

Guide to Institutional Assessment Processes and Components 2025-2026

Office of Institutional Assessment

*Office of the Provost
University of Florida*

Continuous Quality
Enhancement Series

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Guide to Institutional Assessment at the University of Florida

The Nuts and Bolts of Components of the Institutional Assessment Process and
Continuous Improvement Efforts at UF

University of Florida, Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA)

<http://assessment.aa.ufl.edu>

Assessment is central to UF's curriculum, providing evidence of student learning that informs teaching and curriculum enhancements. Faculty assess learning through tools like exams, quizzes, and rubrics. After each semester, faculty use the results to refine their course for the next time. At the program level, academic departments evaluate student learning outcomes and submit annual reports that include plans for ongoing improvement.

Faculty and administrators are encouraged to expand assessment skills through the UF Center for Teaching Excellence and other opportunities for professional development.

Rationale

The University of Florida Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA) manages continuous improvement efforts, assessment processes and related documentation in accordance with best practices across all University of Florida (UF) academic programs--undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees and certificates. UF's assessment system was established in the early 2010's by the inaugural Director of Institutional Assessment, Dr. Tim Brophy, working with faculty experts.

Academic assessment and its use for continuous improvement is an integral part of the UF curriculum. As part of the teaching, learning, and assessment model of continuous improvement, assessment activities provide documented evidence of student learning and decisions to make improvements to the curriculum (See Figure 1).

Figure 1 shows the full cycle of teaching, learning and assessment at UF. It begins with the Student Learning Outcomes, by designing the syllabus to align with those and then teaching the curriculum. By grading assignments of the student, the faculty member can measure the amount of student learning and use the data to evaluate that semester's course and to consider improvements for next time. By "closing the loop" in using the data, the faculty are ready for the next teaching cycle.

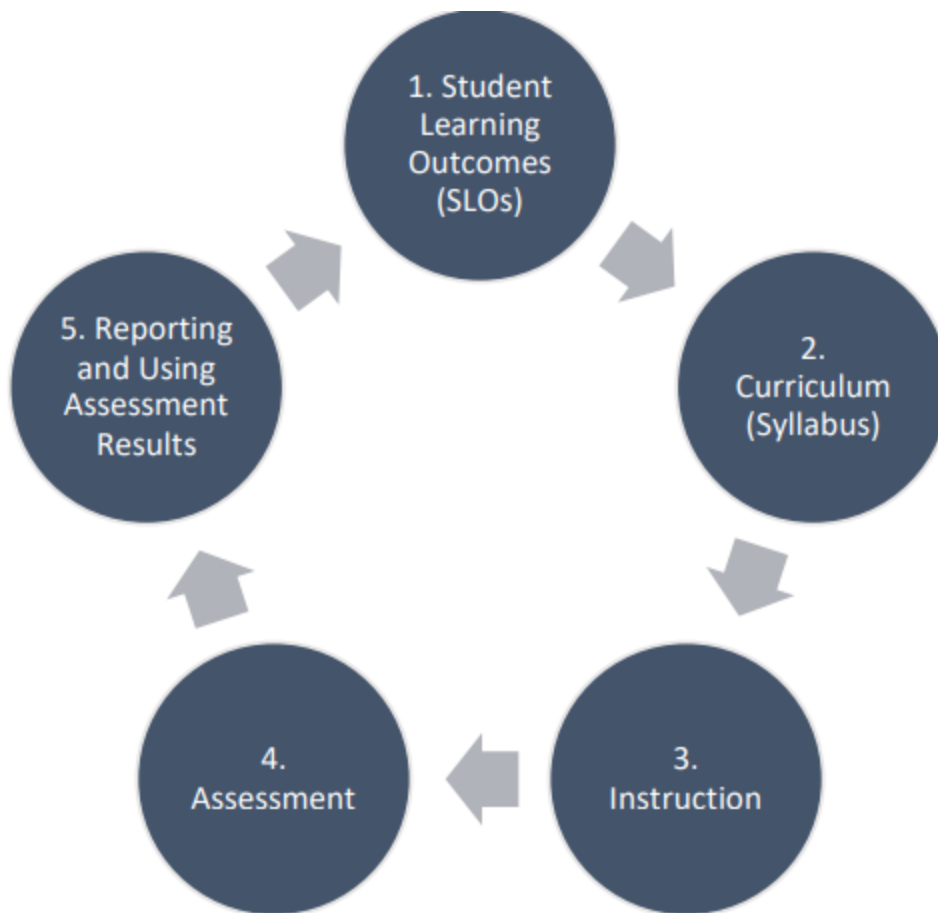


Figure 1: Teaching, learning and assessment model of continuous improvement. In Miller, M.D. & Brophy T.S. (2019). Using assessment results for program improvement: A resource for faculty.

These processes at UF are faculty-led: identify and measure student learning outcomes and progress towards goals, while providing evidence with supporting data. Additionally, faculty members are who sits on the various committees to review and approve curriculum. At UF, examples of faculty-led materials include Academic Assessment Plans, Academic Learning Compacts (reviewed and approved by faculty through the Academic Assessment Committee), and annual Academic Assessment Data Reports.

In these plans and reports, faculty members identify specific components of their assessment processes and implement them. There are numerous components of these items which ultimately are the responsibility of the faculty in support of the curriculum. See Appendix B for details on submittal processes at UF.

Basic Definitions

Student Learning Outcome (SLO):

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) are a statement of what students should know and be able to do by the time they complete an academic program. These are in three categories at UF:

- For undergraduates: content, communication, and critical thinking.
- For graduate and professional students: knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors.

Academic Assessment Committee (AAC):

The Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) is a Joint Committee of faculty appointed by of the President and the Faculty Senate at UF. Its role in the UF curriculum approval process is to review and approve Academic Assessment Plans, Academic Learning Compacts, and other assessment-related topics. Changes to any previously approved components of assessment plans must go through the AAC, such as changes to Student Learning Outcomes, assessment methodology such as Curriculum Map changes, or the overall Academic Assessment Plan.

Academic Assessment Plan (AAP, or Plan):

All academic programs at UF – resulting in an undergraduate, graduate, professional, or certificate credential– must develop an Academic Assessment Plan. The Plan shows how the program will measure its student learning outcomes, which courses or milestones align to the outcomes, and other assessment components. The Plan is the guiding document for the faculty to assess its program. The AAC reviews and approves the Plan. The Plan typically has numerous components.

Curriculum Maps (Undergraduate) and Assessment Timelines (Graduate/Professional)

Examples of Curriculum Maps or Assessment Timelines consist of a matrix that indicate where and in which courses or activities the program's student learning outcomes are introduced, reinforced, and assessed.

- Curriculum Maps describe the distribution of the assessments in undergraduate programs.
- Assessment Timelines present the general sequence/timing of assessments in graduate and professional programs.

Program Goals (PGs)

Program goals are the broad educational goals of the program, and can be changed at any time by a department.

SLO Matrix

A chart can be provided to show which student learning outcomes are measured by which assessment(s) in the Plan. This is simply to help clarify the Plan when it is complex.

Academic Learning Compact (ALC):

For each undergraduate program, the undergraduate catalog publishes an Academic Learning Compact (ALC) for the student audience. This includes a statement about the anticipated skills to be acquired, graduation requirement(s) for the program, the type of assessments that students can expect, and its student learning outcomes. The AAC reviews and verifies the ALC.

Academic Assessment Data Report (Report):

Once the Plan is approved by the AAC, program faculty implement the plan and annually submit an Academic Assessment Data Report for each academic program. The Report summarizes not only the Plan, but also the assessment results for the previous academic year and includes a narrative explaining what changes the program made as a result.

This process is critically important for upholding the quality of the programs, encouraging the continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of assessment methods and procedures. It also supports the institution in articulating internal assessment practices and use of data in clear ways to stakeholders. The purpose of the Report is to document evidence that the University of Florida strives for continuous improvement, whether it be in academic programs or other non-academic units.

Detailed Components of Assessment Plans, Materials, and Reports

Minimum number of students for reporting

The minimum number of unique students required for assessment data reports are:
Undergraduate = 10; Graduate, Professional = 5.

Program faculty must collect data each year on the programs with numbers of unique students less than these minimums and report the aggregated data in the academic year when the total number reaches the minimum. Program faculty can aggregate data for up to three years before they must report.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

A Student Learning Outcome (SLO) is a statement of what students should know and be able to do by the time they complete an academic program. At UF, all SLOs fall into one of three broad categories.

- Undergraduate – Content Knowledge, Critical Thinking, or Communication.
- Graduate and Professional – Content Knowledge, Skills, or Professional Behavior

Student Learning Outcomes should be current, relevant, and rigorous; written concisely and clearly; and represent the consensus of the program faculty on what students should know and be able to do at the end of their program.

SLOs are evaluated by the Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) on the following criteria:

- Clarity – the SLO is concise and clear
- Focus on demonstration of student learning – the SLO describes an observable behavior or action
- Measurability – the SLO can be measured using a direct or indirect assessment (see Methods and Procedures for further information about assessments)

Threshold of Acceptability for SLO's:

The acceptable percentage of students who must achieve a SLO for faculty to consider the outcome to be met successfully and for the program to be considered effective. At UF, the AAC has set the minimum threshold to be 70%. Faculty analyze their assessment results to determine the percentage of students who met the

outcome in any given year, compare that to their threshold of acceptability, and determine if the threshold was met or not met.

Course Grades cannot be used as SLO Measures

Because the calculation of a course grade often involves a combination of various information sources that include data unrelated to the SLO (i.e., attendance, participation, assessments of other objectives), the course grade does not directly represent the student's achievement of the SLO. This weakens the validity of the course grade as a measure of the SLO because appropriate evidence to support the interpretation of the course grade for its intended use as an SLO achievement measure cannot be adequately established (AERA, APA, & NCME, p. 11.) Therefore, grades cannot be used as SLO measures.

Curriculum Maps (Undergraduate) and Assessment Timelines (Graduate/Professional)

Curriculum Maps describe the distribution of the assessments in undergraduate programs. Assessment Timelines present the general sequence of assessments in graduate and professional programs.

Curriculum Maps and Assessment Timelines consist of a matrix that indicate where and in which courses the program's student learning outcomes are introduced, reinforced, and assessed. When appropriate, they also list other assessments that are used to measure student learning.

In the Academic Assessment Plan, the Curriculum Map/Assessment Timeline should meet these criteria:

- Aligns SLOs with program courses
- Curriculum Maps (undergraduate programs) identify where SLOs are introduced, reinforced, and assessed in the program
- Assessment Timelines (graduate/ professional programs) identify when administration of the assessment is planned in the program
- Identifies the assessments used for each SLO

Entomology and Nematology undergraduate major

Student Learning Outcomes | SLOs

Content

1. Identify insects and describe and explain insect morphology, physiology, and behavior.

Critical Thinking

2. Acquire, analyze and synthesize entomological information.

Communication

3. Communicate proficiently in the sciences in oral and written forms.

Curriculum Map

I = Introduced; R = Reinforced; A = Assessed

Courses	SLO 1	SLO 2	SLO 3
AEC 3030C			A
AEC 3033C			A
ENY 3005	I, A	I, A	I
ENY 3005L	A	A	
ENY 4161	R, A		R, A

Find undergraduate major details online in the UF Undergraduate Catalog (click on Academic Program Compact)

Figure 2: Example of an undergraduate program's SLOs and Curriculum Map

SLO Matrix

A chart can be provided to show which student learning outcomes are measured by which assessment(s) in the Plan. This is simply to help clarify the Plan.

Assessment Frequency Cycle

The assessment cycle is a matrix that graphically organizes the frequency of SLO assessment. Because programs have multiple SLOs in three broad categories, all SLOs must be assessed at least once every three years. However, faculty may choose to assess all of their SLOs annually or over a two-year period. The Assessment Frequency Cycle is evaluated on the following criteria:

- Clarity – the cycle is clearly articulated
- All student learning outcomes are measured
- Data is collected at least once in the cycle for each SLO
- There is a date or time period for data analysis and interpretation
- There is a date for planning improvement actions based on the data analysis
- There is a date for dissemination of results to the appropriate stakeholders

Assessment Methods and Procedures (Undergraduate and All Certificates) and/or Measurement Tools (Graduate/Professional)

Each unit employs various methods and procedures to assess and collect data on program goals and student learning outcomes. In this section of the plan, units provide information on their specific methods and procedures for the Program Goal measures and SLO assessments.

SLO assessment methods include but are not limited to rubrics, exam scores, portfolios, recitals or art show critiques, etc. Program goal measures vary widely, but the program goals may change without review or approval.

In the Academic Assessment Plan, methods and procedures are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Clarity – methods and procedures are clear
- SLO Matrix supports visual reference for how each SLO will be assessed
- Measurements occur at specified times
- Measurements are appropriate for the Program Goals and SLOs
- SLO assessment methods and procedures reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods
- At least one course/program assessment/measurement tool submitted as an example
- Easily accessible self-report data including the UF Graduate and Undergraduate Graduation Survey data, for example.

Sample Rubric Used to Measure an SLO

Faculty may attach a sample rubric that is used to measure one of the program SLOs. This helps reviewers understand how the students will be evaluated for SLO competency.

Mission Statement

All units on campus have a mission statement that describes the purpose of the unit and guides the unit's actions, spells out its overall goal, provides a sense of direction, and guides decision-making. The University's mission can be found online, and units should have an aligned mission to that as well as their college.

This section should meet these criteria:

- Clarity – the mission is clear, concise, and addresses teaching, research, and service
- Alignment with the college's mission and university mission – the unit mission clearly supports the University mission

- All programs - undergraduate, graduate, professional and certificate - must disaggregate data for online, residential, and off-campus instructional site students in their annual reports.

Program Goals (PGs)

Program goals include the broad educational goals of the program (i.e., to graduate students who are prepared for the workplace) and programmatic elements such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Total number of students enrolled
- Percent of admits from those who applied
- Percent matriculated from those admitted
- Median time to degree
- Percent attrition rate
- Percent completion rate
- Number of graduates
- Number of graduates produced per budgeted faculty positions

Program Goals are measured by establishing specific actions that will provide data that inform the faculty of the progress they are making toward achieving the goal. Program Goals are measured and reported annually, but the PGs can be adjusted at any time at the department level. No formal approval is required by any external body outside of the department.

Assessment Oversight or Responsible Roles

In this section of the plan and report, the appropriate personnel (coordinator, chair, committee, etc.) charged with assessment responsibilities are identified. A list of names, department affiliations, and email addresses should be included.

Use of Results for Program Improvement:

This is a written narrative in the annual Report where each program is expected to demonstrate that responsible individuals reviewed the data results, considered changes, and these data informed some sort of change as a result. As part of the concept of continuous improvement in the teaching and learning process, the use of results for improvement is a key component to show the “closing of the loop” in the full cycle of assessment. Program faculty may check the option "No changes made based on this review" in no more than two consecutive years.

A Deeper Dive into Policies

External Examinations as Student Learning Outcome Measures

UF faculty use external examinations in programs and departments for a variety of purposes, including, but not limited to, the assessment of student achievement, professional licensure, and professional certification. These examinations, developed by third-party providers, provide faculty with high quality, valuable information about student achievement in their programs.

Every undergraduate, graduate, and professional program at UF has established program-level student learning outcomes (SLOs). UF faculty measure these SLOs using a diverse range of assessments, from exams to performances to portfolios, and use this data to engage in productive, professional conversations that lead to continuous program improvement and effectiveness. This diversity of measurement tools is one of the hallmarks of our excellence.

Program SLO measures should be those that are developed, administered, and graded by the faculty in the program where the student is learning. When faculty use an external exam that they do not develop, administer, or grade to measure SLO achievement, the validity of the inferences made from the scores to support their interpretation and use for this purpose can be compromised.

The Interpretation and Use Argument

Therefore, when program faculty use external examination scores/subscores as measures of program SLOs, they must submit their interpretation and use argument to the Academic Assessment Committee for their approval.

Interpretation and use arguments are submitted through the approval portal in the Approval Tracking System as a change to an academic assessment plan. The committee requests the following information, depending on the specific use:

- When faculty have been directly involved in the development of the external exam or measure, they should describe their involvement in the development of the external examination, and justify the use of the scores/subscores as actionable data for the purpose of SLO measurement.
- When faculty use external exam scores/subscores in combination with additional, faculty-developed measures for the same SLO, they should justify the interpretation and use of the external exam scores/subscores as actionable data for this purpose.

- When faculty use external exam scores/subscores as the sole measure for an SLO, they should justify the interpretation and use of the external exam scores/subscores as the best source of actionable data for this purpose.

External Examinations as Program Goal Measures

While we advise that external examination scores/subscores only be used as measures of program SLOs when they are supported by sufficient validity evidence to justify their interpretation and use for this purpose, they can be considered as inherently valid as measures of certain academic program goals. For example, program faculty might set a goal that 95% of their students will pass a particular external exam, or that 80% will pass a professional licensure exam on the first try, etc., as a measure of program effectiveness.

Justification for Combination, Joint, and Dual Degrees

The UF Faculty Senate has a policy which requires thoughtful consideration of “double-counted” credits in such academic programs. The AAC will review proposals upon request as an extra review body of faculty.

References

American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), & National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). (2014). *Standards for educational and psychological testing*. Washington, DC: AERA.

Miller, M.D. & Brophy T.S. (2019). *Using assessment results for program improvement: A resource for faculty*. University of Florida Office of Institutional Assessment.

Appendix A: UF Assessment Components Chart

This chart identifies the various components to be included in the major assessment practices at UF, and who reviews and validates them.

Components	Notes	Academic Learning Compact (undergrad only)	Academic Assessment Plan (all degree programs and certificates)	Academic Assessment Data Reports (all degree programs and certificates)
Mission Statement		X	X	X
Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)		X	X	X
Student-friendly catalog copy	Includes graduation requirements, skills to be acquired from program aimed at student audience	X		
Program Goals	Can be changed without approval by department at any time to remain nimble		X	X
Curriculum Map (ugrad/cert) OR	Show which courses or milestones you are using to measure SLO's		X	X
Assessment Timeline (Grad/Prof)			X	X

SLO Matrix	A chart of which assessment(s) measures which SLO(s)		X	X
Assessment Frequency Cycle of SLO's (max 3 years)	Which SLOs are you measuring when?		X	X
Assessment Methods and Procedures (undergraduate, all certificates) OR	What methods, procedures, or tools are you using to assess the SLO's?	X	X	X
Measurement Tools (Grad/Prof)	Any specific details		X	X
Sample Rubric for SLO measurement	Include at least one as appropriate		X	X
Assessment Oversight Personnel and Responsible Roles	Who oversees this program and plan?		X	X
Use of Results for Program Improvement	Narrative that summarizes the annual data report and how those results are used for any change.			X
Review and Approval Process		Faculty-led curriculum approval process for any modifications or new programs at Academic Assessment Committee	Faculty-led curriculum approval process for any modifications or new programs at Academic Assessment Committee	Annual program reports submitted in Anthology (formerly Campus Labs), managed by UF Office of Institutional Assessment

Appendix B: UF Academic Assessment Processes

Process for Submitting Academic Assessment Plans and Academic Learning Compacts to the Academic Assessment Committee:

Faculty submit new plans or modified plans/components through UF's online approval system. Various faculty committees review the materials in UF's shared governance process. The plans are due no later than the first semester that there are students in the program.

Process for Submitting Academic Assessment Data Reports and Institutional Effectiveness Data Reports:

There are specific administrators, the UF Assessment Liaisons, who have the responsibility to collect and submit these annual data reports for their Plans for their area at UF. Each component of the Report is entered into its corresponding field in UF's assessment and accreditation software program, Anthology (formerly Campus Labs). Using the previous academic year's data, reports are submitted annually in the Fall semester.

Each unit has its own internal procedures for completing and submitting these Reports. Beyond the academic data collected and submitted for each academic program through the college assessment coordinator, all administrative units (including academic colleges) complete an Institutional Effectiveness Data Report that measures progress towards goals and operational excellence in administrative units.

Each year at the end of May, all existing reports are rolled over for the next Academic Year in UF's Anthology Planning software and are archived for future use. The "rolled over" report contains all major report components including data from the previous year, allowing Assessment Liaisons to simply make changes and provide updated information based on the current year's academic data and analyses.

Academic Assessment Committee Workflow

