Assessment Guide 2020

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND DATA INFORMED ACTIONS

Assessment and Accreditation

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Contact the Assessment Office for help at assessment@nl.edu.
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Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices.
Contact the Assessment Office for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Introduction to Outcomes Assessment
What assessment is, why you should do it, what it looks like, & who is involved

What is assessment?
OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT, a process of measuring learning outcomes to analyze and reflect on student learning, and make informed decisions for improvement, is grounded in five core principles (below). Assessment provides everyone in the NLU community the opportunity to engage in the examination of student learning within courses, programs, and the University as a whole.

1. Meaningful
   This relates to what I do and value.

2. Impactful
   This leads to change and improvements.

3. Manageable
   This was not overwhelming; it's a part of my work.

4. Informative
   This taught me something, and raised more questions.

5. Robust
   This was useful in many ways.

Why should I do assessment¹?
When assessment is done in a meaningful way, it benefits us all!

Benefits to STUDENTS:
- Communicates expectations
- Promises standards or common core competencies that will be delivered
- Helps them engage in their own learning

Benefits to FACULTY AND STAFF:
- Helps determine what is working and what needs to be changed
- Facilitates interdisciplinary discussion throughout the University
- Provides evidence to justify resources to maintain or improve
- Provides evidence that student learning occurs
- Provides data that can inform decisions

Benefits to the UNIVERSITY:
- Connects effective teaching and curriculum to student learning
- Provides evidence of educational effectiveness
- Improves key University success indicators (persistence, graduation, and job placement rates)
- Enhances the University’s reputation as an innovative and quality educator

Benefits the COMMUNITY:
- Promises standards or common core competencies that will be delivered
- Provides evidence that student learning occurs throughout all areas of the University
- Provides evidence that our students are leaving NLU as informed, professional citizens

Assessment is NOT an evaluation of an individual student, faculty member, employee, or course section.
Assessment is a method used to identify our strengths and weaknesses based on the defined learning outcomes.

¹ Center for University Teaching, Learning, & Assessment [uwf.edu/cutla]

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### Levels of Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Assessment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who Typically is Involved</th>
<th>When?**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Course Level</td>
<td>Assessing learning in specific courses (CLOs)</td>
<td>Faculty***, Program Chairs and Coordinators, Deans</td>
<td>Not currently done systematically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Program Level</td>
<td>Assessing learning outcomes of a program of study (PLOs)</td>
<td>Faculty, Program Chairs and Coordinators, Deans</td>
<td>Annually plans set in fall and reports come in summer/early fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs Area Level</td>
<td>Assessing student-facing services and areas contributions to learning</td>
<td>Student services related area staff, associate directors and directors</td>
<td>Annually plans set in fall and reports come in summer/early fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Learning Outcomes Level*</td>
<td>Assessing the outcomes NLU expects every student to develop here (ULOs)</td>
<td>University Assessment Committee (UAC), program chairs and coordinators, student affairs staff</td>
<td>Annually with report in fall/winter using data from across the university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*General Education outcomes are bachelors' level ULOs. These are assessed/reported on like an academic program and referred to in the ULO reporting efforts.

**According to college/university timelines determined for the year

***Unless otherwise designated, mentions of "faculty" throughout this entire guide include adjunct faculty.

### What does assessment look like?

1. Start your planning journey! Faculty and staff should meet with the assessment representative for your area. Adjunct faculty should talk to their faculty contact or program chair. Everyone can contact the assessment office (assessment@nl.edu) for support!
   a. Confirm your learning outcomes and mapping (curriculum and ULO alignment)
   b. Discuss goals and assessment interests for the year
2. Select outcomes to address this cycle
3. Choose robust and meaningful measures. Set appropriate targets for success.
4. Finalize and submit your assessment plan
5. Collect data!
6. Analyze the assessment data and summarize the results. Ask for help if this gets overwhelming!
7. Interpret your results in your annual assessment report
   a. What did you learn? What do the results say about student learning and success?
   b. Where are students excelling? What areas are they the weakest?
   c. What are the strengths and areas for improvement that are highlighted by the results?
   d. How appropriate were the targets you set?
8. Discuss the assessment results as they relate to the ULOs that aligned to the outcomes you assessed.
9. Reflect and provide feedback on the assessment cycle and process
10. Determine your next steps in your Action Plan
   a. List of more information needed to make an improvement plan
   b. List of meetings or individuals to discuss results and next steps with
   c. Changes to the assessment plan for next cycle, curriculum or program activities, processes or services for students
11. Close the Loop from last cycle! What did you do with the results from the prior year? Any updates on your prior action plan?
Assessment and Accreditation
Assessment supports with planning, data collection, and reporting on student learning outcomes across the university. Part of assessment efforts include NLU’s prior learning assessment and credit for prior learning efforts. The Accreditation team manages regional accreditation, state licensing and approval, and regulatory compliance.

The goal of assessment at NLU is to exhibit accountability for continuous improvement as an institution; assess whether students are developing the knowledge, skills, and competencies expected of NLU graduates; and to create a culture of data-informed inquiry.

If at any time you have questions or concerns regarding the assessment process, please contact us. We are here to help make the process meaningful and manageable for you and your department.

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External Resources
ASSESS Listserv from UKentucky - https://lsv.uky.edu/scripts/wa.exe?A0=ASSESS&A0=ASSESS
Assessment Commons - http://assessmentcommons.org/
Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education - https://www.aalhe.org/default.aspx
Chicago Area Assessment Group - http://www.chicagoassessment.org/home
Joe’s Blogs - https://www.joebookslevy.com/#joe-writes
National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NIOLA) - https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/
Student Affairs Assessment Leaders - http://studentaffairsassessment.org/

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Mission Statement

Like all great adventures, we start assessment with our mission. A clear mission statement allows departments and programs to focus on what they intend to accomplish. Mission statements should be shared by faculty, staff, administrators, and students to provide clear expectations. While mission statements should be publicly accessible, it is important immediate and internal audiences are aware and clear about an area’s purpose and intended accomplishments.

When writing a mission statement, consider the following:

1. Alignment to National Louis University’s mission statement and values
2. Description of the program or department
3. Realistic to achieve – not a vision statement
4. Provides direction for future work
5. Specifies the function and activities
6. Specifies expectations of students
7. Clarifies the connection between teaching/activities and student learning
8. Describes impact on the community
9. Developed by faculty/staff through collaboration and guidance from chairs and directors
10. Feedback provided by students and/or stakeholders
11. Can be understood by all students and community members (uses inclusive language)
12. Addresses the standards or competencies of accreditation agencies or professional organizations

The Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) provides professional standards for higher education areas, offices, and programs. These standards provide example mission statements and points of focus for each area, office, and program. The general standards provided by CAS are useful if your area is not covered by the current CAS edition.

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Equity in Assessment Practice

Equity should be a focus throughout the assessment process. Equity-focused assessment practices mean that all students are provided an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, or abilities for each learning outcome. To make this promise to our students, NLU recommends the considerations and suggestions from the National Institute for Learning Outcome Assessment (NILOA), and other resources (below).

To embed equity throughout your assessment process (NILOA, Equity in Assessment, 2020):

- Check biases and ask reflective questions throughout the assessment process to address assumptions and positions of privilege.
- Use multiple sources of evidence appropriate for the students being assessed and assessment effort.
- Include student perspectives and take action based on perspectives.
- Increase transparency in assessment results and actions taken.
- Ensure collected data can be meaningfully disaggregated and interrogated.
- Make evidence-based changes that address issues of equity that are context-specific.

Equity work is on-going and never perfect. NLU faculty and staff strive to continue this important work through on-going dialogues, critical reflections, and continued improvement. Look for Equity Focus sections throughout this guide on suggestions for making equity embedded throughout the assessment cycle. To help spot or signal equity content, look for this pink leaf symbol:

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Equity Resources


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Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Developing Outcomes

Articulating objectives and outcomes are the first step in assessment. Clarifying what we are trying to accomplish allows us to clearly design learning experiences and choose appropriate measures. Terminology used in assessment communities may feel inconsistent at times (goals, outcomes, and objectives). At NLU, program objectives and learning outcomes are defined below. Note that learning experiences are any workshop, activity, course, or program that was designed to develop learning. This section focuses on developing effective student learning outcomes.

Program Objectives

Program objectives are the activities to be completed or delivered area (program, office, department). Objectives should be the actions implemented to achieve the mission. Having four to six objectives is suggested.

Here are some starting questions to developing program objectives:

- What do you hope to accomplish?
- What is the result of your work?
- How will students receive these services or participate in these activities?
- Are there any goals for your area that need to be addressed?

Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes examine cognitive skills or behaviors that students develop through department interactions; measurable, transferable skill development. They are statements indicating what a participant (usually students) will know, think, or be able to do as a result of an event, activity, program, etc. Learning outcomes should also align and mirror any programmatic accreditation or professional standards/competencies for your area. Consider having 3 to 6 outcomes that focus on the most important goals of the learning experience and your mission.

Typically, outcomes are made up of:

By the end of the [learning experience], students will be able to [verb] + [learning details].

Many people start with the verb when writing learning outcomes, but this is also where many fall short for developing learning outcomes. Avoid using words such as, “know” and “understand” because they are not measurable or directly observable. “Demonstrate the ability to” can also be redundant in learning outcome statements and can usually be left out, but this is a preference for some. Start with a verb search to help you develop strong learning outcomes. Bloom’s Taxonomy (Appendix A), the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, and the SOLO Taxonomy are great starting places.

Here are some starting questions to help you write your learning outcomes (Harper College, Assessment Guide):

- What are the important concepts that students should be able to articulate and define at the end of the course or program?
- What should a student be able to do as a result of the learning experience?
- What level of information should a student be able to retain or master?
- What are the most important skills a student should demonstrate after the experience?
- How will students develop these skills and how would you assess their mastery?
- Are there any standards, competencies or discipline-specific goals that students should meet or accomplish in order to be success in their field?

Purpose and Benefits

Learning outcomes guide course, program, and service design. Stating what you want a student to know or be able to do after an experience, you can then think about your curriculum map as an actual map. Outcomes are the destinations. Outcomes also express student expectations. Clearly stating learning outcomes helps students take their learning experience into their own hands. Students should not have to guess what they are getting from their education.

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Characteristics of Well-Written Outcomes

Focus on the end results when writing (or revising) your learning outcomes. Statements should describe what students will be able to do after the learning experience (an event, course, program, etc.) ends.

Whether creating from scratch or making revisions, consider these key characteristics for well-written learning outcomes:

- Learning outcomes state what a student will be able to do or think
- Learning outcomes use measurable action verbs
- Learning outcomes are manageable after the learning experience takes place
- Learning outcomes are meaningful to the goals and mission of the department
- Learning outcomes are specifically tailored to the learning experience
- Learning outcomes are understandable to others

Elements of Learning Outcomes

Well-written learning outcomes contain the four essential elements.

1. Who is expected to learn?
2. What learning is expected?
3. When/where is learning expected?
4. Why is learning expected?

Put it All Together

Once your outcomes are developed or revised, share out and add in any clarifying context information that is important for the reader. Outcomes should be shared with your office, department, division, College, and the NLU community. Faculty and staff better serve students when they know the clear end goal of the learning experience they are providing. Likewise, students learning better when they know the expectations of their learning. Course learning outcomes should be listed on the course syllabus. Program learning outcomes should be prominent on the program's webpage and listed in NLU's online course catalog. University learning outcomes are listed on the Assessment website.

Finally, don't forget to go back and connect your student learning outcomes with other outcomes at the University (e.g., CLOs to PLOs to ULOs), and accreditation or professional standards. Curriculum mapping and outcome alignment helps us focus our efforts and see where we are missing learning opportunities for our students. Curriculum mapping is described in full in the following section of the Assessment Guide.

Regular efforts like program review, assessment planning, and reporting afford excellent times to review your outcomes.

Equity Focus

Outcome statement should always be written in ways that are understandable by all students and external stakeholders. Consider engaging students to receive feedback on learning outcomes. View your outcomes as promises to potential and current students – are you showcasing your program, course, event, or discipline in the clearest way?

Resources for Outcome Writing

- A Brief Guide to Creating Learning Outcomes by Joe Levy
- How to Write Learning Goals by Stanford University
- The Assessment team at NLU
- Writing Measurable Learning Outcomes by Sandi Osters and F. Simore Tiu from Gavilan College
- Writing SMART Learning Objectives by UNCW
- Writing Student Learning Outcomes by UW-Madison

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nlu.edu.
Curriculum Mapping

What is curriculum mapping? Why should we all care?
Curriculum mapping is the process of aligning outcomes between multiple levels (course, general education, program, college, university). Learning outcomes are developed at multiple levels and aligning them allows us to visually show how educational experiences work together to develop students. The purpose of creating a curriculum map is to improve the coherence of a course or program, as well as increase its effectiveness.

Curriculum maps are the blueprints to our programs. Mapping provides a comprehensive, time-progressive visual of students’ educational experience. This mapping helps us…

1. Rationalize the inclusion of courses in the program or development of courses to address gaps
2. Highlights redundancies of content or gaps
3. Assess the timing of content throughout the program (sequence of courses), such as when and how often concepts are introduced, reinforced, or demonstrated
4. Visually show the connection between outcomes, courses, and programmatic accreditation standards or professional competencies

Curriculum mapping is not [just] an assessment thing.
Curriculum mapping isn’t initially for assessment activities, but is often used in assessment planning. Because there are many, the primary uses of curriculum maps include:

- **Addressing issues** of access, equity, and pathways to learning outcome achievement
- **Backward designing** of curriculum in a program
- Ensuring coverage/adherence to any **external standards or competencies** (where applicable)
- Determining the role of course **pre-requisites** or gatekeeper courses
- Examining and determining the optimal **course sequence** to a program
- Developing **advising tools** that provide students with sequence, timing, and expectations of a program
- Informing curriculum **development** and course design
  - Are there any learning outcomes that are not addresses in courses?
  - Are there any courses that do not address learning outcomes?
- Confirming student **exposure to learning** outcomes is sufficient throughout the program
  - Are they introduced to core outcomes only early on, or only at the end of the program?
  - Are they provided enough opportunities to reinforce and master outcomes?

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
So what does this have to do with assessment?

**Curriculum mapping can inform assessment activities.** It allows for conversation on the mechanisms, approaches, and methods chosen for students to demonstrate learning. Mapping allows for examination of when, where, and how well students are able to demonstrate their learning throughout the program and for each outcome. Curriculum mapping, in conjunction with assessment planning, can be used to help answer the following questions:

- Does the learning outcome match the method we are using to assess learning?
- Is the outcome being assessed throughout the program?
- Are students achieving higher levels of learning attainment for the outcome as they complete the program?
- Are we providing various methods of demonstrating learning, or are we overusing one method (ex: final papers)?

Results of assessment can be used to inform or modify curriculum, and therefore impact the curriculum map. Assessment can then be used to measure the impact of curriculum changes on student learning.

How do we do curriculum mapping?

There are multiple ways to map curriculum alignment! Best practices involve engaging faculty and staff (ideally even students!) throughout the process to develop a complete picture of the student experience. **Curriculum maps should be developed alongside curriculum design, program development, or program review activities.** While it can feel that curriculum mapping is a standalone activity, it is important to have course sequence and learning outcome alignment in mind while revising, redesigning, or developing course and program curriculum. There are three common steps to curriculum mapping:

1. Compile Outcomes
   a. Compile the list of program learning outcomes (PLOs) or student learning outcomes (SLOs), if a non-academic area or program
   b. (Academic areas) Compile the list of courses in the program, course learning outcomes (CLOs), and differentiating between required and elective courses
   c. Compile the list of University learning outcomes (ULOs)
   d. Compile the list of professional standards/competencies and any required accreditation standards
   e. Compile a list of required or recommended co-curricular educational experiences related to the program (internships, research opportunities, licensing or comprehensive exams, student organizations or clubs, etc.)

2. Map Outcomes
   a. Map courses to program learning outcomes (PLOs) by indicating which course learning outcomes (CLOs) relate to the PLOs (Ex: CLOs 1, 5, 6 to PLO3). Optional: indicate if the program learning outcome is introduced, reinforced, or demonstrated in a particular course (Ex: COURSE123 – PLO3 Introduced and PLO4 Reinforced)
   b. Map PLOs and SLOs to university learning outcomes (ULOs) (Ex: PLO3 to ULOs 1 and 4)
   c. Map professional competencies and accreditation standards to PLOs
   d. Map other educational experiences for students to appropriate outcomes as needed
   e. (Optional) Some faculty include key assignments or milestones as details with courses or for PLOs

3. Share Out and Review Map
   a. Share your map with colleagues (and students, if possible) to get feedback and review outcome alignment
      Colleagues and students can also provide input on how understandable your curriculum map is to others
   b. Check if you are missing outcomes that should have been included, or connections to experiences that weren't apparent when mapping outcomes

4. Bonus Step! Utilize Map
   a. Examine the visual representation as a group and discuss potential redundancy or gaps in curriculum and program sequencing
   b. Backward design program curriculum or determine the optimal course sequence
   c. Orient new faculty (including adjuncts) to the program, to give context to assigned courses, create shared understanding of learning goals, and develop advising to guide students through their experience

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Considerations for Outcome Alignment
When determining appropriate alignment of outcomes, there are three considerations to reflect on first:

1. Determine whether outcome is required/expected in result or observation of intervention.
2. Determine whether the intervention is intentionally designed to promote the outcome.
3. Your ability to defend the connection, and articulate its meaning, to a third party.

Often, #1 will be evident, but the key is having both #1 and #2 present to confirm outcome mapping or alignment to other outcomes, standards, artifacts, or interventions.

**YES Example:** Assume there is a case study asking students to reflect on a presented problem. Purpose (and focus of grading rubric) for this assignment is how students take in and utilize information to find a solution or recommendation to problem.

Faculty uses two-part considerations to map to university outcome of Analytic Inquiry (ULO3a)
- Part 1: Is analytic inquiry required/expected in the assignment? **Yes.**
- Part 2: Was the assignment designed to intentionally promote or enhance learning around analytic inquiry? **Yes.**
- **Parts 1 and 2 were satisfied, so this should be mapped.**

**NO Example:** Assume there is a math test asking students to use a specific equation to solve a presented problem. Purpose (and focus of test scoring) is to see how well students apply learning of equation to solve a problem.

Faculty uses two-part considerations to map to university outcome of Communicative Fluency (ULO3f)
- Part 1: Is communicative fluency required/expected in the assignment? **Yes.**
- Part 2: Was the assignment designed to intentionally promote or enhance learning around communicative fluency? **No.**
- **Parts 1 and 2 were not satisfied, so this should not be mapped.**

Resources for Mapping
- [Colorado University Boulder Mapping Resource](#)
- [Curriculum Decisions: Mapping Overview](#)
- [How Outcome Mapping Can Help You Challenge and Support Your Students](#)
- [NIOLA Mapping Learning: A Toolkit](#)
Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices.
Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Assessment Planning

Purpose and Benefits
Assessment plans are an important part of the assessment process. Planning allows us to reflect critically on data we already have and set meaningful but manageable goals for the next cycle. Without an assessment plan, it is easy to get lost in what data is needed and how to interpret successful achievement of an outcome. Use the planning process to create a formal plan that focuses on the questions you have about students and test assumptions of your learning outcomes. The planning process also gives space to describe recent or planned changes to curriculum, strategy, or processes that can impact student learning and success.

Assessment plans can be formative, summative, or use a combination of the two forms. Formative assessments take place while the learning experience is occurring in order to provide immediate feedback on how outcomes are being met. This type of assessment allows for real-time improvements to be made. Summative assessments take place after a learning experience is completed in order to see student performance over the entirety of their learning in inform future practice. Summative assessment allows for reflection that can be used to improve in the future. Using a mix of formative and summative assessment practices in your annual plan can make your assessment approach stronger. For example, including embedded, formative assessment activities in courses allows for real-time changes to be made to best serve students during their respective learning experiences, while summative assessment of learning outcomes throughout the program occurs with key, signature measures. While each of these methods serves a purpose, the combination provides a more active and comprehensive picture of student learning in the program.

Review your area or college’s Assessment Handbook (if applicable) and Templates for specific processes (links at end of section).

Selecting an Assessment Focus and Outcomes
The focus of your assessment sets the stage for the outcomes, measures, and targets you select. Your assessment focus can be determined by current accreditation or professional association requirements and interests, a recent change in curriculum or processes, a trend you noticed or would like to know more about, or based on additional questions the prior assessment year brought to your attention.

The following questions may help you select an assessment focus:

- What questions do you have about student learning? What outcomes align to these questions? How can we leverage assessment to answer these questions?
- Do you have an accreditation or self-study coming up that needs special assessment focus?
  - Accreditation or self-study preparation starts years prior to the deadline or site visit (at least 3!)
  - Double check at the start of every assessment cycle that you are collecting the data you need for your self-study and visit!
  - Collecting data aligned to external standards does not always mean using the same assessment method. Be sure to check with accreditor needs or criteria, however, as there may be an expectation for multiple years of the same data to be reported at time of visit or self-study.
- Have you changed anything based on the results of the prior assessment cycle that you’d like to measure again?
- What does trend data say about your outcomes? Have they all been assessed at least once in the past three years? Do any need to be assessed this cycle? Can any be paused or set aside for this year?
- Is anything new going on that makes you question the achievement of particular outcomes?

Learn from the past!
Start each assessment cycle by reflecting on what you learned and changed as a results of the previous cycle.

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Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Some example questions that act as the assessment focus:

- How well can students demonstrate particular skills at different points across the program curriculum?
- Are students progressing through their courses and growing their skills in a particular outcome?
- Where are students struggling the most in the core classes? Where are they performing the best?
- Are the incoming students entering with the appropriate skills? If not, how fast are they reaching appropriate levels of competency?
- How did the change I made to my pedagogy impact student performance in particular outcomes?

Measuring Outcomes

Choosing the appropriate method for assessing your outcome depends largely on the outcome itself, prior data available, data collection feasibility, and timeframe to complete the assessment cycle. Fortunately, there is a wide variety of assessment methods to use. Refer to Appendix B for a list of methods and description, or contact Assessment and Accreditation, or your assessment representative in your College.

When selecting a method, review all the methods you currently use or have available to you. Embedded assessments are considered best practice because they use the work students are already producing in classes to measure student learning outcomes. Use a project, set of questions from the final exam, a final paper, or any regularly used student artifact to evaluate your outcomes. Be mindful when creating rubrics though! Rubrics must be designed with assessment in mind in order to be used as an outcome measure. See Appendix C to learn more about designing and using rubrics.

The following acrostic – CREATE – is a tool to remembering the key steps of method selection:

- C Consider your purpose
- R Review past efforts
- E Evaluate methods for appropriateness
- A Account for resources and logistics
- T Test draft of design
- E Ensure purpose is satisfied

Equity Focus

Use multiple methods of assessment so students have various ways to demonstrate their learning.

Discuss assessment outcomes and measures with students to get their perspective and engage

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Method Considerations
Consider the following when selecting a measure for your outcomes:

- What you collect depends on the question you want to answer
- Use multiple methods to assess each outcome
  - Multiple methods assess different aspects of the outcome
  - Multiple methods allow for increased accuracy when other measures produce similar results
  - Multiple methods provide opportunity for follow-up questions when results contradict each other
- Use both indirect and direct measures
- Use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to assess outcomes
- Choose methods that assess student strengths and weaknesses
- Choose manageable methods
- Use embedded assessment methods
- Check accreditation criteria (where applicable) to design your assessment plan and methods

Each method has advantages and disadvantages. Below is a list of typically used assessment methods².

- **Classroom or course data**
  - Outcome or objective tests
  - Essay tests
  - Classroom assessment techniques
  - Embedded questions and assignments
- **Individual projects / performance assessment**
  - Written projects / research papers
  - Graphic test and display
  - Individual demonstration of skill or ability
  - Oral presentations
  - Posters
  - Structural/situational assessment tests and exams
- **Self-Assessments**
- **Collaborations**
  - Research team project
  - Group project
  - Online activities
- **Summative Assessment Methods**
  - Capstone project
  - Internship or professional application and evaluation
  - Case or longitudinal studies
  - Locally developed exams
  - Standardized tests
  - Portfolios
  - Final research paper
- **Qualitative**
  - Exit interviews
  - Focus groups
- **Surveys**
  - Quality, needs, satisfaction, usage surveys (e.g. Noel Levitz)
  - Pre-/Post-event or experience-based surveys
  - Course evaluations (e.g. IDEA survey)
  - Graduation or alumni survey
  - Attitude or disposition measures
  - External examiners
  - Performance reviews

Selecting Meaningful Targets for Success

Targets for success are the **desired or expected level of performance** you want to see; acting as an indicator for whether or not the outcome was achieved. Targets can be **expectation** (achievable through no further effort), **aspiration** (achievable through some additional effort), or **stretch** (achievable through major focus). **Note that targets, and assessment as a whole, is never used as punishment for students, faculty or staff.** Set reasonable but rigorous targets to help you reflect on your data without fear of risk. Be sure to set your targets **before** collecting data.

Setting your target shouldn’t be guessing what you might achieve, but depends on the outcome, measure, and prior data. Reflect critically on **what level do your students need to be able to show in order to be successful?**

Methods of Setting Targets

- **Benchmarking Data**
  - **Internal - Using Prior Data**
    - Data that you’ve already collected in the past are useful for knowing the average performance level. Prior data also allows us to see trends, where abrupt changes in performance can spur investigating reasons or contributing factors.
    - Example target language: Increase from baseline (74%) by 5%.
    - Example target language: Students will achieve a mean score at or above baseline for 80% of the discipline content test subscales.
    - If no prior data exists, use your best “gut” guess for a target. You can adjust your target after the first year and a baseline is obtained.
  - **External - Sources and Professional Associations Standards**
    - Peer institution benchmarking data is useful in comparing to our competitor programs. Set targets that are reasonable for the benchmarking data you obtain. Professional associations can be a source of benchmarking or performance expectations; use these targets to push and challenge our students to perform above industry expectations.
    - Example target language: Association minimum pass rate is 80% on national exam; students at NLU will score, on average, 10% higher (90%) on exam.

- **Quantitative Indicators**
  - **Average as targets**
    - While a student might be unhappy with a score of 70% on an assignment, it can make an acceptable target for many outcomes and measures.
    - Example target language: 70% of students will score 3 or higher (at least Proficient) on the analysis of knowledge rubric criteria.
  - **Quantitative measures are useful for reporting purposes, just be sure you are clear on what they are measuring. For example, key performance metrics such as persistence, retention, graduation rates, and advancement rates are easy to compare against University or College averages but should not be used alone as a target for outcome achievement**
  - **Tracking participation in events or processes may be acceptable for student service or student affairs areas, but should not be the sole measure of an outcome.**
    - Example target language: Reduce student complaints by 10% from prior year.
    - Example target language: Increase student attendance at workshop by 20% from prior year.
    - Example target language: Schedule appointments with 70% or more of referred students within two weeks of initial referral notice.

- **Qualitative Data**
  - **Focus group, listening sessions, and interview data can be used as assessment methods for measuring an outcome or objective, but targets should be worded meaningfully.**
    - Example target language: Assess qualitative results to find common themes to address student needs and barriers.

Explore the Resources page on the **Assessment website** for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at **assessment@nl.edu**.
• Other Notes on Targets
  o Completion of a task or assignment is **not** a meaningful target (i.e. Students will write a paper).
  o Grades are not typically meaningful targets for learning outcomes.

Assessment Plan Templates
Assessment templates for the following are all linked here: (https://www.nl.edu/assessmentandaccreditation/assessment/assessmentresources/)

  College of Professional Studies & Advancement (CPSA)
    Plan Template
    Report Template

  Undergraduate College (UGC)
    Major Assessment Plan Worksheet Template
    Annual Report Template

    *General Education Assessment Planning following the same process as UGC*

  National College of Education
    Program and Assessment Guide

  Kendall College
    Plan Template
    Report Template

  Student Affairs Assessment
    Combined Plan and Report Template

Assessment Plan Resources

**NILOA’s Assessment Plan webpage**


**Techniques for Prioritizing Data Needs**

**Things to Consider When Crafting Assessment Questions**
Analyzing Assessment Results

Now that you’ve finished data collection, it’s time to interpret the results of your assessment. Data analysis turns raw data points into useful information that answers the assessment questions you set in your plan. The data you collected allows you to compare actual student performance with intended student performance. It allows you to compare reality to the expected.

- **Assessment question** – is my program meeting its learning outcomes?
- **Analysis** – compare targets for success and actual performance data collected
- **Interpretation** – why you have or have not achieved the targets and that it means for your program

**When summarizing your results, be clear and concise.** Summarizing your results provides evidence of strengths and areas for improvement. Report your results in the same format as defined in your assessment plan target for success. For example, if your target for success was, “using the persuasive speech rubric, 80% of students will achieve a 3 or higher on the integration of evidence criteria (out of 4 levels),” then report your results as, “83% of students received a 3 or higher on the integration of evidence criteria.”

Considerations for your results section of your assessment report:

- Make sure to report on all the items in your assessment plan
- Include the percentage of students who completed each assessment (N) item
- Report the percent of students who met the target for success
- Include clearly if your outcome was achieved based on your target (Using ‘Y’/’N’)

**Types of Analysis**

Descriptive statistics are commonly used when digging into assessment data. Descriptive statistics describe our data in a way that is easy to summarize and interpret.

- **Count** – a whole number, calculated by counting the number of students with a particular outcome score or in a specific group
- **Mean** – the average of your data (average score for students on an assessment)
  - Calculation by adding (sum) of all the values and dividing by the number of values (count) in your dataset
  - Note that the mean is impacted by extreme values (outliers)
- **Median** – the middle of the distribution
- **Ratio** – used to express two proportions as they relate (student to faculty ratio)
  - Example calculation: if there are 100 students in the program and 4 faculty members, the calculation is 100/4 = 25. So the student to faculty ratio is 25:1 or 25 students to 1 faculty member.
- **Proportion** – used to compare part of the whole (proportion of first generation students)
  - Example calculation: if there are 15 first generation students out of 75 students in the program, then 15/75 = 0.2 or 1 out of 5 students are first generation.
- **Percentage** – used to express a part in relation to the whole (percent of students who scored 3 or higher on Use of Evidence rubric criteria)
  - Example calculation: Of the 26 students who completed the assessment, 12 scored a 3 or higher on the Use of Evidence rubric criteria for the final paper. 12/26 = .46 (x 100) = 46% scored 3 or higher.
Making Sense of Your Data!
The data you collected or gathered for your assessment is key to providing insight. Assessment data should be used as originally intended in your assessment plan – to identify common areas of strength and weakness of students in order to make improvements. **Data should never be used to evaluate an individual student or an individual instructor or staff member.** As you interpret your data, reflect on the results using the following questions:

1. What do the results say about students’ mastery of the learning outcomes?
2. Were the targets for success met? For all measures of that outcome or just the overall target?
3. What do the results say about students’ preparation for future coursework or a career?
4. What areas are students’ performing outstanding? What areas are **consistently weak** for students?
5. Where are students’ performing acceptable, but not outstanding? Where would you focus to **see improvement**?
6. Are students satisfied with their progress? With their experience?

**When we focus on the overall or average – we risk masking the margins and teaching to the middle.**

A step further in your assessment analysis and interpretation is the disaggregation by groups, and the intersection of different characteristics. **By breaking out results by demographics** (race/ethnicity, gender, academic standing, etc.) or **modality** (ground, blended, online), the results can shed light on achievement gaps and differences in performance. When we only focus on the overall or average, we risk “masking the margins” (J. Levy, personal communication, 2019), or only teaching to the middle. Keep in mind that data shouldn’t be dredged – a method of data fishing where a researcher looks for any result that can be presented as significant without initial inquiry. It’s important to first ask the question, “how are ___ students doing on the learning outcome? Are all students performing at the same level, or are there gaps in my classroom?” to avoid looking at superfluous differences or seeking random relationships between variables. To answer these questions, be sure to request additional or appropriate data results or data access.

**Equity Focus**
Don’t always discredit a small N – there are times when data with a small sample can still be informative and useful. Assessment in response to student needs or for specific initiatives may only examine a subgroup or small sample. In such cases, data should still be interpreted in order to be informed and take appropriate actions for more than just the majority. That said, it may not be appropriate to make program-wide or generalizable claims from subgroups or small samples.

Look to leverage demographic data in reporting on student learning. With disaggregated data, interpretation should consider possible: achievement gaps, underserving of students, lack of equity or access to services, assessment of “hidden curriculum” instead of outcomes, inclusivity of assessment methods, or culturally responsive pedagogy.

Discuss results with colleagues, students, and stakeholders to **bring an outside perspective** to your assessment data.

**Analysis Resources**
UCLA Institute for Digital Research & Education Statistical Consulting. Choosing the correct statistical test in SAS, STAT, SPSS, and R. [https://stats.idre.ucla.edu/other/mult-pkg/whatstat/](https://stats.idre.ucla.edu/other/mult-pkg/whatstat/)


Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Developing an Action Plan

Sharing Assessment Results
The focus of assessment is to obtain evidence that identifies strengths and weaknesses which can be used for continuous improvement strategies. These changes impact classroom strategies, curriculum, pedagogy, facilities, processes, services, and future assessment plans. The ultimate (and most important) goal is for those changes to also positively impact student learning and development.

It is important to discuss your assessment results with those in your program or department, as well as with your Dean or Director. Review results with faculty and staff to develop a shared understanding of student learning and start generating ideas for improvement. Review results with a Dean or Director to help determine the appropriate intervention and obtain resources to improve student learning. Consider sharing out with students and stakeholders, as use of results directly impacts these groups. The following section provides advice on how to share results and make improvements that are informed by assessment data.

Methods of sharing results:
Electronic

- Email blast to NLU Community
- Targeted emails to specific groups
- Newsletters to relevant populations
- Postcards or physical mailings
- Marketing campaigns for programs and services
- Post results on social media
- Assessment Actions Webpage
  - The Assessment web-page Assessment Actions is a great place for you to share your results, success, challenges, and improvement ideas. Contact Assessment and Accreditation (assessment@nl.edu) for more information on how to make it on the page!

In Person

- Regularly scheduled meetings (like department meetings) or invite others to your own!
  - Share the results of your assessment work with program faculty, department faculty or staff, your director or dean, and others outside of your area that may be interested or invested in your work. Student affairs and academic areas should collaborate and share results to better provide holistic support for our students. We can better inform each other’s work through sharing data and information.
- Conferences
  - Share your assessment results and story at a conference through posters, presentations, workshops, and PechaKuchas! Your peers from other institutions will appreciate hearing about your lessons learned and can offer up their own advice and success.
- Casual conversation
  - Don’t be shy bragging about the work you’re doing when people ask how you’re doing or what’s new. Doing so creates opportunities to normalize discussion of assessment work to people in other areas of the university, which in turn can also lead to collaboration of people, areas, or initiatives (e.g., curriculum work, teaching and learning, DEI efforts).

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Determining Action Items
Now that you’ve analyzed your data, shared results with colleagues, and started generating improvement ideas – it’s time to create your action items.

Use of results and improvement planning examples:

- Course and curriculum modifications/ instructional or pedagogy improvement
- Creation of pre-requisite or introduction courses
- Embed writing, metacognitive reflection, critical thinking, analytic skills, etc. throughout curriculum
- Improve assessment methods to better measure student learning (revise methods or tools)
- Offer high impact practices
- Policy or protocol development
- Professional development for faculty and staff
- Program course sequence or scaffolding changes
- Resource allocation, improve lab space or technology
- Revise learning outcomes and curriculum map
- Update or creation of services and events

Equity Focus
The use of results and development of an action plan is a critical step in the assessment process and should always be considered from an equity lens. National Institute for Learning Outcome Assessment (NILOA) suggests the following:

- Check biases and ask reflective questions throughout the assessment process to address assumptions and positions of privilege.
- Include student perspectives and take action based on perspectives.
- Increase transparency in assessment results and actions taken.
- Make evidence-based changes that address issues of equity that are context-specific.

Assessment Report Template

- CPSA Assessment Report Template
- NCE Assessment Report Template
- UGC Program Review and Assessment Report Narrative Template
- Kendall College Assessment Report Template
- Student Affairs Assessment Report Template

Resources on Assessment Actions


## Appendix A: Bloom’s Taxonomy – List of Measurable Verbs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Sample Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Recalls or recognizes information, ideas, and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned.</td>
<td>Arrange, Define, Describe, Identity, Label, List, Match, Memorize</td>
<td>The student will define the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of the cognitive domain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Translates, comprehends, or interprets information based on prior learning.</td>
<td>Compare, Describe, Discuss, Explain, Express, identity</td>
<td>The student will explain the purpose of Bloom's Taxonomy of the cognitive domain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Select, transfer, and use data and principles to complete a problem or task with minimum direction.</td>
<td>Apply, Complete, Construct, Dramatize, Employ, Illustrate</td>
<td>The student will write an instructional objective for each level of Bloom’s Taxonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Distinguish, classify, and relate the assumptions, hypotheses, evidence, or structure of a statement or question.</td>
<td>Analyze, Appraise, Categorize, Compare, Contrast, Debate, Diagram</td>
<td>The student will compare and contrast the cognitive and affective domains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Originate, integrate, and combine ideas into a product, plan, or proposal that is new to them.</td>
<td>Arrange, Assemble, Collect, Combine, Comply, Compose, Construct, Create</td>
<td>The student will design a program to address the learning outcomes related to the affective domain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Appraise, assess, or critique on a basis of specific standards and criteria.</td>
<td>Argue, Assess, Choose, Compare, Conclude, Estimate, Evaluate, Judge</td>
<td>The student will judge the effectiveness of a program based on data collected regarding its learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Modified based on [http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/bloom.html](http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/bloom.html)
Appendix B: Assessment Methods Table

The measures listed below can be used for forms of assessment, evaluation, research, and other measurement purposes of program objectives and student learning outcomes. The list, its purposes, and the pros and cons are not meant to be exhaustive, but should provide a sense of utility among familiar and common assessment measures. It is important to acknowledge assessment data can be used for more than just measuring student learning; these data can complement and contribute to evidence-based decision-making with respect to institutional efforts like program evaluation or review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Best Used For…</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Classroom Course Data                        | Embedding quick measures of outcomes and understanding into a learning experience or course. | • Easy to test validity of the instrument  
• Provides quick feedback through easy scoring  
• Develops norms and internal benchmarking data  
• Inexpensive to develop  
• Comprehensive of the outcome(s)  
• Students are familiar with this form of assessment | • Typically, only assesses low-level knowledge  
• Difficult to develop high-quality questions  
• Can be compromised if question banks are used and students are exposed to them multiple times throughout the program |
| Outcome or objective tests (multiple choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc.) |                                                                                 |                                                                       |                                                                      |
| Essay tests                                   | Collecting data on students’ comprehensive knowledge of a topic and their writing abilities. | • Assesses higher-order thought process  
• Develops writing skills and critical thinking  
• Inexpensive to develop  
• Fast to construct than objective tests | • Difficult to validate the instrument  
• Disadvantage to ESL students, or students with poor writing skills  
• Takes longer to score and provide feedback  
• Requires use of a well-developed rubric and norming session  
• Produces a narrower sample of content knowledge |
| Classroom assessment techniques (1-minute papers, free-writing, quick write, muddiest and clearest points, informal surveying), etc. | Embedding quick measures of outcomes and understanding into a learning experience or course. | • Encourages faculty to take on an experimental attitude towards course design  
• Convenience  
• Quick, immediate feedback about students  
• Demonstrates faculty commitment to student satisfaction and success | • Focuses on faculty performance  
• Needs to be combined with other methods for full picture of student learning  
• Perception that class time is sacrificed for assessment  
• Difficult to measure reliability and validity |

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3 Assessment Methods Table modified and inspired from Harper College Outcomes Assessment Guide (2017-2018)

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Best Used For…</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Embedded questions and assignments  | Embedding quick measures of outcomes and understanding into a learning experience or course. | • Convenience  
• Easy to collect (already being assessed)  
• Faculty discusses common course outcomes and goals  
• Shared responsibility to complete embedded assessments  
• Limits external demands on faculty to complete assessment | • Time-consuming to coordinate embedded work  
• Limits autonomy within courses that have embedded assessments |
| Individual projects / performance assessment |                                                                 | | |
| Written projects/research papers    | When you already have term papers, lab reports, or critique essays in your course. | • Students show off their ability to write on a specific outcome or area  
• Provides evidence of practical skills (writing) alongside competency-focused learning outcomes | • Difficult for students that struggle with writing ability  
• Time-consuming to score and return feedback |
| Individual demonstration of skill or ability | Gauging students’ abilities to demonstrate a specific skill or technique. | • Students who have difficulty with oral or written assessments have an opportunity to demonstrate skills  
• Provides evidence of students abilities to preform skills necessary for profession | • Difficult to construct or measure  
• Can be difficult to score or grade demonstrations |
| Oral presentations                   | Gauging students’ abilities to debate, role play, explain, or critique verbally. | • Students show off their ability to communicate information  
• Provides evidence of practical skills (public speaking) alongside competency-focused learning outcomes  
• Assists faculty in identifying course content that needs additional review | • Difficult for students with ESL, speech and language difficulties, or speaking anxiety  
• Time-consuming  
• Can be difficult to score or grade |
| Structural/situational assessment tests and exams | Assessing if students are able to apply concepts and theory into reality-based assessment scenarios. | • Realistic testing situation  
• Engages students with reality-based situational learning  
• Provides application of transfer of knowledge skills | • Difficult to construct and measure  
• Scenarios can be outdated quickly as history/context/cohorts change  
• Difficult for students who have trouble remembering |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Best Used For…</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Self-Assessments**         | Gauging how student’s rate their own knowledge, skills, and abilities.         | • Provides information on how students view their level of achievement of each outcome  
• Engages students in the assessment process  
• Helps students reflect meaningfully on their current level of knowledge or skillsets  
• Can look for changes over time  
• Promotes accountability | • Students may rate themselves higher or lower than the instructor  
• Susceptible to bias (Lake Woebegone Effect, imposter syndrome, Dunning-Kruger Effect)  
• Students may have limited experience being held accountable to judge their work |
|                              |                                                                                |                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| **Summative Assessment Methods** |                                                                                      |                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Capstone project/Final research paper | When there is an agreed-upon cumulative project or assessment by program faculty. | • Students are highly motivated to do well on the assignment or project  
• Promotes students to take ownership, responsibility and practice time management | • Difficult for students who perform poorly under high-stakes pressure  
• Time-consuming to coordinate embedded work  
• Limits autonomy within courses that have embedded assessments |
| Internship or professional application and evaluation | When students’ can be set up with learning opportunities outside of the course or program. | • Promotes real-world experience as it relates to the profession  
• Creates relationships between program faculty, students, and potential employers | • Time-consuming or develop and manage on or off-site mentors or supervisors  
• Differences in learning experiences between sites  
• May strain relationships with potential employers if internship goes poorly or student doesn’t perform well |
| Locally developed exams      | When you have the time to develop a tailored-exam to your program and outcomes. | • Specific to the program’s outcomes  
• Gives autonomy to program faculty on the content students are assessed on (and how) | • Can be difficult to create and validate  
• Time-consuming to develop  
• Difficult to develop high-quality questions  
• Can be compromised if question banks are used and students are exposed to them multiple times throughout the program |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Best Used For…</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externally developed exams</td>
<td>When you have outcomes that align closely with professional competencies and can access an external exam.</td>
<td>• Externally validated</td>
<td>• Sometimes a cost is involved for the institution, program, or student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• External benchmarks available (sometimes for a fee)</td>
<td>• Exam may not completely align with learning outcomes of program or course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No in-house work needed to construct the exam</td>
<td>• Can be difficult to decide where and when to have students complete exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios</td>
<td>When you can involve students in selecting artifacts that best demonstrate their learning over a period of time.</td>
<td>• Students are able to demonstrate learning using artifacts they feel are the best evidence</td>
<td>• The portfolio collection is only as good as the collected instruments and artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can be used to look at longitudinal trends</td>
<td>• Time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can show consistent areas of strength or weakness for a student</td>
<td>• Challenging to assess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A sense of pride for students to showcase their work</td>
<td>• Content varies between students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students could fail to remember to collect items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Transfer students may not have a complete portfolio by the end of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research team project or group project</td>
<td>When you want to assess collaboration / teamwork skills or professionalism of students.</td>
<td>• Provides opportunity for students to practice teamwork skills and team management</td>
<td>• Students usually lack training and experience in team dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can produce excitement around a project and topic</td>
<td>• Social loafing makes grading and scoring assessments difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engages students in content at a deeper level</td>
<td>• Misinformation about a topic can spread throughout the group unless corrected early on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides students an opportunity to learn from and teach their peers</td>
<td>• Challenging to judge when to step in to redirect or help out groups that struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online activities</td>
<td>When you have a record of online interaction or engagement (discussion boards or group chats).</td>
<td>• Data exists because it is part of the course</td>
<td>• Analysis is time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Records can show trend over time of communication and collaboration skills</td>
<td>• Extra precaution should be taken for privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cheap and convenient</td>
<td>• Requires students to have access to technology/ be technology savvy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Best Used For...</td>
<td>Pros</td>
<td>Cons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>time; data collection is not obtrusive</td>
<td>• Instructors must be technology savvy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides students who struggle with oral communication in class the opportunity to participate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Instructors can provide feedback when content needs to be covered further</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative and surveys</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exit interview</td>
<td>When you want students to reflect on the entire process and provide feedback.</td>
<td>• Participants provide a realistic, in-depth perspective on the experience</td>
<td>• Selection bias – those that choose to participate may have had a negative or positive experience (may not hear from neutral students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A sign of commitment to quality and improvement</td>
<td>• Time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can increase good relationships with graduating students</td>
<td>• Can be difficult to go through and make meaning from all of the interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reinforcing feedback on effectiveness</td>
<td>• Negative discussion can sway neutral students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can be cathartic to participate in</td>
<td>• Students may feel uncomfortable sharing negative feedback if they feel it could impact their relationship with faculty or staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Results are impacted by the quality of the interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit Survey</td>
<td>When you want students to reflect on the entire process and provide feedback.</td>
<td>• Participants provide a realistic, in-depth perspective on the experience</td>
<td>• Selection bias – those that choose to participate may have had a negative or positive experience (may not hear from neutral students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A sign of commitment to quality and improvement</td>
<td>• Students may feel uncomfortable sharing negative feedback if they don’t trust that responses are confidential or anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reinforcing feedback on effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can be cathartic to participate in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation or alumni survey</td>
<td>When you want feedback or information from alumni on the program, where they are after graduating,</td>
<td>• Provides assessment of students' application of competencies and skills</td>
<td>• Selection bias – those that choose to participate may have had a negative or positive experience (may not hear from neutral students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students may feel uncomfortable sharing negative feedback if they don’t trust that responses are confidential or anonymous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Best Used For…</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>and their perspective of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed in their career.</td>
<td>• Can be a measure of enduring learning or skill transfer</td>
<td>positive experience (may not hear from neutral students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides feedback on industry required knowledge and skills for programs</td>
<td>low response rate impacts validity and generalizability of results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Broad-scope, can cover a lot of different topics</td>
<td>results tend to skew positive because of culture around feedback surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction Survey</td>
<td>When you want to know what participants’ felt worked well and what needs improving.</td>
<td>• A sign of commitment to quality and improvement</td>
<td>selection bias – those that choose to participate may have had a negative or positive experience (may not hear from neutral students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides back data on effectiveness and quality of a program, course, or event</td>
<td>results tend to skew positive because of culture around satisfaction surveys (customer service surveys only wanting all 10’s for example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reoccurring responses or results indicate a need for remediation or action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides important perspective from participants or external individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA Surveys</td>
<td>When the IDEA survey items align with activities in your class or program.</td>
<td>• A sign of commitment to quality and improvement</td>
<td>getting participants to respond may be difficult after a course, program, or event ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides back data on effectiveness and quality of a course</td>
<td>low response rate impacts validity and generalizability of results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reoccurring responses or results indicate a need for remediation or action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides perspective from students on their experience in the course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Measure</th>
<th>Best Used For…</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Best Used For…</td>
<td>Pros</td>
<td>Cons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Attitude or disposition      | When you need to assess the disposition of students, as it pertains to their future career or profession. | • Easy to administer  
• Easy to score  
• Provides quick feedback on student attitudes or dispositions; easy to provide immediate remediation if needed  
• Can be reliable (if provided by a reputable source) | • Validity can be called into question  
• Requires participants to have good knowledge about their attitudes, and be honest in their responses  
• Response bias and social desirability bias  
• Labor intensive to develop locally |
| Focus groups                  | When hearing from the students on their personal experience can impact future improvements or changes. | • Participants provide a realistic, in-depth perspective on the experience  
• A sign of commitment to quality and improvement  
• Can increase good relationships with graduating students  
• Reoccurring responses or results indicate a need for remediation or action  
• Reinforcing feedback on effectiveness  
• Can be cathartic to participate in | • Selection bias – those that choose to participate may have had a negative or positive experience (may not hear from neutral students)  
• Time-consuming  
• Can be difficult to go through and make meaning from all of the interviews  
• Negative discussion can sway neutral students  
• Students may feel uncomfortable sharing negative feedback if they feel it could impact their relationship with faculty or staff  
• Results are impacted by the quality of the interviewer |
| External examiners            | When an external interviewer or expert can interview or examine students.     | • Objective rating of students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, or abilities  
• Increases face validity of assessment activities  
• A sign of commitment to best practice and | • Can be expensive  
• Can expose sensitive information  
• Need to consider timing and location for students to participate |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Best Used For…</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Best Used For…</td>
<td>Pros</td>
<td>Cons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance reviews</td>
<td>When you need feedback from external stakeholders (employers, graduate school advisors, internship or externship supervisors, mock interviewers) on the performance of your students or recent graduates.</td>
<td>• Objective rating of students’ skills or behavior</td>
<td>• Difficult to track down performance evaluators that are external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Builds positive relationships with potential employers and internship sites</td>
<td>• Low response rate impact generalizability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A sign of commitment to best practice and improvement when department exposes their practice to outside examiners</td>
<td>• Response bias – participants may feel it is difficult to give negative feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reoccurring responses or results indicate a need for remediation or action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides valuable feedback on industry standards and competencies.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Developing Rubrics

What is a rubric?

“Set of criteria specifying the characteristics of an outcome and the levels of achievement in each characteristic.”

There are two types of rubrics used in higher education:

1. Analytic – separates assessment criteria (also called criteria) into multiple rows to address performance on a scale (columns) that creates a comprehensive picture of student performance
2. Holistic – assessment criteria are grouped together and student performance is assessed simultaneously

For the majority of purposes, analytic rubrics are best because of their focus on separated criteria, and ability to provide clear expectations by relevant outcome and provide feedback on areas of student strength and weakness. Holistic rubrics work well for summative assignments where students are not expecting feedback and the rubric is only being used to provide a grade.

Results from analytic rubrics allow faculty and staff to review areas of strength and weakness and, when used formatively, can be used to design intervention while students are enrolled in the program. By having a score for each criteria, as well as an overall score, evidence of student performance by outcome is direct and describable.

Components of A Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria (Align to Outcomes)</th>
<th>Levels of Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - Exemplary</td>
<td>3 - Competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connects and extends knowledge from one’s own study/field/discipline to other studies/fields/disciplines.</td>
<td>Analyzes knowledge from one’s own study/field/discipline to other studies/fields/disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving Problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considers and articulates rationale for a logical, consistent plan to solve the problem described, and recognizes the consequences of the solution.</td>
<td>Considers and selects from alternative solutions, a logical and consistent plan to solve the problem described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates, organizes, and synthesizes information from multiple sources in a way that provides evidence, clarity, and depth.</td>
<td>Communicates, organizes, and synthesizes information from multiple sources with a clear purpose.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Purpose of Rubrics
Rubrics measure learning! This provides a priceless benefit to faculty, staff, and students!

- Provides clear expectations to students on the level of work we are asking of them
- Makes it easier for raters to provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses of student artifacts or work
- Starts conversations between program faculty and staff on the learning development of students

Using Rubrics to Rate Student Artifacts and Work
Rubrics are used to measure outcomes to provide evidence and feedback on student performance.

Highlight or select the achievement level of performance at each criteria of the rubric instead of filling in the overall score. This saves time and gives valuable feedback to students without having to write additional comments.

Performance that can be assessed with rubrics include, but are not limited to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process (physical skills, use of tools of equipment, work habits, etc.)</th>
<th>Artifact products (written work, physical objects crafted, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
<td>Examples:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Participation in oral discussion</td>
<td>o Landscape painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Working collaboratively (teamwork)</td>
<td>o Master’s thesis paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Cooking a three course meal</td>
<td>o Capstone research paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table modified from Susan M. Brookhart’s *How to Create and Use Rubrics for Formative Assessment and Grading*

Tips for using rubrics to assess group projects:

- Clearly describe the learning outcome(s) for the assignment
- Make sure your curriculum includes plenty of opportunities outside the group project for student to develop and demonstrate the learning outcome
- Deal with slackers or overactive group members proactively by assessing students on both individual contribution and overall group performance
- Ask students to evaluate each other

Using rubrics to look for development or growth:

- If your rubrics for multiple assignments contain the same criteria(s), you can look at student’s level of achievement for an outcome over their experience in the program
- Compare student’s achievement on assignments early in the program to middle and end of the program work (student growth)
  - Have students developed skills in this criteria over time, or have they performed the same?
  - What can we do to modify curriculum or assignments that better develop student’s in these areas?
Rubrics with a Focus on Assessment

Beyond ability to demonstrate an outcome, grading focuses on many other aspects of student participation and performance. Rubrics often include criteria around creativity, proper citation and formatting, spelling and grammar, and written communication. These criteria might not align to intended learning outcomes, and should not be used when reporting results of specific learning outcome attainment. For measuring intended learning outcomes, report the results of the criteria(s) that align appropriately and not the total score from the rubric.

Take the following as an example (below) of two rubric versions – one designed with assessment in mind (Rubric B). **Even though both rubrics had a final grade of 70%, Rubric B provided feedback** on where the student struggled the most (outcomes 1 and 2) while **Rubric A has to rely on the depth and clarity of instructor feedback for this information.** Rubric B is designed well for both assessment and grading purposes, and clearly provides students with expectations of performance. Rubric B is also easier for faculty to use when assessing student work because there is more breakdown of criteria than in rubric A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric A</th>
<th>Rubric B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rubric: 100 points total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rubric: 100 points total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 points for content</td>
<td>20 points for outcome 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 points for creativity</td>
<td>20 points for outcome 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 points for citation formatting</td>
<td>20 points for outcome 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 points for spelling and grammar</td>
<td>20 points for outcome 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade – 70%</td>
<td>Grade – 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55/80 points on content</td>
<td>10/20 points on outcome 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/10 points on creativity</td>
<td>10/20 points on outcome 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5 points on citations</td>
<td>15/20 points on outcome 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5 points on spelling and grammar</td>
<td>20/20 points on outcome 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8/10 points on creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/5 points on citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/5 points on spelling and grammar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is easy to provide the student a grade, but time consuming to find where student learning is weakest because the content dimension bundles all outcomes together.

We do not have measures for each of the learning outcomes aligned to the assignment. We do not know where to improve our teaching strategies.

It is easy to provide the student with both a grade for the project (70%) as well as valuable feedback on where the student struggled vs. did well.

We now have measures for each learning outcome aligned to the assignment, and can intervene appropriately to improve learning.

Explore the Resources page on the Assessment website for more guides, tips, and assessment best practices. Contact the Assessment & Accreditation for help at assessment@nl.edu.
Designing Rubrics

1. Determine the essential elements, criteria, and outcomes that must be present in student's work. These are the criteria (rows) of your rubric. Focus on what the assignment covers and what you want and need to assess. This part of the process can be collaborative in nature and may be revisited as feedback is gained through steps #5, 6, and 7. A formal content validity process can also inform rubric design and determination of what's essential.

2. Decide the number of levels of achievement you will include on the rubric (columns)

3. Describe in detail what the performance at each achievement level looks like
   a. Start by describing the best work for each criterion.
   b. Describe an unacceptable level of work for each criterion. “Lacking” and “absent” are appropriate qualifiers for these descriptions of performance.
   c. Describe intermediate-level performances.
   d. Tip: using even numbers (such as 4) for the levels of performance make it easier to write performance descriptions. Odd numbers, containing a middle level, are too often used as a catch-all and should be avoided.
   e. Tip: keep your descriptions consistent from performance level to performance level. If your description uses quantity, clarity, and details, make sure those descriptors are present in all descriptions for the criteria.

4. Review for double-barrel criteria (criteria that are measuring multiple outcomes in one row) and split up as needed. Review for gaps – does the rubric include all the necessary criteria?

5. Leave space for additional comments or overall impressions that can add meaningful feedback to students

6. Pilot your rubric and seek feedback from others. Does your rubric criteria and levels of achievement cover the range of student performance for the assignment? Check your rubric using the metarubric checklist in this section. Make fine-tune adjustments as needed.
   a. Does the rubric cover the outcomes being assessed?
   b. Does the rubric cover extraneous criteria? (if so, remove them)
   c. Is the rubric useful, feasible, manageable, and practical?
   d. Does the performance level descriptions cover the range of students work sufficiently?

7. Norm your rubric with faculty/staff raters. Don't skip this step! It's important to come to consensus on what work is high and low achieving. Use student artifacts as examples and reminders after norming sessions to increase reliability of ratings.

Rubric tips!

- Develop rubrics that can be used for multiple assignments to assess growth in outcome development over time or modify rubrics to be assignment-specific to track cohort achievement over time
- Check out existing rubrics (such as University of Hawai'i Manoa’s Rubric Bank or the AACU Value Rubrics) to use or modify as your own
- Provide students with the rubric alongside the assignment to promote transparency of expectations
- Integrate rubrics into your assignments and ask students to self-evaluate their work when handing in artifacts

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Rubrics
VALUE AND USE AS AN ASSESSMENT TOOL

"In the classroom, rubrics can make assessment more meaningful, clarify expectations, and yield better feedback."

CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS
Rubric criteria provide students with the specific skills, knowledge, or techniques needed (Chowdhury, F., 2018). Students use rubrics to determine the level of work that is expected, and as immediate feedback on areas they did poorly (Brookhart, S. M., 2018).

REFLECTIVE LEARNING
Students are able to take control of their learning and reflect on areas they fell short (Chowdhury, F., 2018). Giving students feedback through a rubric provides them the opportunity to reflect on where they currently score and where they are expected to be.

TIMING IS KEY
Feedback, from rubrics or otherwise, is only useful if students receive it with enough time to improve their skills, knowledge, or technique for the next assignments or assessment (Cockett, A., & Jackson, C., 2018). Use rubrics to cut time from writing out all your feedback and only provide comments where additional attention is needed.

CONSISTENCY
"(Consistency) is sometimes difficult to maintain due to fatigue, shift in prior expectations and intrusion of external events that can influence an instructor's mood or thinking process" (Chowdhury, F., 2018, p 64)

A well-made rubric provides consistent ratings of assessment criteria (Cockett, A., & Jackson, C., 2018). You don't have to provide written feedback on all the areas, just ones that need additional comments. You don't have to worry about providing the same amount of written feedback to all students, because they are getting feedback consistently via scores in each criteria.

EQUITY
"Rubrics, when they undergo a culturally conscious development process and are shared with students, can be a way to accurately assess learning for all students while allowing variation in how the learning is demonstrated." (Montenegro, E., & Jankowski, N.A., 2017, p 12).

A well-calibrated and normed rubric takes away the subjectivity of scoring, and increases reliability (Heiser, C. A., Prince, K., & Levy, J. D., 2017). This also provides equity in the feedback we provide to our students. Rubrics provide consistency in feedback and scoring so all students are assessed fairly and given the same opportunity to improve their learning.

REFERENCES


References and Resources on Rubrics

- The Wonder Of Rubrics by Joe Levy
- Is This a Rubric? by Linda Suskie
- How to Create and Use Rubrics for Formative Assessment and Grading by Susan M. Brookhart
- VALUE Rubrics by Association of American Colleges & Universities (ACC&U)
- Rubric Bank by University of Hawai‘i Manoa Rubric Bank
- Writing Effective Rubrics by University of Florida

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Assessment Rubric Quality Checklist

Use this metarubric/checklist to check how well your rubric holds up to good rubric practice for assessment. Resolve “needs revision” categories or explain if not applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course subject matter expert (SME)</td>
<td>*use program chair if SME is unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Information (prefix and number)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe the assessment directions and purpose. Attach items or provide links as needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Needs Revision</th>
<th>Acceptable to Use</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alignment to learning outcomes</td>
<td>Rubric only includes learning outcomes that are intended to be demonstrated in the assessment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rubric criteria are aligned to specific learning outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(if applicable) Rubric criteria are aligned to professional competencies and/or accreditor standards.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Criteria is appropriate for the assignment method/format. (e.g., APA formatting for a paper, sound/volume for oral presentation).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criteria is not double-barreled; inclusive of one single skill being demonstrated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criteria covers all the outcomes and standards that are represented or intended to be demonstrated through the assessment (see alignment).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rubric includes criteria that is necessary for reporting or will be valuable data to use for continuous improvement. Avoid additional criteria that do not provide valuable feedback to students and/or are not aligned to outcomes or standards (ex. Page length).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Considerations</td>
<td>Needs Revision</td>
<td>Acceptable to Use</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of Achievement</td>
<td>Rubric includes a level of achievement that is appropriate for the assignment and use of results (e.g., 3 levels: 4 levels: 5 levels). Points/scores are proportionally distributed along the levels of achievement. The levels of achievement labels are specific and descriptive, providing feedback to students. The levels of achievement labels use encouraging and helpful language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Performance</td>
<td>Descriptions of performance match the level of achievement and rubric criteria they are written towards. Descriptions contain detail that can be used to provide feedback to students when scored. Descriptions are clear and different between levels of achievement; avoid vague terms such as “sometimes” to describe behavior. Descriptions are consistent in the use of parallel sentence construction between levels of achievement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Rubric is written clearly for all students to understand; avoid jargon where possible. If pulling language from assignment instructions, revise as needed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Criteria, levels of achievement, and descriptions of performance work together to provide valuable feedback to students on strengths and areas of improvement. Rubric limits subjectivity of scoring; reduces grading bias opportunity. Has normed or has a plan to norm with faculty so that consistent feedback is provided to students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


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Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we do assessment?
Good assessment practice leads to change, curriculum revisions, improved student learning and teaching strategies, increases in persistence, and drives student success. Assessment also provides students with clear expectations so that they can be more engaged and take responsibility for their learning. Assessment is a key piece to the learning process, where we get back valuable feedback to improve learning. It's not the assessment itself, but the continuous improvement which makes assessment so valuable.

Why is having an assessment plan important?
Your assessment plan provides the roadmap that lays out what data you need to answer your assessment questions and provide the evidence and feedback you need on student learning. Without assessment plans, it is easy to go off course and collect more data than you need (resulting in data fatigue) or not enough or the correct type of data (resulting in lack of use).

Assessment plans also give space to reflect on appropriate targets for success. These steps in the planning process make it easier and more meaningful to reflect on results when reporting.

Is assessment just another way for administration to evaluate faculty?
No. The focus of assessment is the measure and improve student learning and is never used to evaluate individual faculty members or students. Assessment results should be reported at the aggregate level. Assessment results should never be tied to promotion or tenure. However, active participation in assessment activities may be rewarded at the discretion of the College or area.

Why can’t you just do this for me and give me the report?
The goal of assessment is to provide results that can be used for improvement, not to report results on past performance of students. Faculty and staff know the outcomes and expectations of students best, and therefore should be the group that drives assessment. Assessment professionals and representatives can give helpful advice and guide you towards better assessment practice, but it is up to you to decide what results are meaningful and to make improvements.

Why should I want to do assessment?
To find answers to important questions around student learning and success. Questions like: how strong are our student’s research skills? Can our students apply what they learned outside of class in another context? Should we revise the curriculum or course sequence for the program? What happens if I change my teaching strategy; will students do better?

Isn’t assessment just another extra thing I have to do?
No, you are already assessing your students! Learning opportunities in your curriculum that gives students on-going feedback about their performance so they can improve learning is a form of assessment. Embed formative and summative assessment activities into your curriculum and it will not feel like extra work. Use the reporting of results to spark reflective conversation with faculty and staff to improve pedagogy and curriculum. Remember that everyone is responsible for doing assessment and making continuous improvements. Collecting and using data is a goal of all NLU areas and departments. Discuss your assessment responsibilities and activities with your Dean, program chair, or assessment representative from your College or area.

My course/program is too large. How do we assess outcomes of this many students?
Use samples of student work already being produced and apply rubrics to assess learning to reduce the burden of integrating other assessments into the program. Not all content and outcomes need to be measured all the time, too; remember to keep the process manageable but meaningful. Consider assessing outcomes on a cycle, so you are not assessing everything each year, but are making sure each outcome is assessed at least every three years.

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4 Assessment Questions modified and inspired from Harper College Outcomes Assessment Guide (2017-2018)
My course/program is too small. How do we assess outcomes with so few students?
When doing assessment with fewer students, it is very important to collect assessment data from as many, or all, of the students in the program (using embedded assessment measures throughout the program). Even with fewer students, you can make meaning from your data based on how well students do when just starting the program (earlier courses in the sequence) to the end of the program (about to graduate). You can also collect data over multiple years to look for trends in your data and identity “pain points” in curriculum.

Can I use one method for assessing learning for the entire program?
No, using multiple methods for assessing student learning provides a better picture of student performance. For example, assessing a capstone project, internship evaluations, test scores, exit interviews, or alumni data. One method should not be used to assess all outcomes alone.

I already give grades and feedback, isn't that enough?
Nope! Grades and assessment are used for different purposes. Grades represent the degree a student has met requirements and expectations, including expectations outside of the learning outcomes. Grades also include aspects like attendance, participation, creativity, and spelling and grammar. Learning assessment measures student learning in specific outcomes and provides feedback on the areas of strength and weakness of student knowledge, skills, ability, and attitudes. Grades should not be used as measures of learning outcomes for this reason.

Curriculum Maps…Why do them?
Curriculum maps allow us to show the sequence of courses in the program, and visually show the connection between outcomes at multiple levels (course, program, and university). You can use your curriculum map to identity gaps or redundancy in content, or engage students in their progress through the program.
## Appendix E: Assessment Terms

The following assessment terminology comes from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) Assessment Glossary resource.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>A participatory, iterative process that provides data institutions need on their students’ learning, engages the college and others in analyzing and using that information to confirm and improve teaching and learning, produces evidence that students are learning the outcomes the institution intended, guides colleges in making educational and institutional improvements, evaluates whether changes made improve/impact student learning, and documents the learning and institutional efforts. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) - <a href="https://www.hlcommission.org/">https://www.hlcommission.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Benchmark</td>
<td>A data point that can be used for the purposes of external comparison. Programs can use Regional, State or National averages as a comparison benchmark. It can also use data from another program as a benchmark.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capstone Courses and Projects</td>
<td>Whether they’re called “senior capstones” or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of college to create a project that integrates and applies what they’ve learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio, or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones can be offered in departmental programs and in general education as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criterion Referenced</td>
<td>A test in which the results can be used to determine a student's progress toward mastery of a content area. Performance is compared to an expected level of mastery in a content area rather than to other students’ scores. Such tests usually include questions based on what the student was taught and are designed to measure the student's mastery of designated objectives of an instructional program. The &quot;criterion&quot; is the standard of performance established as the passing score for the test. Scores have meaning in terms of what the student knows or can do, rather than how the test-taker compares to a reference or norm group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Assessment of Learning</td>
<td>Direct assessment is when measures of learning are based on student performance or demonstrates the learning itself. Scoring performance on tests, term papers, or the execution of lab skills, would all be examples of direct assessment of learning. Direct assessment of learning can occur within a course (e.g., performance on a series of tests) or could occur across courses or years (comparing writing scores from sophomore to senior year). <a href="https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/glossary.html">https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/glossary.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Embedded Assessment</td>
<td>A means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the teaching-learning process. Often uses for assessment purposes classroom assignments that are evaluated to assign students a grade. Can assess individual student performance or aggregate the information to provide information about the course or program; can be formative or summative, quantitative or qualitative. Example: as part of a course, expecting each senior to complete a research paper that is graded for content and style, but is also assessed for advanced ability to locate and evaluate Web-based information (as part of a college-wide outcome to demonstrate information literacy) <a href="https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/beyond-confusion-assessmentglossary">https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/beyond-confusion-assessmentglossary</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Both qualitative and quantitative descriptions of progress towards and attainment of project goals. Using collected information (assessments) to make informed decisions about continued instruction, programs, activities. Leads to statements of the value, worth, or merit of a program.</td>
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<td>Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formative Assessment</td>
<td>Formative assessment is often done at the beginning or during a program, thus providing the opportunity for immediate evidence for student learning in a particular course or at a particular point in a program. Classroom assessment is one of the most common formative assessment techniques. The purpose of this technique is to improve quality of student learning, leading to feedback in the developmental progression of learning. This can also lead to curricular modifications when specific courses have not met the student learning outcomes. Classroom assessment can also provide important program information when multiple sections of a course are taught because it enables programs to examine if the learning goals and objectives are met in all sections of the course. It also can improve instructional quality by engaging the faculty in the design and practice of the course goals and objectives and the course impact on the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect Assessment of Learning</td>
<td>Indirect assessments use perceptions, reflections or secondary evidence to make inferences about student learning. For example, surveys of employers, students' self-assessments, and admissions to graduate schools are all indirect evidence of learning. <a href="https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/glossary.html">https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/glossary.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Norm Referenced Tests</td>
<td>A test in which a student or a group's performance is compared to that of a norm group. The student or group scores will not fall evenly on either side of the median established by the original test takers. The results are relative to the performance of an external group and are designed to be compared with the norm group providing a performance standard. Often used to measure and compare students, schools, districts, and states on the basis of norm-established scales of achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance-Based Assessment</td>
<td>Performance-based assessment is a test of the ability to apply knowledge in a real-life setting. Assessment of the performance is done using a rubric, or analytic scoring guide to aid in objectivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>A systematic and organized collection of a student's work that exhibits to others the direct evidence of a student's efforts, achievements, and progress over a period of time. The collection should involve the student in selection of its contents, and should include information about the performance criteria, the rubric or criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection or evaluation. It should include representative work, providing a documentation of the learner's performance and a basis for evaluation of the student's progress. Portfolios may include a variety of demonstrations of learning and have been gathered in the form of a physical collection of materials, videos, CD-ROMs, reflective journals, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>How consistently a measure of the same phenomenon leads to the same result after multiple administrations or across multiple scorers/raters. <a href="https://case.edu/assessment/about/assessment-glossary">https://case.edu/assessment/about/assessment-glossary</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubric</td>
<td>A rubric is an evaluative tool that explicitly represents the performance expectations for an assignment or piece of work. A rubric 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. Rubrics can be used for a wide array of assignments: papers, projects, oral presentations, artistic performances, group projects, etc. Rubrics can be used as scoring or grading guides, to provide formative feedback to support and guide ongoing learning efforts, or both. <a href="https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/glossary.html">https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/glossary.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Assessment</td>
<td>A process in which a student engages in a systematic review of a performance, usually for the purpose of improving future performance. May involve comparison with a standard, established criteria. May involve critiquing one's own work or may be a simple description of the performance. Reflection, self-evaluation, metacognition, are related terms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standardized Test</td>
<td>An objective test that is given and scored in a uniform manner. Standardized tests are carefully constructed and items are selected after trials for appropriateness and difficulty. Tests are issued with a manual giving complete guidelines for administration and scoring. The guidelines attempt to eliminate extraneous interference that might influence test results. Scores are often are often norm-referenced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Learning Outcome</td>
<td>A specific description of what a student will be able to do at the end of the period during which that ability is presumed to have been acquired, and the focus of outcome assessment. (Note: some professional organizations may refer to these with different terms, such as objectives, indicators, abilities, or competencies).</td>
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<td>Summative Assessment</td>
<td>Summative assessment is comprehensive in nature, provides accountability and is used to check the level of learning at the end of the program. For example, if upon completion of a program students will have the knowledge to pass an accreditation test, taking the test would be summative in nature since it is based on the cumulative learning experience. Program goals and objectives often reflect the cumulative nature of the learning that takes place in a program. Thus, the program would conduct summative assessment at the end of the program to ensure students have met the program goals and objectives. Attention should be given to using various methods and measures in order to have a comprehensive plan. Ultimately, the foundation for an assessment plan is to collect summative assessment data and this type of data can stand-alone. Formative assessment data, however, can contribute to a comprehensive assessment plan by enabling faculty to identify particular points in a program to assess learning (i.e., entry into a program, before or after an internship experience, impact of specific courses, etc.) and monitor the progress being made towards achieving learning outcomes.</td>
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<td><em>Target (for success)</em></td>
<td>A data point that is used to compare against actual performance on an assessment measure. Targets can be expected, stretch, or aspirational. A program can use its prior data as a target against which to compare future performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>The test measures the desired performance and appropriate inferences can be drawn from the results. The assessment accurately reflects the learning it was designed to measure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value Added</td>
<td>The increase in learning that occurs during a course, program, or undergraduate education. Can either focus on the individual student (how much better a student can write, for example, at the end than at the beginning) or on a cohort of students (whether senior papers demonstrate more sophisticated writing skills in the aggregate than freshmen papers). To measure value-added a baseline measurement is needed for comparison. The baseline measure can be from the same sample of students (longitudinal design) or from a different sample (cross-sectional).</td>
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<td>VALUE Rubrics</td>
<td>Developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.</td>
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Note: * indicates that the definition is modified to align with how NLU describes these terms.