to inform stakeholders and decision-makers of the contributions and impact that the university, college, program or unit is making toward its priorities. Often in response to external reviews by accreditors or oversight bodies directed by state and/or federal agencies, efforts related to institutional effectiveness demonstrate our accountability to the community at large, including our students, their families and taxpayers. Institutional Effectiveness works to compile and organize evidence used by decision-makers regarding campus issues. As a best practice, UNCW, like other higher education institutions, utilizes outcomes assessment, as a part of the institutional effectiveness initiative to provide feedback and feedforward to our students, faculty, staff, friends, and campus community. Questions that drive this initiative include, but are not limited to:

1. What are we doing well?
2. What problems exist?
3. How do we use information to improve and celebrate success?
4. Do the improvements we make contribute to the development and growth of our students?

Assessment Cycle

The stages of assessment include (1) identifying outcomes and measures, (2) implementing evaluation methods, (3) collecting data, (4) analyzing and sharing results, (5) creating action steps for improvement, and (6) monitoring performance, as shown in Appendix II.

General Education Outcomes

Student learning outcomes for undergraduate degree programs are assessed in designated courses and experiences. Analysis of the results of these assessment methods are shared with campus constituencies, and recommendations for improvement are made available to stakeholders. The goals for each undergraduate student at UNCW are to:

- acquire foundational knowledge, theories and perspectives in a variety of disciplines (Foundational Knowledge);
- engage in rigorous, open-minded and imaginative inquiry (Inquiry);
- locate, evaluate, and effectively use information by applying a variety of academic and technological skills (Information Literacy);
- integrate multiple methods and perspectives to critically examine complex problems (Critical Thinking);
- effectively express meaningful ideas in speech and writing (Thoughtful Expression);
- demonstrate basic proficiency in speaking, listening, writing and reading in a language in addition to English (Second Language);
- describe and examine the importance and implications of human diversity (Diversity); and
- describe and examine the intellectual and ethical responsibilities of active global citizenship (Global Citizenship).

General Education Assessment at UNCW uses assignments that are embedded in courses, along with common rubrics for most of the Learning Goals. The Learning Goals are assessed on a 3-year recurring cycle.

Academic Program Student Learning Outcomes

“Assessment comprises a set of systematic methods for collecting valid and reliable evidence of what students know and can do at various stages in their academic careers . . . governed by formal statements of student learning outcomes that are developed by a program’s faculty or for the institution as a whole” (Ewell, 2006, p. 10). UNCW identifies expected student/program learning outcomes for each of its educational programs and many of its administrative units, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results. Learning outcomes should be clearly defined, measurable, attainable, but not underperforming, time-bound and inclusive of targets/benchmarks. Each academic program typically has between 5 and 8 student/program learning outcomes. Administrative units vary in number of learning outcomes. If you are responsible for developing SLOs for a non-academic unit, a dual function unit or an academic program, consider these key 4 questions:

1. What are the specific skills or abilities that students need upon completion of the experience?
2. What is the most essential knowledge that learners need to have acquired by the time they complete the learning experience?
3. What do students need to value most as a result of interacting within the experience?
4. How do these skills, abilities, or values related to the UNCW mission?

Also think deeply about the level of expected learning of students by organizing SLOs/PLOs around Bloom’s Taxonomy (See Appendix VI). According to this taxonomy, the action verbs within the outcome are important to pinpoint the action or behavior that you expect to observe and measure as students perform, achieve and master concepts during the learning experience. Certain verbs are unclear and subject to interpretation, such as “understand” and “learn”, while others focus on what the instructor will do rather than what the learner will do. When crafting SLOs/PLOs, consider the following questions: (1) will the action be performed by the student, (2) is the action observable, (3) can the action be measured, and (4) is the action direct evidence of the skill, knowledge or value that you want each completer to demonstrate? Strong SLOs/PLOs are a guide for students, and they communicate the most important “take-aways” from the learning experience.

Find below a few examples of co-curricular SLOs:

1. Students engaged in student organizations will be able to **articulate** the skills they have developed through their co-curricular involvement.
2. The learner will be able to **choose** appropriate databases in order to search for scholarly articles on their research topics.
3. Students will be able to **identify** financial aid resources for which they may qualify, submit applications and meet deadlines.

Operational/Program Outcomes (POs)

Operational outcomes are specific, measurable statements that describe desired performance. This type of outcome typically deals with functions, demand, quality, efficiency, effectiveness, fiscal or human resource allocations, impact, and satisfaction. A unit does not have to assess every outcome, every year. A clearly defined assessment schedule helps to communicate your priorities and the most appropriate allocation of resources to achieve your goals. There are typically three types of POs: results-oriented outcomes, process-oriented outcomes, and customer/client-oriented outcomes.

Process-oriented outcomes - focus on the specific steps in a process that lead, either positively or negatively, to a particular outcome.

1. Work with 8 of 10 faculty liaisons working in recruitment and retention to unify our College's marketing strategies.
2. Reduce website load time on tablets and mobile devices of varying sizes.
3. Shorten response time of faculty media requests to 4 business days.
4. Back-up 100% of media files on campus-wide network in case of system failure.

Results-oriented outcomes – focus on the products, overall quality of outputs, or the summative evaluation of a project.

1. Review of all official policies and procedures for relevance, accuracy and consistency on an annual basis.
2. Capture stories that reflect the university mission and brand, coordinating coverage via news releases and posts to web/social media within two weeks of initial publication.
3. Increase unit staff representation and active participation in strategic planning, task forces, Faculty Senate, campus committees and other groups.
4. Create and disseminate for review to the campus-wide committee, a comprehensive crisis communication plan draft by 10.14.2017.

Customer/Partner/Client Satisfaction outcomes – involve the customer or client determining the level of quality.

1. Increase alumni satisfaction with digital communication by 10%.
2. Increase satisfaction among campus collaborators (i.e., Admissions, Graduate Studies and School of Business) to enhance spring marketing campaign.

Academic Units

At UNCW, academic program assessment is establishing expected outcomes for what the unit seeks to accomplish for each of its degree and certificate programs, formulating and implementing a plan for determining the extent to which those outcomes are being achieved, and using the results to make improvements. For an academic unit, these expected outcomes include student learning goals for all programs at all levels and modalities, in addition to expected operational outcomes such as those for faculty recruitment, faculty development, faculty research productivity, faculty grant activity, faculty teaching performance, community engagement, recruitment and retention of majors, graduation rates, job placement, advising, etc. The planning and assessment of program outcomes involve all the activities of the unit, and are aligned to the institutional mission and strategic plan.



Administrative Units

Administrative units, including student support services, identify outcomes and measure the extent that these goals are achieved. These outcomes include goals related to service quality, efficiency, compliance, volume of unit activity, effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and staff development, as examples. These divisions may also measure student learning outcomes. As an example, the Office of Financial Aid may measure students' knowledge of responsible borrowing, and the Office of Campus Recreation may measure students' competencies in CPR. Furthermore, administrative units seek improvement by analyzing data from their assessment of operational and student learning outcomes, and developing strategies to improve learning, services and client/customer satisfaction. The success of these action steps helps to inform the refinement or creation of outcomes for the next assessment cycle. The planning and assessment of administrative outcomes involve all the primary functions of the unit, and are aligned to the institutional mission and strategic plan. The following questions are useful when approaching the assessment cycle process:

1. What does the unit intend to accomplish?
2. How successful is the unit in producing a desired or intended result?
3. How are the processes meeting best practices, rules or standards?
4. What are students/staff/faculty able to know, do and/or believe after receiving the administrative unit's services/interactions?
5. How satisfied are patrons/clients/customers with the quality of the services/interactions?
6. Are services and measures of quality an indication of client/customer interactions on campus and at a distance, as appropriate?

Types of Evidence for the Assessment Cycle

The materials submitted for evidence of outcomes assessment should be clear and complete, and include relevant documentation. The best evidence in support of outcomes assessment may differ from unit to unit. Appropriate, adequate responses in support of assessment should include different evidence depending on the unit's mission and priorities. You can't simply assert that you are seeking improvement. You must provide documentation to support your assertions. It is important to remove personally identifiable information from your artifacts, whenever possible. Redaction of ID numbers, names and other personal information helps to preserve the confidentiality of students, faculty and staff, as appropriate. Assessment reports should not release information about individual persons that has been guaranteed as confidential.

The following list of suggested evidence is not meant to be exhaustive or a mandate, but a guide.

- Completed inventories
- Completed evaluations
- Excerpts from documents and publications that include the policies, procedures, and criteria, also consistencies across different files
- Directives, emails, minutes that show policies and procedures are followed in general terms
- Specific examples showing policy compliance
- Catalog listing of degree requirements or advising checklist for a program
- Evidence the courses are offered (e.g., published class schedules)
- Copies of any consortium agreements, MOUs, or contracts
- Committee minutes

- State Reports
- Assessment instruments
- List of degrees offered
- Enrollment numbers, timetables
- Organizational or academic charts with descriptions
- A schedule of periodic review consistent with meeting minutes
- Details on training, rosters, handbooks, descriptions of ongoing professional development activities
- Details on selection processes
- Materials used as part of the self-examination process (e.g., excerpts from manuals, retreat handouts, summaries)
- Internal memos and/or written correspondence
- Recent compliance reports, audits, spreadsheets of data (e.g., comparisons, rosters, trends, hours, spending) with descriptions
- References to faculty handbooks or other official publications
- Tables and charts summarizing information, with descriptions
- Data on various locations and across modes of delivery
- Description of resources
- If sampling is used, (1) how the sampling is representative of the institution's mission, (2) documentation of a valid cross-section of units, and (3) make a case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's units.
- Discussion of the underlying rationale for the chosen criteria and thresholds
- Justification that all measures are intended to capture college-level learning

Assessment Planning

Assessment planning is a process that demonstrates that continuous improvement efforts are an integrated, cyclical, ongoing and systematic process which includes identifying outcomes and the means to measure them, analyzing findings, using the information to make decisions about improvement, and implementing improvements based on the data gathered. A final step involves determining whether the actions materialize into improved results. The most important aspect of this definition, if emphasis could be drawn to one item, is using information to seek improvement. The assessment planning process is most effective when outcomes are clearly defined, actionable and measurable, and evaluation methods produce the information you need to determine whether you achieved your goal(s). Assessment planning occurs in stages: (1) planning, (2) evaluating, (3) analyzing, (4) reflecting, (5) implementing strategy, and (6) monitoring performance (See APPENDIX II). Parts of the assessment plan (mission statement, outcomes and measures) are reported at the start of the academic year, and updates on progress (findings, analysis, action plans and status reports) are reported at least annually, depending on your predetermined assessment schedule. The Institutional Effectiveness team and related standing committees review assessment plans and give feedback to the units.

Program/Unit Mission Statement

Each unit or program needs a mission statement. A mission statement is a clear and concise statement of the general purpose and values of the program or unit. In broad terms, your mission statement should articulate the major functions, aims and guiding principles that serve as the foundation for your division. A good starting point in mission statement development is to consider how your unit supports the institutional mission, any overarching divisional mission statement, and specific strategic priorities. The questions that your mission statement should answer are: what your unit/program is (name, purpose and/or alignment within your overarching division), what your unit/program does (primary functions, activities, operations, offerings), and for whom it does it (faculty, students, staff, collaborators, stakeholders, participants, customers). Keep in mind that your mission statement should distinguish your unit from other units on campus. Find a checklist for a Mission Statement here:

- Is the statement clear and concise?
- Is it distinctive and memorable?
- Does it clearly state the purpose of your unit/program?
- Does it indicate the primary functions or activities of the unit/program?
- Does it indicate who the stakeholders are?
- Does it support the institutional mission, and/or the overarching mission of your division?
- Does it reflect the priorities and values of the unit/program?

Check out these mission statements below:

The School of Engineering's mission is to educate the next generation of engineering leaders, to create new knowledge, and to serve society. We strive to attract the most talented people in the world: to create, to innovate, and to see the unseen. Close knit and collaborative, the School is embedded in a hub for technology innovation and surrounded by the old world charm and cosmopolitan brio of Cambridge-Boston. The largest of MIT's five schools, the School of Engineering comprises about 70 percent of MIT's undergraduates and 45 percent of graduate students. Just over a third of MIT's faculty are in the School, and they generate more than half of the sponsored research at the Institute.

Founded on a broad-based commitment to student success in and out of the classroom, the Division of Student Affairs provides a framework for the meta-curricular experience with emphasis on the holistic development of the student that facilitates life-long growth in the areas of:

- *Intellectual and artistic curiosity*
- *Personal well-being*
- *Professional acumen*
- *Leadership*
- *Social responsibility*
- *Community engagement*

Central to our success is a commitment to cultivating deep and meaningful one-to-one relationships with students. We build and sustain collaborative relationships throughout the university to best serve the needs of our student body. Programs, services, and efforts are dedicated to the development of an engaged community among students, faculty, staff and alumni where meaningful and authentic exchanges are valued. Division of Student Affairs staff help students navigate and reflect upon challenges and transitions, and we empower them to become architects of their own learning and development.

Developing Outcomes

Developing Operational Outcomes

Operational outcomes are an outgrowth of the administrative unit's mission statement, and should be clearly linked to the UNCW Strategic Plan, or national or state standards. When you have a clear and succinct mission statement that includes the unit's intended audience, primary function and core activities, the operational outcomes are much easier to identify.

Operational outcomes are typically focused on areas such as:

- Compliance with professional or national standards or regulations.
- Efficiency with which the unit produces products, deliverables, or activities. This might include cost savings measures, turnaround time, improving a process, etc.
- Level or volume of activity.
- Benchmarking performance by using comparative data collected from other colleges, or peers.
- Beneficiaries or Client/Customer outcomes that are gains you want those you serve to make.
- Client satisfaction - How do those you serve rate their satisfaction with your unit's services?
- Inventory, maintenance, distribution, facilities, production, enrollment, or frequencies.

Operational outcomes are specific, measurable statements about improvements a unit would like to make to its programs or services. Operational outcomes should not be checklists, plans or a list of tasks, but should instead focus on goals for continuous improvement and actionable data, once measured. It is a good idea to avoid outcomes that will lead to "Yes/No" results, such as, "The unit will redesign the webpage." This type of outcome will not lead to results that will inform action steps because the findings will be, either "Yes, we redesigned the webpage" or "No, we did not redesign the webpage".

Verbs are important. You should use **active** and **explicit** verbs such as **increase, enhance, minimize, provide, reduce, and promote**, rather than vague or non-observable verbs such as to understand, to know, to have an

awareness of, to internalize, to grasp the significance of, or to learn. Focus on what the beneficiaries will be able to demonstrate once they have learned or internalized, if this type of outcome is important to your unit. These behaviors of learners are much easier to measure and observe.

Most objectives need to have three components: A measurable verb (also known as performance), the important conditions (if any) under which the performance is to occur, and the criterion of acceptable performance (target).

Outcomes should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound/Timely.

Specific-The operational outcome is related with key processes and services provided to students, customers, stakeholders and/or employees. The outcomes should be distinctive to the unit that is conducting assessment.

Measurable-The operational outcome should be practicable to collect accurate and reliable data. Consider your available resources (e.g., staff, technology, assessment support, and institutional level data) in determining whether the collection of data is a reasonable expectation).

Attainable-The operational outcome should be achievable or ascertainable within the assessment cycle, based on the ownership of the processes and functions related to the unit. Avoid outcomes that rely on other units or individuals to determine success.

Results-oriented- The operational outcome should assist the unit in articulating where program improvements are needed and priorities set. If you have previously measured an outcome, it is helpful to use this as the baseline for setting your target for next year.

Time-bound-The outcome should indicate the timeframe for data collection, e.g., every spring term.

Additionally, outcomes assessment is about improvement. If the unit is constantly setting outcomes that are immediately attainable or already achieved, then the unit probably has not set expectations high enough. Units are encouraged to identify outcomes that may be a stretch and will take effort and time to achieve. What is important is that the unit can show that they are making progress toward achieving that which is most important to the unit, and moves it closer to achieving its mission.

In developing your operational outcomes, consider these key questions:

1. What do you know about your current state of affairs in this area (provide metrics where possible)?
2. What results should you expect after providing services?
3. How do you know when your unit is both efficient and effective?
4. What does the end user experience through interaction with your unit?

A few examples of administrative outcomes are shared below.

1. The Office of Fidget Spinning will increase students' participation rates in fidget spinning workshops during the fall 2018 semester.
2. During the 2018-2019 AY, the Basket Weaving Office will reduce the response time for returning phone calls to individuals who have left a voice mail message to request basket weaving supplies.
3. The Advisement Office will, by year's end, serve fifty more students a week than we currently serve.
4. Academic tutors will be able to accurately cite research sources according to the guidelines outlined in the APA Style Manual, 8th edition or later in order to support the Undergraduate Research Office.

5. The Office of Student Athletes will measure the impact of regular study sessions by generating baseline data on attendance, mean term GPA's and number of semester hours earned in the sports of bobsledding, cricket, hacky sack, men's Frisbee and women's Frisbee during the spring semester.
6. Graduate Studies will increase the number of students who apply online so that the percentage of online degree program applications per term increases from 75% (in spring 2018) to 90% by the end of spring 2019.
7. By December 2018, the % of students in developmental math courses using math and writing tutoring services will increase by 15% as reported by student use rosters in the tutoring lab.

Developing Learning Outcomes

Student and program learning outcomes indicate what learners are able to demonstrate in terms of the knowledge, skills, and attitude upon complete of a program. Because student and program learning outcomes should be appropriate to and comprehensive of the program's academic discipline, consulting resources such as specialized accreditation entities, national or state professional organizations, and common practices in higher education institutions at the same level as your program, is a good strategy to ensure that your program is identifying appropriate outcomes in terms of relevancy, rigor, technical specifications, legal and ethical practices, licensure or certification requirements, disciplinary standards and program mission.

When developing student and program learning outcomes, consider the audience, behavior, condition, and degree of proficiency desired.

Audience: Who does the outcome pertain to? An example is, Program Completers will be able to critically analyze text and images in order to independently solve a problem with 80% accuracy.

Behavior: What do you expect students to know/be able to do? An example is, Program Completers will be able to critically analyze text and images in order to independently solve a problem with 80% accuracy.

Condition: Under what conditions or circumstances will learning be demonstrated? An example is, Program Completers will be able to critically analyze text and images in order to independently solve a problem with 80% accuracy.

Degree of Proficiency: How well will the behavior need to be performed and to what level? An example is, Program Completers will be able to critically analyze text and images in order to independently solve a problem with 80% accuracy.

Assessment Methods/Measures

Assessment measures or evaluation methods should be directly related to the outcome it is measuring. UNCW utilizes both direct and indirect measures, as well as multiple measures for outcomes. Direct measures of student learning outcomes (SLOs) include exams, minute papers, portfolios, simulations, projects and performances. Examples of indirect measure for SLOs are surveys or questionnaires, focus groups, exit interviews and student records. For operational outcomes, direct measures could include staff time, costs, reduction in errors, and competencies. Indirect measures might include perception surveys of students, as an example. All measures should be reliable, help the unit identify what to improve, and have sufficient validity. Other variable to consider when select measures and assessment methods are sustainability, ease-of-use, cost and time constraints. Think through these important questions when deciding on appropriate measures and methods:

1. When will assessment activities take place?
2. Where will information that reflects accomplishment of outcome be found?
3. How will the assessments be accomplished?
4. How will the data be collected?
5. What evaluation instrument will be used to collect data on outcome?
6. Will the collected data be able to provide the evidence of intended end results (outcome)?
7. Will the data be quantitative or qualitative?

Criteria for Success

A unit's criteria for success should be a reasonable level of improvement, or a performance target. Oftentimes, a unit will select a percentage or benchmark to achieve by a deadline. Criteria may be comparable to peer units or institutions, or set by professional organizations or accrediting bodies. As a general rule, the criteria for success can be identified based on the previous assessment cycle's results (if applicable), if the outcome was assessed previously.



Student Success Metrics

The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to our mission, the nature of the students we serve and the kinds of programs offered. We use multiple measures to document student success that include retention, progression and graduation rates. Find more information on student success metrics on our website: www.ie.XXX

Interpreting Results

As you work to interpret your assessment results, it is important to look for trends and patterns. Speak to sample size, reliability and validity of your results. Make sure for each outcome that the conclusion drawn is valid in light of your assessment method. Think about a few key questions as presented here:

1. What's the best way to present your findings, such as tallies, percentages, a cumulative score, a breakdown of sub-scores by area or rubric criterion/dimension, qualitative summaries with themes or examples from the data? Will you include data visualization such as charts, tables or images?
2. Did you achieve your target or benchmark?
3. How do the results compare to previous assessment cycles, external markers such as peer groups or best practices? Think about between group/peer comparisons, over-time comparisons and/or comparisons between episodes.
4. Did you get the most for your investment in time, energy, personnel and cost?
5. Did the sample you selected reflect all of your students in the program in terms of student demographics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and/or class level, etc.)?
6. Was scoring consistent across raters?
7. Did results follow expected patterns?

For qualitative analysis consider coding for themes, using methods of triangulation or corroborating information, and including examples from the narrative collected. Even in qualitative analysis, consideration should be given to the number of participants in this case, and the quality of the assessment methods. A rich, thick description makes a more convincing assertion of generalizability, but care should be given to lead with integrity, fairness and an unbiased approach. Address meaningful differences, interesting or unanticipated findings, and matters that the unit can use to focus continuous improvement efforts. Acknowledge possible limitations in your assessment methods, and highlight both strengths and weaknesses. Confidentiality is important.

In quantitative analysis, results may include rubric scores by criterion or dimensions. Dimensions are not usually summed since they commonly represent distinct concepts, knowledge or skills such that a total score would be meaningless. Frequency distributions are an easy way to condense the number of students who receive a particular score on an objective test or on a rubric. Calculating measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion are two other ways of summarizing information. The three most commonly used measures of central tendency include the mean, median and mode. Measures of dispersion show how scores are spread out above and below the measures of central tendency. The range, variance, and standard deviation are examples of measures of variability. See APPENDIX IV for additional resources and guides.

NOTE: If data are sparse or if informative non-response is recurrent, in a survey, as an example, the interpreter should describe what can be inferred from knowing that there are missing data points.

Tips for Summarizing Results and Data Visualization

When summarizing results, it is important to clean and organize the data first. This includes removing identifiable information, such as names, to ensure confidentiality, coding qualitative responses into numbers (be sure to keep notes explaining the meaning of each code), and eliminating “bad” data if necessary. After the data are clean and organized, visualize results in a meaningful way. It is often helpful to use tables, line graphs, or bar charts to get a comprehensible look at the big picture. Lastly, it is important to find the story in the data. Explain what the summary of data revealed and what the plan is for addressing what was learned.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when using data visualization techniques:

- Create simple charts
- Use round numbers where appropriate
- Use contrasting colors for comparisons
- Use gradients of one color for continuous data or ranges
- Use one color to highlight important information
- Avoid complex statistics (unless it is appropriate for audience)
- Sort results meaningfully (high to low; low to high)
- Use percentages instead of averages
- Show trend data where possible



Tips for Using Results to Seek Improvement

Assessment results are meant to be used to improve learning, effectiveness, satisfaction, etc., and to inform decision-making and resource allocation. The end of assessment is action. Once assessment results have been collected and analyzed, the unit should return to the intended outcomes:

- How do the results of the assessment meet those expectations?
- What do you make of these findings?
- What do they suggest about student learning or effectiveness, and what the institution or unit might do to enhance it?
- Were the standards that were set appropriate?
- Should performance expectations be changed?
- What aspects of the assessment process worked well, and what modifications might make it more effective?
- What were the most effective assessment tools?
- In what areas does the unit excel, and in what areas does it need to improve?

Document planned changes, those changes that have already been carried out in response to assessment results, and the impact those changes had on performance and effectiveness. Then, start the assessment cycle process all over again, for continuous quality improvement. Assessment results are important evidence on which to base requests for additional funding, curriculum changes, new faculty and staff lines, and more. Most importantly, the use of assessment results to make these kinds of changes to improve effectiveness and inform decision-making and planning is the reason why we assess. Even negative assessment results can have a powerful,

positive impact when they are used to improve performance, effectiveness, and ultimately, the institution's ability to achieve its mission.

Data Quality and Confidentiality

Special care shall be taken to (1) exercise reasonable care to ensure the accuracy of data reported in assessment reports, and (2) document the sources and quality of such data. Considerations of validity and reliability should be written, as appropriate. Assessment results and related reports should be written in ways that protect the identity of faculty, staff and students. Confidentiality is paramount in aggregate reporting and in particular, all publically available files. Written reports will include group results rather than information on individual participants.

Understanding Sample Sizes

A sample is a proportion of the entire population. You can use data from a sample to make inferences about the entire population. The larger the sample size, the more accurate the results. For assistance determining the appropriate size of your sample, please contact Institutional Effectiveness at ie@uncw.edu.

Understanding Confidence Intervals and Levels

Confidence intervals and confidence levels are used to estimate the level of accuracy of any data. Confidence levels are expressed as a percentage, usually at the 90%, 95%, or 99% level of confidence. The confidence level tells us that if the assessment tool was repeated, the results would match that of the actual population at the percentage of the confidence level. The confidence interval is expressed in plus or minus (+/-) percentage points and tells us how certain we are of the actual result. An example using both confidence levels and confidence interval to describe the level of accuracy would be: *We can be [level of confidence] that the result will be in the range of [result +/- confidence interval]*. For assistance with confidence levels and confidence intervals, please contact Institutional Effectiveness at ie@uncw.edu.



Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to how well an assessment tool measures what it is thought to measure. Reliability refers to the consistency of the results of an assessment tool. Validity and reliability are independent of each other; a measurement may be valid but not reliable, or reliable but not valid. For assistance with validity and reliability, please contact Institutional Effectiveness at ie@uncw.edu.

Taskstream's Accountability Management System (AMS) by Watermark

What is Taskstream?

UNCW's Educational Programs and Administrative and Educational Support Units complete annual outcomes assessment processes, which is also referred to as institutional effectiveness planning. This process is submitted and maintained in the web-based Taskstream Accountability Management System (AMS). The institution purchases an annual subscription to Taskstream AMS, a web-based solution to document, manage, monitor, and archive continuous improvement efforts, and related activities associated with regional and specialized accreditation and annual reporting. Access to AMS requires a unique username and password to ensure security and integrity of the process. If you are a first-time user and need a password and username, contact the Office of Institutional Research and Planning at ie@uncw.edu. Taskstream also offers an e-portfolio platform called the Learning Achievement Tool (LAT). Select programs on campus utilize LAT, and there is a student cost associated with each student subscription. AMS and LAT can work together when reporting on aggregate student performance in select academic programs.



Why use AMS?

AMS is a web-based portal designed to help you and UNCW manage content, resources and communication for major accountability and assessment processes. AMS provides the tools to help you and your colleagues define outcomes through the use of collaborative authoring tools. These tools facilitate consensus building around all aspects of outcomes assessment and accountability, including defining outcomes and planning for assessment. Specifically, campus units will manage learning and operational outcomes, assessment measures, findings, action plans, status reports and other related quality assurance evidence. The system allows the institution to report on comprehensive progress toward the university's mission and strategic priorities.

How do I access AMS?

As a member of a department or division that uses AMS in your organization's accountability process, you will require an AMS account with a unique username and password. An Institutional Effectiveness staff member will provide you with the information necessary to access the AMS system. Your AMS account will be associated with the participating area(s) (e.g. academic program, administrative division, etc.) in which you participate. For example, if you are part of the Electrical Engineering department, you will register your AMS account within the Electrical Engineering organizational area. The web address for AMS is: <https://login.taskstream.com/signon/>. Workspaces can be accessed by multiple members of your participating area.

What if I have questions or have lost/forgotten my username or password information for AMS?

While using AMS, you may have technical questions about the system. For support, you can access the help area at any time by clicking the *Help* link from the top right corner of the webpage. If you would prefer personal assistance, you can contact Taskstream's support team, Mentoring Services, by calling

1-800-311-5656 or by emailing them at help@taskstream.com. If you have questions regarding the requirements of your workspace or other methodological issues, please contact IE@uncw.edu. There is also a “Forgot Login” support link on the Taskstream sign in page: <https://login.taskstream.com/signon/>, which will prompt you to reset your login information.

What is my role in AMS?

There are two levels of permissions that you may be given for each workspace. You may be given only the ability to view the contents of the workspace or you may be granted editing access, as well. You can determine which level of access you were given by looking at the links associated with the workspace on your home page. No matter which level of access you are given, you will also be able to participate in discussions with other members of your participating area around each requirement. The discussion area is a very important part of your workspace. It provides an environment for you and your colleagues to discuss the content that you are including. If you have view only access, then the discussion areas provide a place for you to offer your suggestions and insights for the included content.

Quick Technical Guide for Taskstream

1. We recommend using a supported browser to get full Taskstream capability:
 - a. Microsoft Internet Explorer 7.0 and above (Windows)
 - b. Mozilla Firefox 3.5 and above (Windows)
 - c. Google Chrome 4.0 and above (Windows)
 - d. Mozilla Firefox 3.6 and above (Mac)
 - e. Apple Safari 4.0 (Mac)
 - f. Chrome 5.0 (Mac)
2. Regardless of the browser, you will need to have pop-ups, cookies and JavaScript enabled in order to use all the features of Taskstream.
3. Taskstream works equally well on a Mac or PC and on both desktops and laptops. Whether you're using Mac or PC, you can run Taskstream from your choice of Internet browsers. Many Taskstream features are also available from mobile devices using built-in Internet browsers. You do not require additional plugins or add-ons.
4. You must have an internet connection to edit your work in Taskstream and to perform real-time tasks.
5. There are a number of ways that data can be imported or exported within Taskstream such as Excel, Word, CSV, and pdf, depending on the report.
6. Subscribers can only be logged into to their account once at any given time. If you try to log into your account a second time -- even if you are using two different browsers -- you will be prompted to terminate your first session.
7. Taskstream is committed to making its tools accessible for all users, including people with disabilities. Tools comply with Federal Section 508 guidelines and W3C WCAG recommendations as described in the accessibility statement.
8. Generally, to print a page in Taskstream use either the print button or icon located within that page, or the print feature of your browser. Sometimes a single Taskstream window is divided into multiple frames that might print separately.

Digital Measures (DM) by Watermark

What is DM?

Digital Measures is a web-based tool that maintains faculty activity information, enhances reporting on faculty credentials, teaching, research and service, and connects faculty impact to campus-wide outcomes. Digital Measures is the official repository for faculty activities, and many features of the platform support faculty employment actions such as post-tenure review and applications for tenure, promotion and reappointment.

Why is DM important?

DM affords UNCW the opportunity to capture faculty activities and accomplishments in a systematic way, as well as improve the aggregate and transparent reporting of activities for both faculty and administrative staff. The ultimate goals of this tool are to reduce the number of requests for information directed to faculty, streamline internal reporting processes, promote UNCW's stellar achievements, increase scholarship, monitor compliance with accreditation standards, and attract talent in a faculty-friendly and comprehensive way.

How do I access DM?

When users visit [Digital Measures](#) they are prompted for a username and password. This combination is checked against a list of recognized accounts by Digital Measures and, if found, the user is granted access.

Lost/forgotten username or password information:

You can reset your DM password by logging in with your email address, and a password reset message will be sent to the email address associated with your account. For other questions, please contact IE@uncw.edu.

What is my role in DM?

Administrators can track annual evaluation materials and tenure and promotion processes on schedule using the DM platform. Faculty can document their accomplishments in DM throughout the year, so when it comes time to submit personnel review reports, the most cumbersome part of the task is already complete. DM allows faculty to attach supporting files like syllabi, grant award letters and full-text publications as a dedicated repository of their body of scholarly work.

How often should I update DM?

It is recommended that you review and update information at the end of the fall and spring semesters. For departments/colleges using DM for annual reviews, your profile should be as current as possible prior to the end of the fall semester. Keeping up with information during the year will:

- a) Ensure that you don't forget all the important things that you did,
- b) Reduce the amount of requests for information you get from administrators, and
- c) Make your life easier when it's time to prepare for annual review and RTP/PTR.

Can I import bibliographic information into DM?

Yes, you can usually upload a BibTeX file into DM so that you do not need to rekey those citations. Find details here on how to export publication information from a few common software systems into a BibTeX file: <https://www.digitalmeasures.com/activity-insight/docs/bibtex.html>.

DM Time Savers

- For many list items, one entry may closely resemble another one, such as multiple presentations on a similar topic at a yearly conference. You can quickly create a new entry containing the information from an existing item by following a few simple steps detailed here:
 1. Click on the Copy icon.
 2. Make any appropriate changes for the new entry, such as journal volume or conference year.
 3. Click the Save button to store the copy with its changes.
- PasteBoard allows a faculty member to copy text from one file, such as your CV in Word, and paste it into the PasteBoard. From the PasteBoard, you can select text, click-and-hold on the text you selected, and drag it into a field in the system to have it pasted into the field. To access the PasteBoard, click the text PasteBoard in the left-hand menu under Manage Activities. The PasteBoard will appear in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen and can be pulled anywhere on the screen as needed. Any text in the PasteBoard upon logging out will remain in the PasteBoard for future sessions.

The IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction (SRI)

What is the SRI?

The *Student Ratings of Instruction* tool provides students' feedback on course objectives, methods of instruction and participants' perceptions of the interactions and effectiveness of the class. These overall impressions of the students' experiences and progress on relevant learning objectives are provided to each instructor-of-record after the deadline for the submission of final course grades.

Why is this important?

Student evaluation feedback is often used to improve teaching and learning. To add, tenure and promotion decisions of faculty members will include a review of student ratings and comments, over time. Frequently, instructors use the negative results to improve curriculum, instruction, supplemental resources and time management in a course(s). Those results perceived as positive will typically be strengthened or increased in order to enhance the student experience and student achievement.

Who owns the data once the evaluations are complete?

All institutional data gathered in the IDEA process are the property of UNCW. Care is taken to only share details in the aggregate when reporting for regional accreditation purposes.

Find more information about IDEA here: <http://www.ideaedu.org/Services/Services-to-Improve-Teaching-and-Learning/Student-Ratings-of-Instruction>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

UNCW Assessment Calendar - Assessment at UNCW is a cyclical process divided into interconnected stages. The two-annual assessment cycle focuses on collecting data on select outcomes and strategies throughout the academic year. Units decide which outcomes to assess during this annual assessment cycle.

1. During fall - spring semesters, UNCW's faculty and staff are involved in evaluation and planning activities. Activities include review of unit and institutional benchmarks, setting of goal and objectives for the coming year, and operational and long-range budget planning. Annual reports of assessment activity for each academic year are due in the Office of the Vice Provost by the end of the first week in November of the following academic year.
2. During fall semester, college and school assessment directors will meet with the Vice Provost before the end of November to review and evaluate the annual reports.
3. Annual reports of assessment activities will be reviewed by the University Assessment Council at its meeting or meetings following the annual review and evaluation of the annual reports by the college/school assessment directors and Vice Provost.
4. The University Assessment Council will provide resulting recommendations for improvements in student learning and academic programming to the Provost.
5. During fall semester, UNCW's Leadership Team and Strategic Plan Steering Committee review the institution's five year Strategic Plan priorities and revises as needed based on outcomes.
6. During late summer, each division/department evaluates current goals and objectives, and uses the results to develop its improvement plans, goals and objectives for the coming year.
7. During the late spring, the Leadership Team meets to finalize the institution's operational budget for the coming year.
8. In mid-summer (June), the institution's Leadership reviews progress on the year's initiatives, goals and objectives. As a result, the Leadership Team sets institutional initiatives, benchmarks, goals, and objectives for the coming year.
9. During summer, the area of Institutional Effectiveness compiles and disseminates data from the previous academic year.
10. During spring semester, a mid-year review of institutional initiatives is conducted. Corrective action plans are revised/devised and implemented where necessary.

APPENDIX II

Continuous Improvement Assessment Cycle -The stages of assessment include (1) identifying outcomes and measures, (2) implementing evaluation methods, (3) collecting data, (4) analyzing and sharing results, (5) creating action steps for improvement, and (6) monitoring performance, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: UNCW Continuous Improvement Assessment Cycle



APPENDIX III

Glossary of Terms

1. **Accountability**—the demonstration or proof to external constituencies that the programs, services and management of an institution are responsible and effective.
2. **Achievement level** - indicates what level of efficiency, effectiveness, satisfaction, or student, program, or service performance or satisfaction is acceptable. (see Target or Benchmark)
3. **Action Plan** - specific actions that your unit/division takes to reach its short- and longer-term strategic outcomes. These plans specify the fiscal and human resources committed to and the time horizons for accomplishing the plans.
4. **Assessment** - a systematic process of gathering and interpreting information to learn how well your unit is performing, and using that information to modify your operations in order to improve that performance.
5. **Assessment Plan** - an outline that details operational, student learning and/or program outcomes, the direct and indirect assessment methods used to demonstrate the attainment of each outcome, a brief explanation of the assessment methods, an indication of which outcomes are addressed by each method, the intervals at which evidence is collected and reviewed, the target/achievement level desired, and the individual(s) responsible for the collection/review of evidence.

6. **Assessment Schedule** – a procedural plan that showcases the time and sequence of outcomes assessment activities, which could include how outcomes and methods rotate between cycles (SEE APPENDIX VIII).
7. **Benchmark** - specific standards against which divisions gauge success in achieving an outcome. Benchmarks determine the acceptable level of achievement for each outcome.
8. **Benchmarking** – the process of continuously comparing and measuring an organization against recognized leaders and similar organizations to gain information that will help the organization take action to improve its performance; processes and results that represent the best practices and best performance for similar activities, inside or outside your organization’s industry.
9. **Branch campus** – a location of an institutional that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature, (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
10. **Coherent Evidence** - evidence is orderly, logical, and consistent with other patterns of evidence presented.
11. **Comprehensive Standards** - more specific to the operations of an institution than the SACSCOC Core Requirements, the Comprehensive Standards (The Principles of Accreditation) represent good practice in higher education and establish a level of accomplishment expected of all institutions seeking Initial Accreditation or Reaffirmation of Accreditation.
12. **Convenience Sample** - a sample drawn because of its convenience; it is not a probability sample.
13. **Credit Hour** - for the purpose of accreditation and in agreement with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates (1) not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.
14. **Current Evidence**- the information supports an assessment of the current status of the unit.
15. **Curriculum Map** - a visual tool used to show the alignment of outcomes to instructional experiences, activities and/or courses within a program of study, often used to introduce new students and faculty to the program, inform curriculum discussions, achieve accreditation requirements, and systematically study the curriculum.
16. **Customer/Partner/Client Satisfaction Outcomes** – involve the customer or client determining the level of quality.
17. **Descriptor** – statement of expected performance at each level of performance for a particular criterion in a rubric.
18. **Direct Assessment** – methods that demonstrate realized learning, such as performance measures and objective tests. Other examples of performance measures include essays, presentations, demonstrations, and exhibits. Performance assessments that closely mimic professional practice or in-service expectations are called “authentic assessments”.
19. **Distance Education** - a formal educational process in which greater than 50% of the instruction (interactions between the instructor of record and learners) in a course occurs when students and

instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

20. **E-portfolio** – a digital collection of artifacts used to showcase experiences, accomplishments and/or learning over a specific period of time. Some students often use e-portfolio materials to demonstrate their knowledge, skills or values to prospective employers or admissions officers for graduate school.
21. **Effectiveness** - how well a process or a measure addresses its intended purpose.
22. **Ethical Reporting Practices** - the actions the institution and its representatives take to ensure that all its decisions, actions, and stakeholder interactions conform to its moral and professional principles of conduct. These principles should support all applicable laws and regulations and are the foundation for UNCW's culture and values.
23. **Feedback** - information that tells you how well you achieved a task or mastered a skill in your past performance. As an example, "Your outcomes are not clearly defined, and as a result, are not measurable."
24. **Feedforward** – information that tells you what you can do to proceed and ways that you can improve in the next iteration of an activity or project, or on future performance. As an example, "Please include measurable outcomes and a mission statement in your resubmission."
25. **Findings** - list of results based on the measure (methods & tools) used to assess the outcome.
26. **Focus Group** - a qualitative data-collection method that relies on facilitated discussions, with 3-10 participants who are asked a series of carefully constructed open-ended questions about their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. Focus groups are typically considered an indirect data-collection method.
27. **Formative assessment** - the gathering of information about learning or progress during the evolution of an experience, course or program; usually repeatedly to improve the experience.
28. **Frequency Table** - a table listing the number, fraction or percentage of observations in different ranges.
29. **General Education Assessment** – the plan and evaluation of campus-wide, general education competencies agreed upon by the faculty; more holistic in nature than program assessment, because competencies are measured across disciplines, rather than just within a single discipline.
30. **Indirect Assessment** – methods that provide some indication or insight about learning, such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and reflections. Oftentimes, these assessment methods involve the perspectives of employers of graduates, alumni and advisory boards, as examples.
31. **Innovation** - making meaningful change to improve products, processes, or organizational effectiveness and create new value for stakeholders. The outcome of innovation is a discontinuous or breakthrough improvement.
32. **Institutional Effectiveness** - the degree to which an institution (or department within the institution) is meeting its mission (or having its intended effect or impact).
33. **Minute Paper** – a short writing assignment that takes one minute to complete, and is commonly used as a class assessment technique for formative feedback to an instructor.
34. **Mission Statement** – a statement of your organization's overall function.
35. **Nonresponse Rate** - the fraction of non-responders in a survey; the number of non-responders divided by the number of people invited to participate (the number of sent questionnaires, the number of interview attempts, etc.).

36. **Operational Outcomes** – statements that describe the desired quality of key functions and services within the unit; should lead to improvements in unit responsibilities, service quality, efficiencies and/or effectiveness; focus on critical functions, services and processes that impact the unit and support the mission. An example would be, “Increase patron traffic during advising hours by 25%”.
37. **Outcomes Assessment** – the systematic collection, review and use of information to improve learning, processes, quality and/or effectiveness. The ultimate goal of assessment is to generate direct and indirect evidence that can be used to improve student success and learning, operational effectiveness and quality in service(s) across the institution, which in turn demonstrates achievement of the unit and university mission.
38. **Peer Institution** – an institution with similar or aspirational characteristics whose comparative data is used to establish goals, set priorities, measure progress and influence institutional improvement.
39. **Performance** - outputs and their outcomes obtained from processes, products, and customers that permit you to evaluate and compare your organization’s results to performance projections, standards, past results, goals, and other organizations’ results.
40. **Population** - the entire collection of people, animals, plants, things, etc. researchers wish to examine. Since populations are often too large to include every member in an investigation, researchers work with *samples* to describe or draw conclusions about the entire population using statistical tests.
41. **Process-oriented outcomes** - focus on the specific steps in a process that lead, either positively or negatively, to a particular outcome.
42. **Program** - a postsecondary educational program offered by an institution of higher education that leads to an academic credential such as a professional degree, certificate, or diploma.
43. **Qualitative Variable** - a qualitative variable is one whose values are adjectives, such as colors, genders, nationalities, and residency status.
44. **Quantitative Variable** - a variable that takes numerical values for which arithmetic makes sense, for example, counts, temperatures, weights, amounts of money, etc. For some variables that take numerical values, arithmetic with those values does not make sense; such variables are not quantitative. For example, adding and subtracting social security numbers does not make sense. Quantitative variables typically have units of measurement, such as inches, people, or pounds.
45. **Rubric** – a scoring tool that explicitly represent the performance expectations for an assignment or piece of work; divides the assigned work into component parts and provides clear descriptions of the characteristics of the work associated with each component at varying levels of mastery; used for a wide array of papers, projects, oral presentations, artistic performances, group work, etc.; used as scoring or grading guides, to provide formative feedback to support and guide ongoing learning efforts, or both.
46. **Quality** - the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something.
47. **Qualitative** - measures that contain non-numerical data such as vocal or written feedback from students, faculty and staff members. This data is analyzed for patterns and trends, and typically themes emerge from this analysis.
48. **Quantitative** - measures that collect numerical data that can be analyzed statistically.
49. **Regional Accreditation** –the recognition that an institution maintains standards requisite for its graduates to gain admission to other reputable institutions of higher learning or to achieve credentials for professional practice; an assurance to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality.

50. **Regional Accrediting Agency** – an authority recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education that monitors the quality of education or training offered by the institutions of higher education they accredit. The individual agencies accredit institutions in specific geographic regions of the country.
51. **Relevant Evidence** - the evidence directly addresses the requirement or standard under consideration and should provide the basis for the unit's actions designed to achieve compliance.
52. **Reliable Evidence**- the evidence can be consistently interpreted.
53. **Representative Evidence** -must reflect a larger body of evidence and not an isolated case. Additionally, evidence should: (1) entail interpretation and reflection; those responsible for submitting the evidence should have thought about its meaning and be able to interpret it appropriately to support a conclusion, (2) represent a combination of trend and "snapshot" data, and (3) draw from multiple indicators.
54. **Results** - outputs and outcomes achieved by your organization.
55. **Results-oriented outcomes** – focus on the products, overall quality of outputs, or the summative evaluation of a project.
56. **Sample** - a smaller group selected from a larger population. Researchers study samples to draw conclusions about total population.
57. **Sample Size** - the number of units in a sample from a population.
58. **Simple Random Sample** - a simple random sample of n units from a population is a random sample drawn by a procedure that is equally likely to give every collection of n units from the population.
59. **Specialized Accreditation** –normally applies to the evaluation of programs, departments, or schools which usually are parts of a total collegiate or other postsecondary institution.
60. **Stakeholders** - all groups that are or might be affected by your organization's actions and success.
61. **Standards** –statements of accomplishment that all students or programs are expected to meet or exceed; frequently considered the common, minimal level to be achieved; not necessarily representing the highest level of accomplishment.
62. **Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)** – rating instruments that ask learners to rate their perceptions of instructors and courses with the intent that the data can be used to inform strategies for improvement; ratings used to evaluate faculty's teaching effectiveness typically conducted within the last few weeks of courses, before final grades are assigned.
63. **Student Learning Outcomes** –competency statements about what learners should know, be able to do and value; the expectations that faculty or professional associations have for student learning that are intended or expected by the end of an experience such as a course or program. Outcome statements about student learning guide decisions about instruction, data collection, and sharpen the collective view of faculty and staff about intentions for their graduates. Furthermore, expected outcomes provide information to potential employers and informs students about the aims of higher education. Student learning outcomes describe student learning and NOT instructor behavior.
64. **Summative assessment** - the gathering of information at the conclusion of an experience, course, program, or the undergraduate career, as an example; used to improve the experience or learning for the next group of students or participants; often used to meet accountability requirements.
65. **Systematic** - well-ordered, repeatable, and exhibiting the use of data and information so that learning is possible.
66. **Target** - a specific criterion for success that allows your outcome to be measurable. You must ask yourself what level is acceptable and then seek to sustain or enhance that performance. Examples of targets are: 90% of graduates will pass the national licensing exam, 85% of customers will rate the service at "satisfied" or "highly satisfied", and 4 out of 5 inquiries will receive a call back within 24 hours.

67. **Trends** - information that shows the direction and rate of change of your organization's results or the consistency of its performance over time.
68. **Triangulation** - collection of data from multiple measures in order to show consistency of results.
69. **Value** - the perceived worth of a product, process, asset, or function relative to its cost and possible alternatives.
70. **Value-added** - the increase in learning or benefit that occurs during an experience, such as a course, program, or undergraduate education; requires a baseline measurement for comparison.
71. **Verifiable Evidence**- meaning assigned to the evidence can be corroborated, and the information can be replicated.

APPENDIX IV

Suggested Free, Web-based Resources

1. Assessing Administrative and Support Units: <http://assessmentcommons.org/assessing-administrative-support-units/>
2. Assessment Commons (contains links to college websites, handbooks, portfolio information and information on outcomes assessment): <http://assessmentcommons.org/>
3. Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (Student Success): <http://www.aplu.org/projects-and-initiatives/center-for-public-university-transformation/>
4. Authentic Assessment Toolbox: <http://jfmuller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/index.htm>
5. Bloom's Taxonomy: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/vu-wp0/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/2010/06/12092513/BloomsTaxonomy-mary-forehand.pdf>
6. College Navigator: <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=NC&l=93&ct=1&id=199218#service>
7. College Scorecard: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/school/?199218-University-of-North-Carolina-Wilmington>
8. Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education: <https://www.cas.edu/>
9. Degree Qualifications Profile: <http://degreeprofile.org/>
10. ERICae-A Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation: <http://ericae.net/>
11. Ewell, P. (n.d.) CHEA workshop on accreditation and student learning outcomes. Available online: http://www.chea.org/pdf/workshop_outcomes_ewell_02.pdf
12. Hutchings, P., Ewell, P., & Branta, T. (2012). AAHE principles of good practice: Aging nicely. Retrieved from: <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/PrinciplesofAssessment.html>.
13. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (national data on colleges and universities and allows you to run comparisons): <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>
14. National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment: <http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/TransparencyFramework.htm>
15. The Quality Assurance Commons for Higher and Postsecondary Education: <https://theqacommons.org/>
16. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC): <http://www.sacscoc.org/index.asp>
17. University of Nevada, Reno Learning Outcome Generator: <https://www.unr.edu/student-services/resources-and-downloads/persistence-research/assessment/learning-outcome-generator>
18. University of North Carolina Info Center (contains downloadable reports, data tables and interactive data tools): <http://www.northcarolina.edu/infocenter>

19. Who Does Your College Think Its Peers Are?: <https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/peers-network>

APPENDIX V

Five Principles of Good Evidence (Ewell, 2002, pp. 9-12)

Relevant. Any evidence advanced ought first to be demonstrably related to the question being investigated. While this principle may seem obvious, it is frequently violated in practice. In fact, institutions sometimes produce reams of statistics that are only marginally related to the questions they are trying to answer. It should be clear, instead, exactly what any advanced information is supposed to show, and why it was chosen over other potential sources of information. In practical terms, this means that institutions need to select carefully the kinds of evidence they use to make their case, according to either the specific standards set forth by the accrediting commission, or questions of importance to the institutions themselves. It means they not only should present the evidence, but also should set forth a clear rationale for why they think the evidence is related to the intent of the standard.

Verifiable. The validity of any evidence advanced must be verifiable. This is partly a matter of whether the process of assembling the evidence is replicable, and if repeating the process would yield a similar result. This property corresponds directly to the concept of reliability in measurement. Verifiability, however, is also a matter of documentation—whether sufficient information is available to enable a reviewer (or any third party) to corroborate independently what was found. Because these concepts constitute fundamental principles of scholarship, they should already be familiar to college faculties.

Representative. Any evidence advanced must be typical of an underlying situation or condition, not an isolated case. If statistics are presented based on a sample, therefore, evidence of the degree to which the sample is representative of the overall population ought to be provided. Furthermore, it is helpful to present such statistics over time (three to five years, for example) to check for inevitable variation and to make any underlying trends apparent. If the evidence provided is qualitative—for instance, in the form of case examples or documents—multiple instances should be given or additional data shown to indicate how typical the cases presented really are. In advancing this principle, commissions need to make it clear that sampling is generally useful and desirable. Sampling procedures can save considerable energy and allow for much more in-depth analysis and interpretation than would be possible when trying to gather data about all cases. But in both sampling and reporting, care must be taken to ensure that what is claimed is typical.

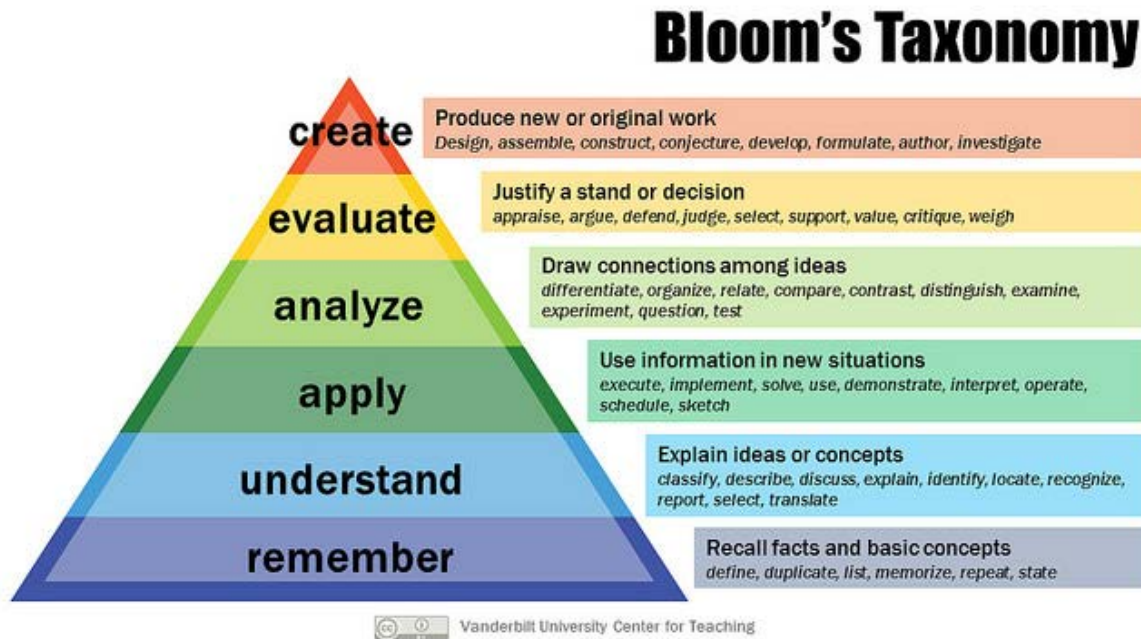
Cumulative. Evidence gains credibility as additional sources or methods for generating it are employed. Conclusions also become more believable when they can be independently corroborated by quite different sources. In evaluation, using multiple methods is often termed triangulation and helps guard against the inevitable flaws associated with any one approach. The same principle applies to qualitative evidence whose “weight” is enhanced both as new cases or testimony are added and when such additions are drawn from different sources. While not every statement advanced by an institution needs to be backed by information drawn from multiple sources, the entire body of evidence should be mutually reinforcing when presented to address a particular standard.

Actionable. Good evidence should provide institutions with specific guidance for action and improvement. This means that both the analysis and presentation of evidence must be disaggregated to reveal underlying patterns

of strength and weakness, or to uncover specific opportunities for intervention and improvement. The evidence provided must be reflectively analyzed and interpreted to reveal its specific implications for the institution.

APPENDIX VI

Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning *Revised*



Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) helps instructors to plan and deliver instruction that is aligned to intended student learning outcomes. In addition to this, the framework helps teachers design valid assessment tasks and methods that directly align to the SLOs. When used as a guide, the application of the hierarchy helps to ensure that instruction and assessments are aligned to the intended learning outcomes. The action verbs embedded in this taxonomy describe cognitive processes by which learners demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The original taxonomy was developed by Benjamin Bloom in 1956, and consisted of 6 major levels of knowledge, skills and abilities: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. The knowledge level is prerequisite for applying the skills and abilities in practice. In the revised taxonomy, knowledge remains the basis for the six levels, but the type of knowledge is further defined:

- Factual Knowledge
 - Knowledge of terminology
 - Knowledge of specific details and elements
- Conceptual Knowledge
 - Knowledge of classifications and categories
 - Knowledge of principles and generalizations
 - Knowledge of theories, models, and structures
- Procedural Knowledge
 - Knowledge of subject-specific skills and algorithms
 - Knowledge of subject-specific techniques and methods
 - Knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures
- Metacognitive Knowledge
 - Strategic Knowledge
 - Knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge
 - Self-knowledge

APPENDIX VII

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Do all of the measures need to be quantitative? We use lots of interviews, surveys and focus groups, so the comments are really important to our process.**

All of your data does not need to be quantitative. If you use text or voice to measure your outcomes, you should use qualitative methods to identify the patterns or trends that emerge from your review of the narrative. Use the themes and patterns to seek answers to your questions, and share in a systematic way, the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of your particular population. Your evidence might be field notes, recordings, and transcripts. It will be important to share how you recruited your participants, the measures you took to ensure informed consent and confidentiality.

- 2. Suppose our assessment yields data that are unreliable or too small to analyze?**

It is a good practice to describe the data that you collected, what the data suggests, and the limitations of the data. The improvements you report might be plans to increase your response rate, or revise your assessment methodology during one assessment cycle, in order to ensure a more representative data set in future cycles.

- 3. What if we discover that we collected data that doesn't truly assess the outcome we intended?**

Report on your assessment outcomes, measures, and findings, as conducted. Don't fabricate your results, but reflect on the mismatch and the limitations of your analysis. Also include your action steps for improvement to better assess your outcome(s).

- 4. Our results are always stellar. Our program and students always achieve the target, and poor performance is rare. How do we continuously improve what's already a success?**

The expectation is continuous improvement, and if your outcomes are consistently achieved you might consider more rigorous targets or selecting other outcomes which will lead to action steps. Also consider ways that students or customers might grow in knowledge, skill or values, as a result of their success of this outcome. For example, 100% of students might attend a professional conference, yet none serve as conference presenters or engage in grant writing. Your unit could improve by offering workshops on grant writing or how to respond to a call for conference proposals. Note that accreditation reviewers are skeptical of claims that there is no need for improvement.

- 5. Why can't grades count for outcomes assessment?**

This is a very common question from faculty. Although course grades are sometimes treated as a proxy for student learning, they are not always a reliable measure of program learning outcomes. Grades are a valuable source of information, and are often important for students and faculty to gauge progress toward course-specific learning objectives. Typically, grades are a reflection of a student's ability to satisfy the instructor's requirements, and often include particulars like attendance, effort, participation, timeliness, formatting, grammar, spelling, extra credit, bibliographic information, etc. On most occasions, grades do not purely reflect students' level of proficiency or mastery of knowledge, skills or dispositions that are directly related to the program learning outcomes and evidence of career-readiness. Because grades are inclusive of so many variables, and the variables and weights of the variables are so diverse and unique to the instructor, it is almost impossible to use grades as evidence or proof of students' progress toward the program learning outcomes.

Consider this scenario, three faculty members teach a course on educational leadership, and all sections of the course share a common student learning outcome, “Identify and utilize appropriate methodologies to address a research question.” Faculty Member-A requires learners to prepare two mini case studies and critique scholarly articles in order to demonstrate the course objective. She gives bonus points for use of APA format, and requires that students work in groups. Faculty Member-B requires learners to conduct applied research strategies in a local school district, and prepare reflections about their experiences in order to demonstrate mastery of the course objective. This faculty member deducts 15 points for late submissions, and requires students to work with a faculty mentor. Faculty Member-C requires learners to complete an IRB application, and conduct ethnographic studies in depressed neighborhoods in order to demonstrate mastery of the course objective. This faculty member offers a weighted scale for this assignment, and 20% of the point structure is related to presenting research at a national conference or submitting a proposal for publication to a scholarly journal. Here are the grades:

Faculty Member-A	80% received A’s and 20% received B’s
Faculty Member-B	90% received A’s and 10% received B’s
Faculty Member-C	80% received A’s, 10% received B’s and 10% received C’s

Since each of these faculty members has the academic freedom to customize the students’ experience and course requirements, the grade on this assignment, which is designed to show evidence of a completers’ ability to identify and utilize appropriate methodologies to address a research question, is difficult to use as evidence of competency. Looking purely at grades, what assertions could we make about the learners, in the aggregate? What knowledge, skills or dispositions do they have in common? What percentage of graduates from the educational leadership program have mastered this skill or demonstrated this knowledge at a proficient level? In what areas should the program faculty work to improve in terms of this outcome? What does the program know for sure? Because of these variances, grades are not always a reliable measure of students’ degree of proficiency in program learning outcomes.

6. Do improvements need to be major?

Action steps and improvement activities do not need to be extraordinary or a major overhaul for each assessment cycle. Examples of improvements could be policy revisions, changes to processes, or adjustments to student/customer experiences or curriculum, to name a few. The purpose of the assessment cycle is to seek improvement based on the analysis of data, and this cyclical process can lead to incremental improvement(s) over time, or breakthrough improvement(s) all at once.

7. Do we need student learning outcomes (SLOs) and program/operational outcomes (POs)?

Academic programs typically focus on student learning outcomes (SLOs). However, there are usually expectations within a program to achieve certain outcomes related to scholarship, service, advising, and student success metrics, such as retention, progression and graduation rates. Both types of outcomes are needed in this case. In administrative units, there are usually operational outcomes related to service quality, satisfaction, efficiency and effectiveness. However, there are occasions when students are expected to gain knowledge, skills or dispositions as a result of an experience facilitated by an administrative unit. Student learning and operational outcomes are needed in this case. A unit is not expected to manufacture a student learning experience, if it is not within the scope or purpose of its unit. However, all units are expected to report on appropriate outcomes that are mission-focused, and integrated into the institutional mission.

8. Why not have each program or unit do its 'own thing' with assessment and then just report results?

In order for our outcomes assessment results to be meaningful as a whole, there needs to be consistency in how the assessment plan, action plan and status reporting procedure is completed, compared and reported. Because of our SACSCOC accreditation standards, the institutional effectiveness process must be systematic, which means that it must be organized, integrated and cyclical. Elements of uniformity within our assessment plan process lean toward a structured and well-planned assessment system, and well-documented continuous improvement initiatives. There is lots of nimbleness within each unit's plan.

9. How do units find time to participate in assessment activities?

The work of assessment should be shared among teams and stakeholders, thus lightening the load on any given individual. The goal is to identify or create assessment methods that fit with or are in keeping with your primary functions, outputs and expectations. We are not encouraging units to select assessment practices that are so overly cumbersome, costly and time-consuming that they aren't sustainable, over a number of cycles. The *KISS* acronym is a good idea when thinking in terms of assessment.

10. Do we need to assess every outcome every year?

No. Most units develop an assessment schedule (below), which describes which outcomes are the focus for each assessment cycle. Many units rotate outcomes between those that are assessed and those that are monitored. For example, a unit could focus on odd outcomes in odd years, and even outcomes in even years, while monitoring performance in the off-year. Another approach is to develop a curriculum map, used in many academic programs, to map outcomes to specific courses or experiences. Each time the course or experience occurs, the outcome is assessed and reported in that assessment cycle. It is important to understand the population of students/customers/participants who have access to the course or experience. Keep in mind that assessments are a work in progress. Assessment planning is a cyclical procedure. When changes are made due to assessment of outcomes, reevaluation can create additional changes. Also, new outcomes always can be created or replace current outcomes. In each cycle, stakeholders can decide which outcomes are a priority in relationship to patterns, trends, mandates, and resources. The goal is to state a systematic process.

Assessment Schedule
Name of Program/Unit:

List Outcomes below:	Year 1 2018	Year 2 2019	Year 3 2020
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>