EXCELLENCE
in Assessment

University of Florida
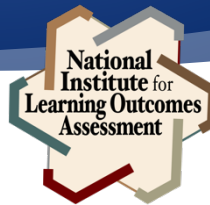Excellence in Assessment
Application

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THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
2020 EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT APPLICATION

Overview of Individuals and Groups Engaged in Assessment Activities

As a comprehensive, decentralized university, our approach to assessment is framed to provide institutional consistency in programmatic assessment development and annual reporting. There is a significant cadre of faculty, staff, and administrators who lead engagement in assessment at the University of Florida (UF). This brief description includes the university's Academic Assessment Committee, the Assessment and Accreditation Leadership Network, the upper administrators most directly involved with assessment at UF and closes with the Assessment Oversight faculty at the program level.

The Academic Assessment Committee. University of Florida's Academic Assessment Committee provides faculty oversight of the academic assessment process. The Academic Assessment committee is charged to review all matters related to academic program assessment across the institution – mission alignment, student learning outcomes and program goals, thresholds of acceptability, curriculum/assessment maps, and assessment methods. The committee consists of eight faculty, a student representative, and liaisons from the university's general education committee, the Office of Undergraduate Affairs, and the undergraduate catalog editor. We publish the members' photos, bios, and statements about the importance of assessment in higher education to strengthen their recognition and stature on campus. The committee meets monthly and publishes its agendas and minutes publicly. Because this is a joint Senate-Presidential committee, four members are elected by the Senate, and four are appointed by the President. The Chair of the committee is the Director of Institutional Assessment, and the co-chair is elected from the senate members.

Assessment and Accreditation Leadership Network. Because we are decentralized, we implement a *distributed leadership* model to ensure assessment quality across the institution. We have established assessment and accreditation coordinators in each of the administrative and academic units on campus ($N = 64$). The coordinators are selected by the deans of the academic units and the vice presidents and senior vice presidents of the administrative units. These individuals are the contact points for the Office of Institutional Assessment as well as for the faculty and staff within their units, and their primary role is to ensure that all plans and data reports meet UF requirements and are submitted into the assessment system. The assessment and accreditation coordinator is a critical component of UF's Assessment System. The Director of Institutional Assessment, along with the Director of Postdoctoral Affairs and Academic Communications (who oversees the university's assessment and

accreditation reporting technology solution, *Campus Labs*) provide ongoing professional development for the coordinators and meet with the coordinators twice yearly to share new information and review institutional processes.

Administration. The following senior administrators engage with institutional assessment as appropriate to their position, as well as all deans and associate deans.

- *Provost.* The Provost oversees the academic enterprise at the University of Florida; he serves as the final authority on academic assessment activities. The Director of Institutional Assessment reports directly to the Provost and they meet monthly.
- *Associate Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs.* This individual engages with the Director of Institutional Assessment regarding accreditation-related assessment matters.
- *Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs.* This individual engages with the Director of Institutional Assessment on matters related to undergraduate and professional program assessment, general education and UF Quest assessment.
- *Senior Associate Dean, The Graduate School.* This individual engages with the Director of Institutional Assessment on all matters related to graduate program assessment.

Assessment oversight faculty and external stakeholder engagement in the assessment process. Each program assigns one or more faculty as assessment oversight contacts (N = 587 for 2019-20). These individuals are responsible for leading the assessment work at the program level. Because program faculty are responsible for the assessment of student learning in the academic programs, external stakeholder engagement takes place at the program level and consist of field representatives from outside the university or the program's department or college. Here are a few examples:

- *Bachelor of Science in Sustainability and the Built Environment.* Faculty engage an Advisory Board of industry professionals as external reviewers for the assessment of student projects in their capstone course.
- *PhD in Mass Communication.* Faculty engage outside reviewers to assess student research.
- *Student internships.* Students engage in degree-related practical experiences wherein external assessors who are active in the field (e.g. in-service K-12 teachers, business owners, therapists, and medical practitioners) assess student performance in programs across the university, e.g. in the colleges of Health and Human Performance, Education, Nursing, Medicine, Engineering, Business, and the Arts.

Application Narrative

Introduction

The University of Florida is a comprehensive land-, space-, and sea-grant public Research 1 AAU-member institution with over 56,000 students, approximately 5,700 full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty, and 13,000 full- and part-time staff employees. The university administrative units comprise 16 colleges, 11 vice presidential units, four senior vice-presidential units, the Florida Museum of Natural History, the Graduate School, and a comprehensive library system.

Grounded in the Mission

Mission fulfillment grounds all institutional assessment activity at the University of Florida. As evidence of the validity of our institution-level assessment process we first examine the alignment of department, unit, and program missions with our institutional [mission](). The academic and administrative unit missions are the frameworks within which faculty and staff establish goals and outcomes for their respective academic programs, departments or units. The interlocking academic, unit and institutional missions ensure that all outcomes and goals align with and support the university's mission and its concomitant goals.

University of Florida Assessment System

Institutional assessment and effectiveness practices and procedures are implemented via the University of Florida Assessment System (described later in this document). The Assessment System is a coordinated and carefully designed set of processes and tools used by university assessment and accreditation coordinators, administrators, and faculty to submit, review, and store academic program assessment plans, institutional effectiveness plans, and data reports. We currently track the assessment of over 500 undergraduate, graduate, professional, and certificate programs annually.

We distinguish Academic Assessment Plans (AAPs) and Reports from Institutional Effectiveness Plans (IEPs) and Reports. Academic Assessment Plans and Reports address student learning and program goals in the university's academic programs. The Institutional Effectiveness Plans and Reports address the attainment of goals in the administrative units. This application focuses on the processes for the institutional assessment of student learning.

Student Learning Outcomes Statements

Institutional Outcome Categories

At the University of Florida, all student learning outcomes are developed at the program level. The program level SLOs are organized into six specific categories that are consistent across the Institution (seven categories beginning Fall 2020). They are:

- **Undergraduate programs**. Content, Critical Thinking, and Communication (required as part of each undergraduate program's *Academic Learning Compact* by the State University System of Florida Board of Governors regulation 8.016).
- **Graduate and Professional Programs**. Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Behavior (initiated by the Graduate Council in 2010)
- **General Education**. Our current institutional General Education Student Learning Outcome definitions and subject-area outcomes are universally assessed for all General Education courses.

UF Quest

UF Quest is a major revision and reimagination of undergraduate general education at the university. *UF Quest* includes *Connection* as a 4th outcome category. The UF Quest Assessment Task Force has posted a crosswalk that links the institutional outcome category area definitions with the current General Education outcomes and the new UF Quest outcomes. UF Quest 1 and UF Quest 2 outcomes and objectives are also publicly posted. Quest 1 starts with the fall 2020 semester; UF Quest will be fully implemented by 2027.

SLO Publication in the UF Catalogs

The undergraduate outcomes statements, curriculum maps, and types of assessments that students may encounter in the program are all shown in the online, open access undergraduate catalog as part of each program's *Academic Learning Compact.* Graduate and Professional programs outcomes statements are publicly posted in the graduate catalog. We have linked eight examples here.

- *Undergraduate*
  - Bachelor of Science in Accounting
  - Bachelor of Science in Nuclear Engineering
  - Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance
  - Bachelor of Science in Fire and Emergency Services

- *Graduate*
  - Animal Sciences, MS and PhD
  - Music Education, PhD
  - Applied Physiology and Kinesiology, PhD
  - Mathematics, PhD, MS, MAT, MST

At the time of this application, there are 27 residential undergraduate programs that have corollary programs offered fully online through UF Online. The student learning outcomes statements for these programs are identical regardless of delivery mode; e.g., the undergraduate anthropology on-campus and UF Online programs.

Institution-level Assessment Plan

The University of Florida Institutional Assessment [website](#) presents the details of our institutional assessment plan. Faculty develop, review and submit Academic Assessment Plans and Data Reports annually. The plans are the source for formal review and validation of the SLOs and their associated assessments. The Academic Assessment Committee reviews and approves these plans, including the instruments developed or identified for the purposes of the assessments. The Data Reports provide the program faculty's analysis of their assessment results and the improvement decisions they made based on that analysis.

The Academic Assessment Planning and Reporting process is facilitated by extensive online information about the institution's procedures and expectations. These are described on the [Academic Assessment](#) home page, and this page is linked to descriptions of the [Procedures for Developing New Assessment Plans](#), [Procedures for Modifying Approved Assessment Plans,](#) [Academic Assessment Planning](#) (where we have linked the AAC&U V.A.L.U.E. rubrics) and [Reporting Resources](#).

Implementation

The institution-level assessment plan is implemented through the University of Florida's Assessment System. The multi-step institutional assessment review process begins with the faculty, who develop the new plan or modify the existing plan. They then enter a request into the [Academic Approval System](#), which tracks and manages the university's curriculum and assessment actions. At each stage of the review process, additional information or clarification may be requested. The approval process begins at the department, moves on to the college, then to institutional assessment, and then to the Academic Assessment Committee. Once the Academic Assessment Committee approves this, the University Curriculum Committee is informed and can send the action back to the Academic Assessment Committee for further review if deemed necessary. Once all approvals are complete, Student Academic Support personnel enter the appropriate changes in the catalogs (for public access) and internal online tracking databases.

At each stage of the process the appropriate personnel review the outcomes and their associated assessment instruments (e.g., rubrics, locally developed exams, projects, papers) and consider educational measurement principles of reliability, validity and fairness. We expect faculty to develop, refine, and implement their own program assessments, and we [do not allow course grades](#) to be used as SLO assessments. When faculty decide to use a third-party exam as a student learning outcome measure (e.g., ETS Field Exams), the faculty must submit [an interpretation and use argument](#) to justify the validity of the exam scores for the purpose of outcome measurement for Academic Assessment Committee review and approval (see the [minutes](#) of the April 14, 2020 meeting for an example approval).

Data Report Review

The Director of Institutional Assessment and select staff review annual assessment data reports for their adherence to university guidelines regarding reporting [assessment data and student learning outcomes](#) and [program goals](#), and provide specific feedback to the leadership network college coordinators for each program. In cases where we expect revisions, we offer faculty two weeks minimum time to revise and resubmit their reports. We also make note of exemplary reports, and provide [publicly available examples](#) of from each college with faculty permission. This is a public recognition of excellence in assessment data reporting.

Institution-level Assessment Resources

The University of Florida maintains a dedicated web page on the Institutional Assessment website for [Faculty Resources](#). The size and scope of the university shapes the type of resources we offer and the media through which we make them available. Our primary workshops and direct interactive sessions regarding assessment take place with our Assessment and Accreditation Coordinators (once per semester), as well with any faculty or group on campus that reaches out to us for a specific need.

Open-access Resources

Our Faculty Resources webpage presents over 100 open-access links to our videos and guides, PowerPoint presentations, and documents related to institutional assessment. We update and refresh our resources regularly. We post videos and presentation materials from our annual assessment conferences (the most recent is the [2020 conference](#)). The most recent addition to the Resources page is the *[Practical Guide to Assessment](#),* a set of short videos and materials that provide faculty with specific information regarding our most frequently asked questions related to assessment.

Current Institution-level Assessment Activities

Our primary institution-level assessment activities revolve around (a) the review and maintenance of our academic programs' annual data planning and reporting, (b) our annual assessment conference, (c) our State University System Board of Governors (BoG) reporting requirements, and (d) our continuous work to improve institutional assessment to sustain our accreditation status with SACSCOC.

Internal Research and the Annual UF Assessment Conference

Guided by the Academic Assessment Committee, we conduct internal research with our faculty to identify areas of strength and need in our institutional assessment work. The research conducted to date (reported and publicly accessible at *[Assessment@UF: Context Matters](#)*) led to a number of actionable items for us to improve. The faculty were clear that they wanted an opportunity to learn from each other, so we began our annual internal assessment conferences in 2017. These

events allow our faculty to be recognized institutionally for their excellence in assessment and share their assessment work with their colleagues. We preserve the presentations and related materials with presenter permission on our Faculty Resources webpage.

State Reporting Requirements

We submit a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Status Report annually to the BoG for our undergraduate programs. This report is delivered to the BoG through our Office of Institutional Research. This report requires that we provide an update on the last date of SLO assessment for the 120 academic programs in their inventory as well as links to their online Academic Learning Compacts. The university submits an annual Accountability Plan to the BoG (see 2019 for an example), which presents institution-level student achievement data not captured in the institutional assessment process, e.g., average GPAs, employment rates, median wages of graduates, and professional licensures and certifications. The Accountability Plan data and student learning achievement data triangulate to form a complete view of student learning and success at UF.

Institution-level Evidence of Student Learning

Student Learning Outcome Visualization Project

To raise the transparency of our assessment information, we have developed our Student Learning Outcome Visualization Project in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Planning and Research. This publicly accessible data summarizes student learning at the institutional, college, and program levels as reported by the faculty. The current site presents 2018-19 SLO achievement data.

We have also initiated visualization of a limited amount of our general education assessment data. Additionally, as reported earlier, general education is undergoing a transition to UF Quest. We will pilot our first assessments of UF Quest SLOs in fall 2020 with rubrics developed by the UF Quest Assessment Task Force, whose members represent each area of the university. The UF Quest rubrics are in the final stages of review at the time of this application.

Evidence of Impact

The visualization of the program assessment data provides program, college, and university leadership an accessible view of strengths and areas of concern for student learning at all levels. For example, meetings are underway now with leadership in two colleges whose faculty reported less than 70% of students on average met their thresholds of acceptability for 2018-19 SLO achievement. These discussions are leading to change and attention to programs where student learning (or data reporting) needs improvement.

Reflection and Growth/Improvement Plan

The University of Florida Board of Trustees is focused on raising the university's national rank to a top five public institution; we are currently 7th in the 2019 US News and World Report rankings. One of our greatest strengths is our comprehensive array of programs – unparalleled in our state, and one of the largest in the nation. We hire top faculty from across the world, who develop and implement strong, effective, and competitive academic programs. The university's assessment system is well established to ensure that student learning assessment is planned and reported with institutional oversight, and our work now is focused on continuous improvement and efficiency.

Plans to Sustain and Improve
Here are our plans to sustain and improve our processes.

1. We will continue the professional development of our leadership network. These individuals are an essential component of our assessment system, and we keep them refreshed and renewed through our development work.
2. We will continue to strengthen our collaboration with the UF Office of Institutional Planning and Research. Our goals are to:
   a. Refine further our visualization project to add additional information on assessment methods and program improvements, and
   b. To establish practices and procedures to access general education and UF Quest assessment data directly from Canvas to facilitate this data collection and analysis.
3. Our concrete steps consist of our ongoing meetings with UF Quest leadership, UF Online leadership, and Institutional Planning and Research to establish new integrated assessment processes and further strengthen the existing ones.

Areas of Strength and Need
The application and visualization processes revealed areas of strength and need. Here are a few.
- *Faculty comportment and engagement with the assessment process.* The faculty's honest and clear analyses of student learning data and use of this data to continuously improve student learning is strength. The faculty have evolved significantly over time as they have adjusted to UF's institutional assessment process, and we have adjusted our institutional processes to better align with their work.
- *Commitment to the assessment process.* The commitment of our college coordinators to our process development and implementation is a strength. Some have as many as 145 programs to oversee in their colleges, and their commitment to continuous improvement is commendable.
- *Institutional minimum threshold of acceptability.* The Academic Assessment Committee has set the university's minimum SLO threshold of acceptability

at 70%; the visualization process revealed a number of SLOs with thresholds less than this. As a result, we are meeting with these programs to align their thresholds with the committee's minimum.

- *Recognition of the importance of student learning assessment to the university's goals.* The University administration and Board of Trustees have historically played a limited role in the review of SLO data; however, we are working to enhance engagement by presenting SLO data in easy-to-find and interpret visualizations. The [UF Strategic Plan](#) (p. 6) addresses the Future of Learning, and assessment will continue to evolve with the learning process as faculty increasingly incorporate artificial intelligence and virtual reality into their pedagogy and andragogy. All program assessments support the [President's Goal 2](#), "an outstanding and accessible education that prepares students for work, citizenship and life" and its associated objectives.

COVID19 and Assessment

Our expectations for high quality assessment planning and reporting have not changed as a result of the sudden onset of universal remote learning because of the COVID19 pandemic. The pandemic focused our attention on the comparability of online versus on-campus (residential) instruction. Our recent comparison analysis of residential undergraduate programs that have a fully online corollary delivered through [UF Online](#) revealed that SLO achievement was not significantly different based on delivery modality. This finding supports our assertion that a program's delivery modality does not impact student learning.

Conclusion: The Currency of Trust and Good Faith

Institutional assessment does not have an allocated budget; instead, the Provost supports internal assessment initiatives directly (e.g., the annual assessment conference). Our primary resources are our people and their talent and expertise, from the Assessment Oversight personnel at the program level to the leadership at all levels of the university. The trust we have built with our constituents is our primary currency, and we continue to excel with the good faith of our faculty, administrators, and staff. We continue to learn from each assessment cycle, and revise and improve our processes to strengthen assessment planning, reporting, and student learning at the University of Florida.