Guide to Assessment of Academic Programs at TAMUCC

What is assessment of student learning?

Assessment is the ongoing process of:

- Establishing clear, measurable expected student learning outcomes
- Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes
- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations
- Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning

Assessment is also a cycle – a continuous loop characterized by 5 simple steps:*

* WEAVEonline® Assessment Management System

Why do assessment?

We assess to answer questions in a systematic way. Here are a few reasons to assess:

- Assessment feedback helps faculty improve their teaching.
- Clear course and program expectations outlined in a good assessment plan help students understand where they should focus their time and energy.
- Assessment activities bring faculty together to discuss important issues such as what they should teach and why and what their standards and expectations ought to be.
- Assessment plans help faculty see how courses link together to form a coherent program.
- Continuous assessment lets faculty know which teaching methods under which conditions lead to effective student learning. The feedback loop process leads to continuous improvement of the program.
- It is now required by most state governments and by all accrediting organizations (as mandated by the federal government) that all higher education institutions provide direct evidence of student learning. Assessment is the process by which this evidence is collected and analyzed.

Assessment is necessary in order to determine how effective we are – how closely our achievements and outcomes match the expectations put forth in our mission.
What’s my role in assessment?

Faculty are responsible for assessing student learning in academic programs and for assessing the effectiveness of these programs. Annually, program faculty should review, and revise if necessary, the mission statement for their academic program(s), program-specific student learning outcomes, measures, and criteria for success.

You are expected to assess performance against criteria, review the assessment results, and develop an action plan based on those results to implement in the following year. You are also responsible for ensuring that all of your assessment data is entered and saved in TAMUCC’s assessment management system.

What is the Assessment Management System?

TAMUCC has purchased a subscription to WEAVEonline® Assessment Management System. This system is “a web-based solution to capture, manage, archive, and track academic and administrative assessment information for regional and disciplinary accreditation, program reviews, annual reporting, and program improvement.”

With WEAVEonline® we can keep all our planning and assessment information in one place. It is easily accessible and searchable, and has a number of flexible reporting features that provide quick and simple summaries of our assessment processes and data.

NOTE:
For the programs that submitted unit plans to the Office of Planning & Institutional Effectiveness last year, PIE converted the first three columns of your 2006-07 unit plans created in the Excel spreadsheets and created WEAVEonline program files. This conversion was done to make the transition WEAVEonline go more smoothly. Therefore, most faculty will not need to input their mission, objectives, measures and expected performance levels for 2006-07. Of course, faculty have the choice of either keeping their program’s mission, objectives, and measures as converted by PIE or they may change what has been put into WEAVEonline.
What is the annual timeline for program assessment?

Year 1:
Aug ’06 – Dec ’06: develop plans for 06-07 academic year
Sep ’06 – Aug ’07: implement actions and assess performance
Aug ’07 – Oct ’07: view assessment results
By Dec 14 ’07: develop action plans
Aug ’07 – Oct ’07: view assessment results
By Dec 12 ’08: annual assessment plan report completed

Year 2:
Aug ’07 – Dec ’07: develop plans for 07-08 academic year
Sep ’07 – Aug ’08: implement actions and assess performance
Aug ’08 – Oct ’08: view assessment results
By Dec 12 ’08: annual assessment plan report completed

How do I access my WEAVEonline® Assessment Management System account?

Use a current version of Internet Explorer to Access WEAVEonline®
Go to: http://www.weaveonline.net/subscriber/TAMUCC/ or access the link from the PIE homepage: http://pie.TAMUCC.edu/

IMPORTANT!!! News and information about planning and assessment processes and timelines at TAMUCC will be posted to this login page. Check it often!

Also NOTE: The bottom of each page in WEAVEonline® contains links to the TAMUCC website, the website for the TAMUCC Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, and TAMUCC’s WEAVEonline® administrator.
First-time login

1. Enter your username at the login prompt on the left side of the screen. Your username is your TAMUCC e-mail ID (first name dot last name, e.g., john.smith)

2. Click on “Forgot Password?” A password will be sent to your e-mail address. Check your e-mail for your temporary password.

3. Again access WEAVEonline® at http://www.weaveonline.net/subscriber/TAMUCC/ using a current version of Internet Explorer.

4. Enter your username and temporary password at the prompts on the left side of the screen and click “Change Password.” It is important to change your password to ensure the security of WEAVEonline.

5. Enter a new password. See page 14 for password creation tips.

6. Click “Submit” You should receive a message that your password has been changed successfully.

YOU ARE NOW READY TO ENTER YOUR ASSESSMENT PLAN

Subsequent Logins

1. Access WEAVEonline® at http://www.weaveonline.net/subscriber/TAMUCC/ using a current version of Internet Explorer.

2. Enter your username and new password at the login prompts on the left side of the screen.

3. Click “Login”
My Home Page

Your WEAVEonline® Home page is a blue-bordered Administrative Workspace. It includes a dashboard style layout that provides at-a-glance summaries and other useful information.

Verify your name, and note the year: 2006-2007. You will also have the option to start your program plan for the 2007-2008 year.

The left side of the page contains links to features that allow you to add, edit, or delete programs and people associated them, generate reports, and send messages. See page 14 for details.

The Status Snapshot gives the data entry status overview of your program(s). Click on Detailed Report to display status information for each program.

The program list display on the right side of the screen can be sorted by organizational Levels (organizational structure) or A-Z.

Selecting a Program – The Program Overview Page

On your Home page, after sorting your program list display by either organizational Levels or A-to-Z, select a program (aka unit, department, division, service, etc…) for assessment.

The Overview page for the program displays within a magenta-bordered Program Workspace. This Program Overview page serves as a data entry status page.

A glossary of terms can be found under help (top right).
Entering Your Assessment Plan – Mission

Mission: The purpose of the program.

Select the **Mission** tab on the left menu to review the program mission statement.

Click the **Add** button to add the program’s Mission statement if one does not exist, or select the **Edit** button to update an existing Mission statement.

Type in the program mission statement.

**IMPORTANT!** Once data entry is in final form, you must click **Yes** under **Data Entry Completed**. If you do not, the assessment plan for your program will appear **incomplete** when reports are generated.

However, **do NOT** click **Yes** under **Data Entry Completed** if, in fact, your data entry is **not complete** (e.g., if you’re going to make changes to it later). When you generate reports, this will provide a useful reminder of which sections in your plan still need data entered – you won’t have to search through your whole plan to determine what’s incomplete.

Once the Mission Statement has been Added or Edited click **Yes** or **No** under **Data Entry Completed** (**No** is the default).

Click **Save** to submit your Mission statement to WEAVEonline.

**REMINDERS:** (1) Save often, (2) Use navigation within the program to move to next and previous screens, (3) If preparing a large amount of text, use Word to spell-check and save, then copy and paste text into WEAVEonline.
Entering Your Assessment Plan – Outcomes/Objectives

An **Objective** is a statement of intention, describing a task to be accomplished or a goal to be met. A well-formulated objective is SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound. You can enter an objective in WEAVEonline® for a single year (e.g., establish an online course evaluation survey) or enter one that will be continuing (e.g., deliver reliable and secure university-wide technology resources). You make Outcomes/Objectives entries at the start of an assessment cycle.

An **Outcome** is a specific kind of objective that describes a desired end result related to your mission. An outcome statement defines what you expect to happen as a result of your activities (e.g., through orientation and training sessions, faculty will gain sufficient Blackboard skills to implement Blackboard in their courses).

A **Student Learning Outcome** is a statement regarding knowledge, skills, and abilities students should gain or enhance as a result of their engagement in an academic program or other structured learning experience. Student Learning Outcomes are the most important outcomes/objectives for an academic program.

If you are writing a Student Learning Outcome statement, you may find it helpful to start out with “Students [or program graduates] will be able to…. You make Outcomes/Objectives entries at the start of an assessment cycle.

Select the **Outcomes/Objectives** tab on the left menu to review the program’s Outcomes/Objectives.

Click the **Add** button to add a new Outcome/Objective, or select the **Edit** button next to an existing Outcome/Objective to update.

1. Enter a short description of the Outcome/Objective

2. Enter a Full Description of the Outcome/Objective

   **Suggestion:** Put strategies for outcome/objectives in a bracketed statement in Full Description field.

3. Select **Yes** or **No** to “Is this a student learning outcome?”

   Most academic program outcomes will be student learning outcomes.

In the Full Description, you may want to include details about what you will do (strategies), who’s responsible, the timeline, etc.
4. You now have options to select whether the Outcome/Objective is associated with General Education Outcomes, the Strategic Plan, or Institutional Priorities. Clicking on Select… for any one of these will bring up a checklist. Check all that apply and click Select. Your selections should appear in the appropriate fields.

5. Next, you can enter any applicable information about Accreditation/Professional Standards or other Relevant Associations.

IMPORTANT! If the Outcome/Objective is associated with a general education outcome, strategic plan goal, institutional priority, and/or accreditation/professional standards, etc., enter that information. This information is needed to properly generate reports.

6. After the Outcomes/Objectives have been Added or Edited click Yes or No under Data Entry Completed (No is the default).

7. Click Save. Clicking Save or Cancel will return you to the main Outcomes/Objectives screen. Selecting the Outcomes/Objectives tab on the left menu will also return you to the main Outcomes/Objectives screen.

8. If outcome/objective statements need to be re-ordered, open the outcome/objective and change the number to the desired number. Please note that all numbers must be edited, they are not automatically change.
TIP: To prepare for entering assessment plan measures, print outcomes/objectives first. This will make that information easily and readily available to assist with entering measures.

Entering Your Assessment Plan – Measures

Measure: A measure identifies evidence and methods you will use to determine whether you are achieving expected results. Measures need not be quantitative, but they do need to show performance compared to criteria for success in relation to outcomes/objectives.

Measuring student learning is a special case. The best measures for this are direct indicators in which students demonstrate what they know or can do. In this category are portfolios of work over time, exhibitions, clinical evaluations, performances, carefully designed course-embedded assessments, and products such as papers or oral presentations. Indirect indicators, in which students or others report on student learning, are less powerful, though they do have a place in creating “an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time” (from AAHE’s Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning).

Select the Measures & Findings tab on the left menu to add new measures or review existing ones, and to relate these measures to your Outcomes/Objectives.

1. Click the Add button to add a Measure, or select the Edit button next to a Measure to update.
2. Click on Select to display a list of your Outcomes/Objectives. Check all that apply and click Select.
3. Enter a short description of the Measure
4. Enter a Full Description of the Measure
5. Enter a statement that describes the target performance level for the program on the Measure.
6. If measures need to be re-ordered, open the measure and change the number to the desired number. Please note that all numbers must be edited, they are not automatically change
Target: You determine the criteria for success on a given measure for an outcome/objective, either specifying an exact target level [e.g., 85% of oral presentations rated by a panel of reviewers will be scored at or above the “Acceptable” level, using a rubric (scoring scale) developed by the department] or establishing an internal benchmark (e.g., the average turnaround time for a transcript request) and improving on it in subsequent cycles. You need to ask yourself what level of performance by your program would be acceptable and then seek to sustain or enhance that performance.

7. Once the Measures have been Added or Edited click Yes or No under Data Entry Completed (No is the default).

8. Click Save. Clicking Save or Cancel will return you to the main Measures & Findings screen. Selecting the Measures & Findings tab on the left menu will also return you to the main Measures & Findings screen.
Findings

Once you have completed assessment using a given Measure, add your Findings.

Select the Measures & Findings tab on the left menu to review existing Measures.

On the Summary of Measures and Findings page, locate a Findings link below each measure.

Click Add Findings or Edit Findings to add or update the findings for each measure.

1. Enter your Findings

Findings: Findings are the results of your assessments; they give evidence of achievement versus a target level for each measure you use. For Student Learning Outcomes, findings detail how students performed on the measure; for other outcomes or objectives, findings usually describe performance of the program itself on the measure. If you are following a regular assessment and quality improvement cycle, you set Outcomes/Objectives and Measures early on, then enter Findings, Action Plan, and Analysis later in the cycle.

2. Based on Findings, indicate whether the Target Level of Achievement was Met, Partially Met, or Not Met.

3. If Target Level of Achievement was Partially Met or Not Met, check Yes next to Further Action Planned?

4. Once the Findings have been Added or Edited click Yes or No under Data Entry Completed (No is the default).

5. Click Save

TIP: To prepare for entering action plan, print measures and findings first. This will make that information easily and readily available to assist with entering measures.
Action Plan

After you review findings, select the Action Plan tab on the left menu to plan actions. Formulate actions when you want to improve performance. If assessment shows that you are not meeting target performance levels, take action! Click the Add button to add a new Action, or select the Edit button next to an existing Action to update. Remember, these are actions that you plan to take in the future, not reports of actions already taken.

Action: An action is an organized activity you undertake to help your program more effectively achieve its intended outcomes/objectives. Whenever your program does not achieve the desired target performance level for an outcome/objective, you should plan an action to address that shortcoming. For example, if students did not meet your program’s expectations for oral presentations, you might decide to include more instruction and/or more practice to enhance students’ development of oral presentation skills. You can also include planned actions not related to assessment findings, e.g., an action to respond to a new opportunity that has arisen during the course of a year. You make Action Plan entries at the end of an assessment cycle.

1. Click on Select to display a list of your Outcomes/Objectives. Check all that apply and click Select.
2. Click on Select to display a list of your Measures. Check all that apply and click Select.
3. Enter a short description of the Action.
4. Enter a Full Description of the Action.
5. Identify the person/group responsible for implementing the action.
6. Input the target date for implementation of the action.
7. Assign a priority to the action: High, Medium, or Low. The level assigned should match your perception of the value the action could have for enhancing quality, as well as the likelihood of your proceeding with the action.
8. Describe any additional resources needed to accomplish the action. List what is needed for you to undertake the specified action, but is not available within current or reallocated staffing or budget.
9. Once the Findings have been Added or Edited click Yes or No under Data Entry Completed (No is the default).
10. Click Save (see screen shots on next page)
Analysis

Analysis is your reflection on your program’s findings versus the criteria you set for success on your program's intended outcomes/objectives. Here you summarize what you see as patterns of strength and areas in which improvement is needed. You make Analysis entries at the end of an assessment cycle.

At year’s end, select the Analysis tab on the left menu to add summary comments for this assessment cycle.

1. Click the Add or Edit link to add or edit your analysis narrative.
2. Answer the questions about program strengths/progress and about objectives/outcomes that require continued attention.
3. Once Analysis has been Added or Edited click Yes or No under Data Entry Completed (No is the default).
4. Click Save.

Annual Report

Select the Annual Reporting tab.
Click the Add Annual Report or Edit link to add or edit your report.
Enter the information that is applicable to your program and/or requested by your supervisor.
Tracking

Tracking will activate in the second year of using WEAVEonline®. Instructions on how to use this module will be provided for 2008-09.

| Tracking: | In this module, a program can track actions over time to show its program improvement efforts. Each action in this module comes from some previous year's action plan. The tracking of these action plan elements forms a cumulative record that is of special value for accreditation or program review. Because circumstances change, a program can modify a planned action. A program might change the person responsible or the implementation target date, for example. The tracking status defaults to Current, but it is easy to change that status to Completed, On hold, or Terminated. There is also an optional Comments field to give more information about any status change. |

Mapping

Module is coming next year. Instructions on how to use this module will be provided for 2008-09.

Feedback

Module is coming next year. Instructions on how to use this module will be provided for 2008-09.

Reports

Select the Reports tab on the left menu to view/print reports for your program. Click on the link for the desired report. You can export to Microsoft® Word from the Detailed Assessment Report by clicking on the Export button within that report. The Data Audit reports allow you to do a quick self-check on whether you have Measures Needed for any Outcomes/Objectives, Findings Needed for any Measures, or Actions Needed as a result of any Findings. More detailed information about each type of report can be found in the Glossary: click the help link at the top right corner of the screen.
Administrative Modules

Click Home on the menu at the left of the screen to return to the administrative workspace.

1. Select the People & Programs tab on the left menu in the blue-bordered Administrative Workspace to view or add people in WEAVEonline, update your own name, phone number, and email, or give people read-write or read-only access to your programs.

2. Select the Messages tab on the left menu in the blue-bordered Administrative Workspace to draft an email and send it to one or more people in your assessment area(s). You can also draft and send a message to those who have access to certain WEAVEonline programs in your area. Please note, in order to ensure that the appropriate administrator is included in the email list, the administrator must be added to the program.

3. Select the Reports tab on the left menu in the blue-bordered Administrative Workspace to run reports across two or more programs. Select a specific report from the first column, then select the programs you want included in that report. When you are ready to run the report, click Go!

4. Select the Search tab on the left menu in the blue-bordered Administrative Workspace to search across all of your programs for a particular keyword or to find programs with new data entry on or after a selected date.

Password Tips

Don’t…

- Use a word that is in print in any language
- Make a password by simply adding a number to the beginning or end
- Use sequences like 987654321 or mnopqrst or qwerty
- Simply substitute similar symbols for letters, like $tr33tc
- Spell words sdrawkcab
- Use repeated characters more than twice: 3zzz4nnn

Do…

- Create a random appearing password, or 8 or more characters, symbols, and digits
- Mix upper and lower case letters, at least one of each
- Make a password you will remember
- Commit password to memory and never write it down or leave it around the office

Tips

- Use two unrelated words and join them with an arbitrary number and/or symbol
- Use first letters of a sequence
- Make a really long password from a sentence