WTAMU Assessment Workbook

The purpose of this workbook is to assist Direct Supervisors, Program Coordinators, and other stakeholders in developing an assessment plan for an academic program, summarizing the assessment data results, and determining improvement points to implement. For additional information and a more in-depth look at assessment, please refer to the *Buffs Improvement Handbook* located on the West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) Assessment website.

Note that WTAMU utilizes Weave, an online software system, as an improvement repository for submission of the Annual Reports.

For academic assessment, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) defines an academic program as any undergraduate or graduate degree program. Furthermore, degree programs that have multiple majors are then considered to have each major as an assessable academic program.

Outline of Workbook

- Assessment and Improvement Cycle Overview
- Suggested Annual Timeline
- Template
- Academic Unit – Assessment Process (with examples)
- Weave Format

Assessment and Improvement Cycle Overview

The Assessment and Improvement Cycle consists of eight specific steps that must be reviewed, implemented, and evaluated to fully assess a program. These steps are outlined below, in addition to providing a suggested timeline, as an example.

- Step 1: Strategic Plan – Mission Statement
- Step 2: Program Objectives
- Step 3: Learning Outcomes
- Step 4: Methods
- Step 5: Criteria / Instruments
- Step 6: Data / Results
- Step 7: Actions Plan and Analysis
- Step 8: Annual Improvement Narrative

Suggested Annual Timeline
(Beginning Summer 2022 and for Subsequent Years)

- **Summer** – Determine or reevaluate outcomes and benchmarks
- **Fall/Spring** – Monitor and gather data from faculty and other stakeholders
- **April/May** – Write Annual Report (Improvement Narrative)
- **June 1** – First "proof" submission to Director of Assessment for review
- **June** – Work on suggested updates from Director of Assessment
- **July 1 – Final deadline for Annual Reports to be upload into Weave**
- **July/August** – Determine modifications of the objectives/outcomes for next assessment cycle based on assessment analysis
- **September/October** – Submit curriculum changes, as needed, through department, college, and university curriculum cycles.

Academic Unit – Assessment Process

Please note that the examples provided below are <u>not</u> actual or factual representation of the program below. They are provided to give the reader ideas and guidance on various options.**

Step 1: Strategic Plan – Mission Statement

What is it:
The Strategic Plan requires each college or academic unit to declare a college or program Mission Statement. This is a broad statement that describes the overall purpose and focus.

Example:
Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences
The College is dedicated to the preparation of education and social science professionals who excel academically, are reflective in practice, demonstrate a global perspective, and are committed to ethical behavior.

Apply it:
What is the Mission Statement for your college or program?

Step 2: Program Objectives

What is it:
Program Objectives (or program goals) are the overall outcomes that a program defines as the abilities, knowledge, or values students will learn from the program and/or goals (national ranking, job placement for graduated students, enrollment, etc.) and that the program wants to achieve.

Note:
These should relate directly back to the college or program Mission Statement and should have 2 or 3 program objectives. Objectives should also <u>correlate</u> to the overall goals of the University in regards to recruitment, retention, graduation rates, and job placement rates.

Example:
Program Objectives for the Education Program
- Students will be prepared to successfully complete state certification tests on the first attempt. (Relates to "excel academically".)
- Students will receive successful First Year Recommendation report from their principal (Relates to "reflective in practice".)
- The Education Program will increase enrollment from ___ to ___ (University recruitment goal).

Apply it:
What are the Program Objectives for your program? How do these objectives impact the University through recruitment, retention, graduation rates, or job placement rates? Answering these questions will aid you in the development of strong learning outcomes.

Step 3: Learning Outcomes

What is it:
Learning Outcomes or Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are expected learning outcomes that refer to specific knowledge, practical skills, competencies, or areas of personal development that students will achieve at the completion of the course (or program) and are measurable. If it cannot be clearly measured, it is not an outcome. Strong action word examples: (find more of these in Bloom's Taxonomy) compile, identify, create, plan, revise, analyze, design, apply, prepare, compute, explain, predict, assess, compare, critique, and evaluate should be used in the writing of these outcomes.

Note:
WTAMU recommends that student learning outcomes be limited to 3 to 4 outcomes, but only 2 or 3 will be assessed over a three-year period. All SLOs should directly relate to the college or program Mission Statement and goals/objectives. Programs should be committed to assessing these specific outcomes for three consecutive years. Avoid unclear verbs such as: know, be aware of, appreciate, learn, understand, comprehend, become familiar with. These are difficult to observe or measure in Steps 4 and 5.

Example:
Student Learning Outcomes for the Education Program
1. Students will apply critical thought processes. (Can relate to state certification testing, practicum testing, and other exam and research exercises.)
2. Students will create teaching materials for diverse learners. (This can relate to state certification testing, student teaching, and First Year Recommendation)
3. Students will apply integrated technology into teaching material. (This can relate to student teaching and/or the First Year Recommendation.

Apply it:
What are the Student Learning Outcomes for your program? Are these outcomes ones that the program can commit to for three consecutive years? Are these outcomes measurable?

Step 4: Methods/Measures

What is it:
Methods/measures determine the questions 'how' and 'what' are you measuring. During this step, determine the courses that have a direct correlation to the Student Learning Outcomes that were created in Step 3.

Note:
While every program is required to be assessed, <u>not every</u> course will be assessed. Only courses that relate to the Student Learning Outcomes should be assessed.

Example:
Courses that will be assessed, based on the determined Student Learning Outcomes, are:

- Educational Foundations (example: EDPD 3340) – critical thinkers and diverse learners
- Clinical teaching (example: EDEL 4341, EDPD 4398) – critical thinkers and diverse learners
- Technology Instruction (example: EDPD 4348) – technology and diverse learners

Apply it:
What courses are in the program (and are also located within the department) that relate back to the Student Learning Outcomes chosen in Step 3?

*Director's Note – Though not required to be completed with the 2021-22 reporting cycle, each program will be provided blank curriculum maps (both paper and electronic) that could benefit them in completion of their assessment.

Step 5: Criteria / Instruments

What is it:

Now that the courses have been identified, this next step is a little more involved and requires the following:

A. determine the assignments that will be assessed in each course from Step 4,
B. decide on benchmarks or targets that students should meet (minimum standards necessary),
C. and determine the rubric or criteria used to evaluate the assignments.

A. Assignments/Instruments:

Assignments will be Direct Assessment (students displaying actual knowledge or skills), which is the preferred type of academic assessment. Indirect Assessment (students reflect on their learning rather than demonstrating it) is a useful tool that reflects student efficacy with their given major/program. WTAMU requires Direct Assessments as this is a SACSCOC requirement, but this in turn can be supplemented with Indirect Assessments, which lends to a more conclusive understanding of SLOs and their influence. Indirect Assessments can be as simple and straightforward as questions on a course evaluation and/or minute papers (a brief description of knowledge) that express appreciation and understanding, or not, for a given course/major.

Direct assessment examples:

Capstone assignment/project	Evaluation of field placement/internship
Case studies	Internal/external juried review of performances
Comprehensive exams	Internship and clinical evaluations
Dissertation	Oral exam
Essays	Performance (Rubrics)
Exhibit	Portfolio evaluation
External examiners/peer review	Senior thesis

Indirect assessment examples (not recommended):

Alumni survey	Job / Graduate school placement statistics
Exit interviews	Peer assessments
Focus groups	Surveys sent to students, faculty, employers on program perceptions
Graduation / Retention rates	

B. Benchmarks/Targets:

Benchmarks or targets state the level of minimally acceptable performance that is expected of students. A degree program should develop benchmarks that align with the Program Objectives and Student Learning Objectives from Steps 2 and 3 above. *These are usually set the prior year based on the results from that year.

C. <u>Criteria and Rubric</u>:

Once the assignments are selected and the benchmarks determined, the criteria and rubrics should be developed that identify whether students have met the necessary benchmarks. These can be based on various scales (holistic or an analytic weighted scale).

Note:
It is typically better to set higher targeted outcomes that can be measured over the three years than to set lower, more attainable benchmarks. It is better to be perceived as striving towards higher standards than just seeking to achieve the status quo.

It should also be noted that the assignment grade assigned by the faculty, is not necessarily in complete correlation with the assessment rubric. One professor's "A" can be another's "C". Assessment is based on specific knowledge in a given year without as little subjectivity included as possible. This is especially true if a faculty committee evaluates student performance on the assignments and then assigns a score based on the assessment rubric.

Example:
- Educational Foundations course (example: EDPD 3340) – critical thinkers and diverse learners
- Clinical teaching (example: EDEL 4341, EDPD 4398) – critical thinkers and diverse learners
- Technology Instruction (example: EDPD 4348) – technology and diverse learners

A. <u>Assignments</u>:
- Educational Foundations course: EDPD 3340 – Comprehensive exam
- Clinical teaching: EDEL 4341 – Final clinical evaluation
- Technology: EDPD 4348 – Portfolio

B. <u>Benchmarks</u>:
- Educational Foundations: 90% of students will be able to successfully identify key major components covered in a comprehensive exam. (Reminder: It's not the grade, but the content that is being measured more specifically. Over time, grades and expectations will change, but knowledge content should remain static.)
- Clinical teaching: 95% of students will meet or exceed expectations in their clinical evaluation
- Technology: 85% of students will demonstrate effective use of technology integration within lesson plans and for diverse learners for their course portfolio project.

C. <u>Criteria and Rubric</u>: (*Examples are from final results and do not portray an actual rubric.*)
- Educational Foundations
  i. Criteria: Comprehensive exam - students must provide evidence of critical thinking
  ii. Rubric (holistic):
     1. Does not meet expectations
     2. Meets expectations
     3. Exceeds expectations

- Clinical teaching
  i. Criteria: Final Evaluation - students must demonstrate critical thinking and identify strategies and implement solutions for diverse learners.
  ii. Rubric (holistic):
     1. Weak (does not meet expectations)
     2. Satisfactory (meets expectations)
     3. Strong (exceeds expectations)

- Technology
  i. Criteria: Portfolio – students must provide a portfolio that effectively communicates content, is visually engaging, and is easily adaptable for diverse learners.
  ii. Rubric (analytic):
     1. Effectively communicates ideas – 20%
        a. 0-12% (does not meet expectations)
        b. 13-17% (meets expectations)
        c. 18-20% (exceeds expectations)
     2. Visually engaging – 30%
        a. 0-17% (does not meet expectations)
        b. 18-24% (meets expectations)
        c. 25%-30% (exceeds expectations)
     3. Adaptable for diverse learners – 50%
        a. 0-30% (does not meet expectations)
        b. 31-40% (meets expectations)
        c. 41-50% (exceeds expectations)

Apply it:
Determine what the (a) assignment will be in each course, (b) the benchmarks or targets for the assignments, and (c) what the criteria and rubric will be for each assignment being assessed.

Step 6: Data / Results

What is it:
Once students complete the assignment, exam, portfolio, etc. and at the conclusion of the course, data and results should be gathered from the faculty by the Direct Supervisor or Designated Assessment Representative. These results should be compared to the benchmarks set in Step 5 and analyzed. A chart should be created to show how the data was broken down based on the rubrics.

Note:
Some programs may decide to have all faculty in a specific discipline or content area score assignments based on assessment criteria. (See the Step 5 'Note' for additional information.) These scores should then be used for the chart.

Example:
- Educational Foundations: EDPD 3340 – 90% of students will be able to successfully pass the final comprehensive exam.
  A total of 62 students took the comprehensive exam for EDPD 3340. The exam consisted of a total of 40 questions and thirteen of these questions pertained to critical thinking. Of these thirteen questions, eleven were multiple choice and two were essay questions.

  Overall, the class mean exceeded expectations with an average of approximately 96%.

Number of students: 64

Multiple Choice (11):	Essay question (1):	Essay question (1):	Overall exam points (100):
0-5 Correct: 0	Does not meet: 2	Does not meet: 2	Does not meet 0-73: 2
6-8 Correct: 47	Meets: 37	Meets: 24	Meets 74-88: 38
9-11 Correct: 15	Exceeds: 23	Exceeds: 36	Exceeds 89-100: 22
Total Meets/Exceeds: 100%	Total Meets/Exceeds: 96%	Total Meets/Exceeds:96%	Total Meets/Exceeds: 96%

- Clinical teaching: EDEL 4341 – 95% of students will meet or exceed expectations in their clinical evaluation
  A total of 96 students participated in clinical teaching for the fall and spring semester. A final clinical evaluation is given by the clinical teaching supervisor and is based on whether the student effectively utilized critical thinking and implemented solutions for diverse learners.

  Overall, the students exceeded expectations with an average of approximately 97%.

Number of students: 96

Critical thinking utilized	Diverse learning strategies
Weak/Not met: 3	Weak/Not met: 2
Satisfactory/Meets: 51	Satisfactory/Meets: 47
Strong/Exceeds: 42	Strong/Exceeds: 47
Total Meets/Exceeds:96.8%	**Total Meets/Exceeds: 97.9%**

- Technology: EDPD 4348 – 85% of students will demonstrate effective technology integration within lesson plans and for diverse learners

A total of 77 students participated in presenting their course portfolio. This project is broken down into three categories: effectively communicates ideas, visually engaging, and is adaptable for diverse learners.

Overall, the students did not meet expectations with an average of approximately 83%.

Number of students: 77

Categories	Did not meet	Meets	Exceeds	Total Meets/Exceeds	Weighted Percentage of Meets/Exceeds
Effectively communicates ideas 20%	10	50	17	(50+17)/77 = 87%	87% x 20% = 0.174
Visually engaging 30%	10	42	25	87%	87% x 30% = 0.261
Adaptable for diverse learners 50%	16	39	22	79%	79% x 50% = 0.395
Total:					0.83 = 83%

Step 7: Actions

What is it:
This step states what went well and what did not. After the data and results are evaluated, then the course, assignment, and rubric (from Step 5) should be reviewed to determine why the students met or did not meet the benchmark. In addition, future benchmarks or targets should be established.

Note:
This step will be broken down into the following narratives: Positives, Challenges, and Future benchmarks.

Example:
Technology Instruction – EDPD 4348

Positives: Students were actively engaged with the portfolio assignment and many embraced the opportunity to integrate technology into teaching material. (This could include a breakdown of the positives from the rubric or specific questions in an exam.)

Challenges: Students struggled in understanding the concept and the faculty expressed concern that not enough time was devoted to specific learning objects within the course. (This could include a breakdown of the challenges from the rubric or specific questions in an exam.)

Actions to take as programs set future benchmarks: Based on this year's achievements or lack thereof, Faculty and Program Coordinators will do the following things in the coming year that they expect will have a more positive effect on achievement of the outcome.

Apply it:
What were the positives and challenges and future actions be for each program assessed? What should future benchmarks or targets be, based on the results from this assessment? Are there other, more effective measures in the same or different courses that might have greater effect on SLO improvements?

Step 8: Improvement Narrative

What is it:

Building the improvement narrative is perhaps the most critical as it pulls everything together, summarizes the year's assessment process with its aforementioned positives, challenges, and future action plans, while asking the question, "How do we improve?" This step should also include sharing the assessment data with program faculty and staff. Other thoughts and reminders to consider:

- Decide if the program needs different assessment methods to obtain more targeted information.
- Review what needs to be done as the assessment cycle transitions back to the planning phase. (Are different assessment methods necessary to determine degrees of achievement with regard to SLOs? What specific actions must be taken as programs seek the desired improvement in a given SLO?)

Upon further review, it was determined that several concepts from EDPD 4348 would need to be added to other courses to ensure students are introduced to concepts at an earlier stage in the Education program. Curriculum forms will be submitted to make these changes.

Apply it:

What areas of improvement are needed for each of the Student Learning Outcomes?

What areas of improvement are needed in the coming assessment cycle for the program based on the assessment findings?

Weave Format

Format for the Improvement Narrative

The Improvement Narrative will be stored annually in Weave and can be located above the listed 'Outcomes', 'Measures', and 'Results/Data' tabs. For additional instructions, please reference the *Weave Step by Step Guide*.

Categories in Weave relating to Assessment/Improvement Narrative Steps 7 & 8

Process – Includes discussion of action plans from previous year that affected current year's assessment.

Positives – Pull from Steps 7 and 8 above.

Challenges – Pull from Steps 7 and 8 above.

Action and Analysis – Pull from Steps 7 and 8 above.

Improvement starting in 'Year 2' – Did something improve from the previous year? Whether Yes or No, how will the program seek to improve in the coming year. What are future actions? Does curriculum for courses or the program need to be updated or changed? Pull from Steps 7 and 8 above.