



**The University of New Orleans  
Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment**

Fall 2013

This manual provides a framework for understanding, planning and implementing meaningful assessment activities. Guidelines and resources to assist in assessment are included.

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## Mission, Vision and Scope

### **Mission**

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment provides leadership, support, and resources for university-wide planning and assessment efforts. The institutional effectiveness process is designed to enhance the university's mission by facilitating data collection, analysis and reporting. Strategic planning and budget decisions are closely aligned with this commitment to continuous improvement.

### **Vision**

The University of New Orleans will continue to foster a culture of assessment and evidence-based practice. Faculty and staff value and engage in assessment for ongoing improvement purposes.

### **Scope**

The institutional effectiveness process involves programs, services, and constituencies throughout the university. All entities participate in planning and assessment efforts, including colleges, academic departments and programs, administrative and student support units, as well as centers and institutes.

## Overview of the Institutional Effectiveness Process

The University of New Orleans engages in ongoing, integrated and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes. The university mission and strategic plan provide the framework upon which the institutional effectiveness process operates. The institutional effectiveness process permeates all entities including colleges, academic departments and programs, administrative and student support units, as well as centers and institutes. Each unit is required to articulate its support of the mission and strategic plan through a concise statement of purpose.

The following flowchart (Figure 1) demonstrates the connection between mission, strategic plan, institutional effectiveness, and general education.

Figure 1. Flowchart for Mission, Strategic Plan, Institutional Effectiveness and General Education



The goals and expected outcomes included in institutional effectiveness plans should align with the university's strategic plan. Budget requests should be supported by data-driven, improvement-oriented action plans.

Following is a diagram (Figure 2) that demonstrates the point at which strategic planning and budget intersects with the institutional effectiveness process.

Figure 2. Strategic Planning and Budget Intersection with Institutional Effectiveness Process

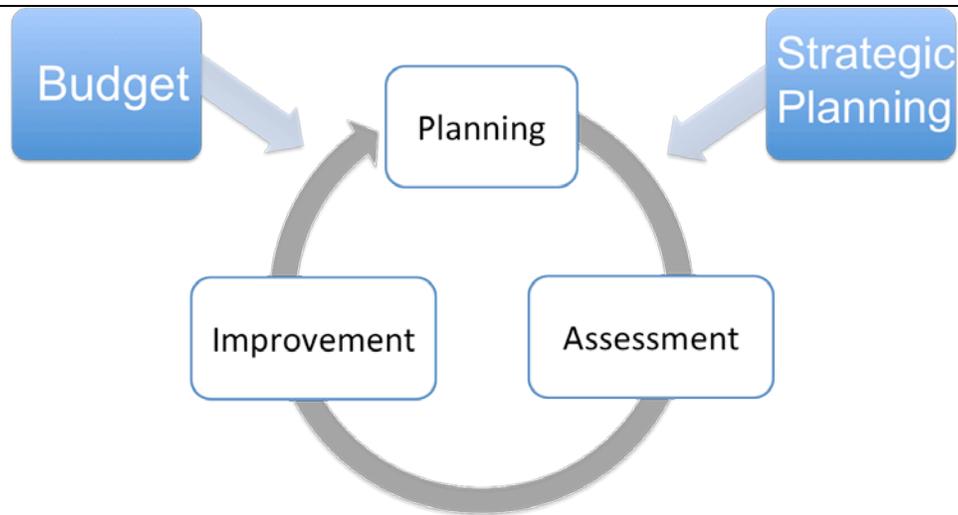


Figure 3 depicts the institutional effectiveness process. Each unit must identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. Student learning outcomes and other expected outcomes must align with the university mission and strategic plan, while also demonstrating movement toward program-specific improvement. Assessment methods must be tied directly to the stated outcome, specify the type and source of data to be collected, as well as include both direct and indirect measures. Criteria for success are quantifiable performance targets geared toward improvement with appropriate rationale. Once data are collected and analyzed, appropriate changes are implemented and documented.

Figure 3. The Institutional Effectiveness Process

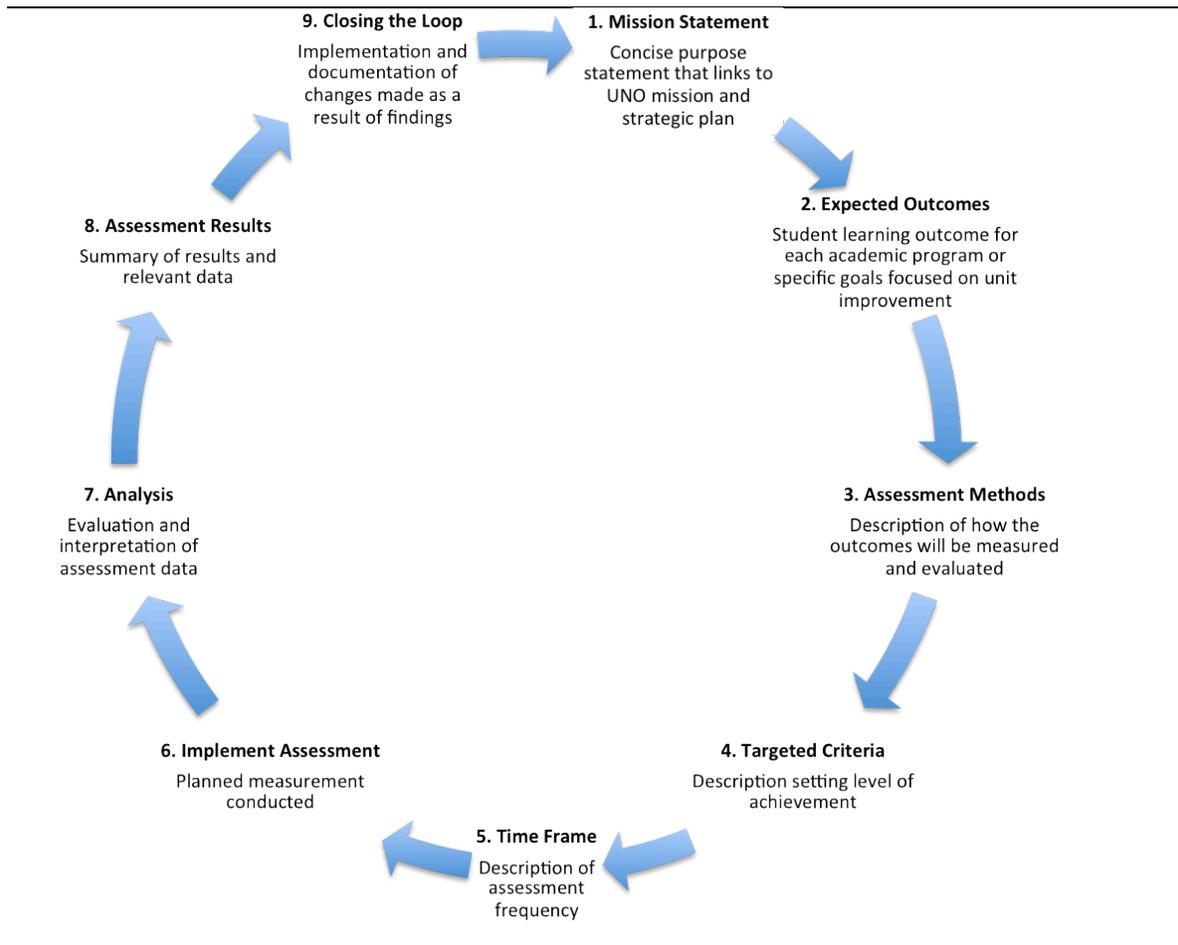


Figure 4. Levels of Assessment at the University of New Orleans

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IE plan types:

- College
- Academic department
- Academic program
- Administrative and student support unit
- Center and institute

## Benefits of Institutional Effectiveness

Faculty and staff will be able to:

- Participate in planning and assessment processes
- Align college, department, academic program, service unit, center or institute missions with the broader university mission
- Streamline curriculum/program development
- Determine student/program areas of strength and weakness
- Illustrate courses/program value to the university
- Provide evidence-based feedback to colleagues and students
- Contribute to creating a data-driven, disciplined culture of excellence

Administrators will be able to:

- Evaluate/allocate resources efficiently based on evidence
- Increase effectiveness of providing direction and deciding policy
- Track/demonstrate program progress and contribution to university
- Create cohesive and meaningful strategic plans
- Identify the degree of topic or activity reinforcement in courses/programs
- Align curricula or services across courses/programs
- Support institutional goals
- Contribute to creating a disciplined culture of excellence

The institution will be able to:

- Obtain better information to evaluate policies and practices
- Draw on evidence to make changes
- Use results to seek grant or foundation funding
- Demonstrate responsiveness to public needs and concerns
- Align learning across curriculum
- Place students appropriately
- Generate higher student academic success
- Demonstrate how the institution is making a difference
- Improve communications with stakeholders
- Achieve more thorough curriculum review and revision
- Align strategic planning and budgeting processes
- Ensures compliance with SACS Core and Comprehensive Standards

Students will be able to:

- Engage in a more rigorous and coordinated learning experience
- Learn more and better

## Role of Institutional Effectiveness Committee

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee is a university-wide committee charged with providing leadership for the overall direction and support of academic program and service unit effectiveness, assessment and improvement. The committee will oversee assessment and evaluation across campus to ensure integrated, meaningful, and sustained improvement.

### Responsibilities:

- Develop IE process and timeline that is aligned with the university mission and strategic plan
- Review IE plans and assessments, disseminate feedback
- Oversee assessment and evaluation across campus to ensure integrated, meaningful and sustained improvement
- Provide recommendations for budgeting and strategic planning based on results of IE process
- Communicate the results of institutional effectiveness efforts to appropriate campus and external stakeholders to promote accountability and transparency
- Serve as a resource for institutional effectiveness efforts on campus

### Membership:

Administration (4), Assistant/Associate Deans (5), Faculty (4), Staff (4)

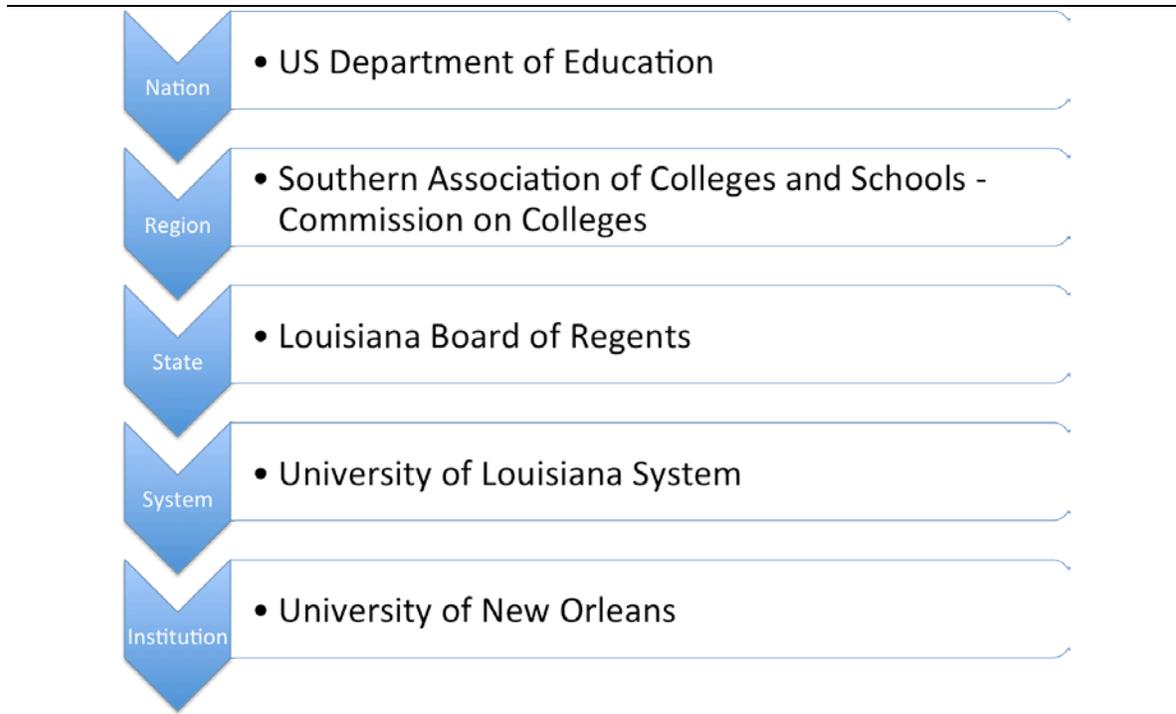
### Reports:

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

## Higher Education Accountability

The education community is under increased pressure from higher education stakeholders to provide evidence of academic accountability. These include regulations from the U.S. Department of Education and professional accrediting bodies, funding linked to accountability measures from state boards and legislatures, as well as demand from students and parents to demonstrate the value of the higher education experience.

Figure 5. Levels of Accountability in Higher Education for the University of New Orleans



## Role of SACS COC

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and other international sites approved by the Commission on Colleges that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees. The Commission also accepts applications from other international institutions of higher education.

The mission of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is to assure the educational quality and improve the effectiveness of its member institutions.

SACS COC has six core values:

- Integrity
- Continuous quality improvement
- Peer review/self regulation
- Accountability
- Student learning
- Transparency

Following are SACS COC standards related to institutional effectiveness:

#### Core Standard

2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that:

- (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes;
- (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and
- (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

#### Comprehensive Standards

3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on the analysis of the results in each of the following areas:

- 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
- 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
- 3.3.1.3 academic and student support services
- 3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate
- 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

“A commitment to continuous improvement is at the heart of an on-going planning and evaluation process. It is a continuous, cyclical process that is participative, strategic, flexible, relevant, and responsive. An approach to institutional effectiveness includes all programs, services, and constituencies; is strongly linked to the decision-making process at all levels; and provides a sound basis for budget decisions, resource allocations, and plans for institutional improvement” (SACS COC Resource Manual, 2012 Edition, p. 16).

## Curriculum Mapping

### **What is curriculum mapping?**

The process of building a curriculum map or course matrix enables an institution and its programs to create visual representations of how courses and experiences support outcomes/objectives. This powerful process tool can be used in academic and administrative areas alike.

### **What can you do with mapping?**

- Faculty developing a new curriculum and staff designing programs and services for students can use the tool to align courses and experiences with desired outcomes/objectives.
- Individually, faculty can see how their courses relate to other courses to form a coherent curriculum.
- As a group, faculty can review maps and determine where there are gaps in learning opportunities for students.
- General education committees can see how core general education outcomes/objectives are addressed in the major.
- Assessment councils can track the types and suitability of assessments used across the curriculum.
- Maps can also reveal course patterns in relation to accreditation requirements.

## WEAVEonline

### *Background*

After reviewing several software packages, UNO purchased WEAVEonline in 2013 to serve as a university-wide tool and repository used to develop and maintain continuous improvement processes. WEAVEonline is a web-based outcomes assessment package that allows the university to more effectively manage and track assessment. The purchase includes Affirm, an accreditation module that is used to organize information and compose reports for accreditors.

### *Capabilities*

#### Institutional Effectiveness

- Assessment (course, program, department, college, administrative/service unit, and institution levels)
- General education assessment
- Curriculum mapping

- Alignment of goals and outcomes with strategic plan
- Alignment of goals and outcomes with institutional priorities
- Multi-year or longitudinal comparison

#### Logistics

- Multiple user levels
- Flexible configuration
- Task assignment and tracking

#### Output

- Standard reports
- Ad hoc, customized reports
- Progress monitoring
- Regional accreditation
- Professional accreditation

#### *Functionality*

WEAVEonline allows users in each unit on campus to enter goals, student learning outcomes, other expected outcomes, assessment methods, targets, data and analysis. There is a document repository feature for uploading spreadsheets, artifacts and so forth. Users can create and run a variety of reports to easily share information.

#### *Access*

To access WEAVEonline, click here: <https://app.weaveonline.com/UNO/login.aspx>  
 Your user name and password is identical to your current UNO user name and password. If your access is not yet authorized or you encounter difficulty, please contact [weave@uno.edu](mailto:weave@uno.edu).



## Developing Student Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of **what is learned by students** as opposed to what faculty teach, processes that students are exposed to, experiences that they should have, or their level of satisfaction.

Competencies include:

- Knowledge – what should students know?
- Skills – what should student be able to do?
- Attitudes – what should students value, think or care about?

Competencies may be:

- Factual
- Conceptual
- Procedural
- Metacognitive

Student learning outcomes should be:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**spirational, but **A**ttainable
- R**easonable and **R**elevant
- T**ime-specific and **T**imely

Good learning outcomes are:

- Learner centered
- Key to the program or course mission
- Meaningful for faculty and students
- Representative of a range of thinking skills

Developing student learning outcomes:

- Focus on specific, measurable, attainable goals related to the program
- What evidence is needed to understand how well students are learning this?
- Now write a learning outcome for your program
- “At the end of this program, student will . . . [know, value, do]”

### **How do we choose which student learning outcomes to assess?**

To select student learning outcomes to be included in your institutional effectiveness plan, please consider the following questions:

- What are the three to five most critical outcomes for the academic program?
- Is there a particular area of student achievement about which faculty have questions?
- Are there topics, areas, or concepts with which students struggle on a regular basis?

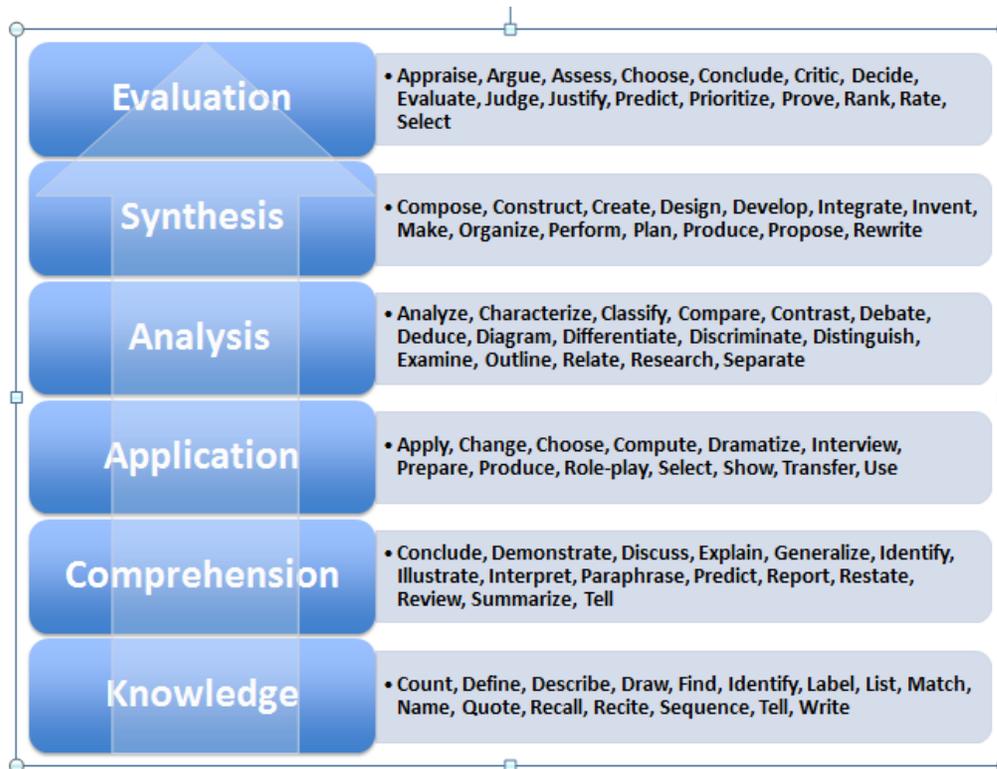
- Are there student learning outcomes already identified by a professional accrediting body?

Table 1. College with Sample Student Learning Outcome Statements

College	Sample Student Learning Outcome
Business Administration	Students will demonstrate a proficiency in financial accounting, governmental accounting, and auditing.
Education and Human Development	Students will demonstrate the ability to design, implement, and evaluate instruction for students with disabilities.
Engineering	Students will demonstrate the ability to identify, formulate, and solve engineering problems.
Liberal Arts	Students will be able to identify important musical works in historical context.
Sciences	Graduate students will be able to explain in technical written and oral formats an advanced understanding of a current topic in the chemical literature.
Interdisciplinary Studies	Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate ideas across disciplines and incorporate distinct perspectives in their learning processes.

Figure 6 lists sample verbs for stating specific student learning outcomes. The verbs are grouped so as to demonstrate the movement from lower to higher level thinking.

Figure 6. Bloom's Taxonomy



## Developing Other Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes must align with the university mission and strategic plan, while also demonstrating movement toward unit-specific improvement. Consider the following:

How can we improve our unit?

What goals are fundamental to our unit's operations?

Target problem areas

Target institutional priorities

Tools to improve operations

- Efficiency
- Cost effectiveness
- Customer service
- Overall effectiveness

Direction of change

- Increase student satisfaction
- Decrease student complaints

Table 2. Unit with Sample Expected Outcome Statements

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Sample Expected Outcome</b>
College	The college seeks to maintain the highest quality faculty for teaching and research.
Academic Department	Faculty members will engage in scholarly activities that advance knowledge in their academic fields.
Admissions	Increase number of admitted students who are most likely to be successful at UNO.
Orientation	Inform new students of on-campus resources such as academic and student services.
Enrollment Services	Increase satisfaction of customer service.
Facility Services	Improve response time to Trouble Calls.
Midlo Center	Sponsor one new public lecture series to link the university with the community.

## Collecting Valid Evidence

Learning is a complex process. In order to effectively measure learning, it is essential to employ multiple assessment methods.

### **Examples of direct measures:**

- Authentic performances/demonstrations
- Comprehensive exams
- Internship evaluations
- Jury-judged capstone assignments
- Juried activities with outside panels
- Licensure/professional exams
- Portfolios of student work over time
- Pre/post tests
- Presentation or projects
- Theses/dissertations
- Standardized tests

### **Examples of indirect measures:**

- Alumni surveys
- Employer surveys
- Exit interviews
- Focus groups
- Graduate rates
- Graduate school or job placement data
- Honors/awards
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data
- Retention rates
- Student evaluations
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Transfer acceptance
- Questionnaires

### **Examples of administrative measures:**

- Activity volume
- Benchmarking
- Climate/environment
- Discussions
- Document analysis
- Efficiency
- Evaluations
- Existing data
- External report
- Focus group

- Government standards
- Professional standards
- Satisfaction
- Service quality

**Assessment types:**

- Direct vs. indirect
- Embedded
- Formative vs. summative
- Authentic
- Triangulation

**Can grades be used as evidence of student learning?**

Please note that *course grades and course completion* should not be used as evidence of student learning. Grading criteria often include behavior or activities such as attendance, participation, extra credit, improvement or effort that, while valued and may be correlated to learning, typically are not direct measures of learning. Student learning assessment methods should measure what knowledge, skills, and attitudes the student has learned.

Grades on exams, projects, activities or other assignments can serve as appropriate measures of student learning as long as the measure directly corresponds with the intended learning outcome. Faculty across sections of the same course should use the same evaluation tool and criteria for grading.

*Consider developing assessment guides such as checklists, rubrics, or other scoring tools* for papers, portfolios, internships, juried activities within a capstone course, and so forth. These types of evaluation tools facilitate data collection and analysis. The goal is to obtain useful data upon which modifications and decisions may be based.

**Assessing your outcomes**

Assessment methods should clearly align with the specified outcome. For example, are you only interested in the percentage of students who participate in internship or are you interested in assessing how students apply certain knowledge and skills in an internship setting?

Develop a measure directly related to your outcome. In the case of student learning, consider developing a specific assignment or activity completed by the student to demonstrate the outcome.

**Consider the following questions when reviewing your assessment methods.**

1. Is there a balance between direct and indirect assessment methods?
2. What types of measurement are used?
3. Does assessment occur at different points in the program of study?

## Developing Targets

Criteria for success are quantifiable performance targets geared toward improvement with appropriate rationale. Targets should be aspirational, but attainable. It is important to note that plans and assessments will not be judged by whether or not objectives were achieved or targets met, rather they will be judged by whether or not a documented effort was made.

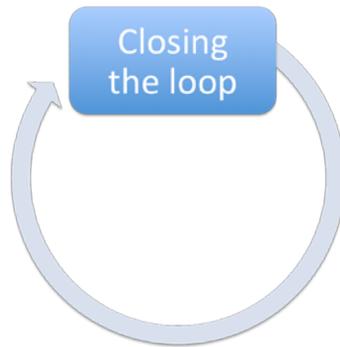
Each outcome should have an appropriate measure and each measure should have a meaningful target. Targets should be developed based on the structure of the assessment method being used. Dichotomous targets will not provide useful information. In the case of student learning outcomes, targets should relate to the actual learning, not simply participation in the assessment.

Table 3. Measures with Sample Target Statements

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Sample Target</b>
Listening test score on final music exam	80% of students will score satisfactory or above on the rubric.
Counseling graduate survey	80% of all graduates will be employed as counselor educator, counselor or in closely related positions.
NCEES Fundamentals of Engineering Exam	100% of students will score within one standard deviation of national average.
Departmental qualifying exam	75% of students will pass the Qualifying Examination on its first administration.
Student satisfaction rate	85% of students will express overall satisfaction rate with tutoring sessions.
Time processing applications	80% of actions within 30 working days.
Number of actual intramural teams and club sports registered	2-3% increase annually.

## Closing the Loop

Figure 6. Closing the Loop



Closing the loop is the most important step in the institutional effectiveness cycle – it involves analyzing data and then modifying strategies as needed to better achieve measurable objectives. Plans and assessments are not judged by whether or not measurable objectives were achieved – but by whether or not a documented effort was made, data analyzed, and appropriate changes made to the strategies in order to better achieve measurable objectives in the future.

The following table provides guidance on how to close the loop in a variety of situations.

Table 4. Closing the Loop Decision Making

<b>Presenting Situation</b>	<b>Potential Action</b>
Results are difficult to interpret	Invest time to review the assessment method selected. It may be necessary to change the assessment instrument and/or to revise the scoring guide/rubric.
Results can be interpreted but do not provide sufficient detail to inform a meaningful decision	Think about the scoring strategy(ies) currently in place. It may be necessary to develop or revise the scoring guide/rubric to provide more meaningful information.
Improvement noted but criterion was not achieved	Consider adding action steps (e.g., professional development of faculty, revision of course content) that increase the likelihood of attaining the desired outcome. Adjust the criterion level if warranted.

Criterion was achieved	Celebrate your achievement and determine if the criterion should be adjusted to a higher standard or if sustainability efforts should be put into place to maintain the level of performance noted.
Criterion achieved consistently (over more than one cycle)	Consider removing the student learning outcome from your institutional effectiveness plan and replacing with another outcome that will assist faculty with addressing meaningful program improvement targets.

How faculty respond to assessment results may vary widely - from an adjusted quiz question to a major curricular change. Following are some examples.

Curricular changes

- Adding or changing an assignment
- Adding or changing prerequisite
- Updating course content

Pedagogical changes

- Guest lectures
- Small group activities
- Web-based instruction

Student support

- Tutoring
- Help session
- Remediation

Faculty support

- Professional development
- Technology assistance
- Online resources

When documenting closing the loop efforts, keep the following tips in mind.

- Results are reported in aggregate form because the results represent the program or unit rather than individuals
- The anonymity of all participants (students, staff, faculty, other constituents) should be maintained and no individual results should be identified
- Clearly state how and when findings were reviewed
- Clearly state changes implemented as result of the findings
- Include plan for how success of implemented changes will be tracked

## Planning

The institutional effectiveness cycle involves the assessment of the prior plan and production of the next year's plan. Faculty and staff are integral to the assessment process. For academic plans, all faculty members should participate in the process, not just department chairs. For nonacademic units, broad input is expected.

The university operates using annual institutional effectiveness cycles that correspond to academic years. However, closing the loop may occur as often as assessment methods and data collection allows. It is important to keep in mind that the institutional effectiveness process is iterative, with focus and priorities changing over time.

## Glossary

**Accreditation:** A process by which an institution or disciplinary unit within an institution periodically evaluates its work and seeks an independent judgment that it achieves substantially its own educational and other objectives. Maintaining fully accredited status ensures that the university remains in compliance with federal expectations and continues to receive federal funding.

**Administrative Measure:** A method that gauges entity effectiveness in non-learning areas.

**Assessment:** A systematic, ongoing process to identify, collect, analyze, and report on data that is used for improvement purposes. A process to answer the question, are our efforts bringing forth the desired results?

**Assessment method:** A measurement tool used to measure and evaluate outcomes.

**Close the loop:** Modifying strategies or implementing other changes as needed to better achieve measurable objectives.

**Culture of assessment:** An institutional characteristic that shows evidence for valuing and engaging in assessment for ongoing improvement.

**Cycle:** Span of time for a single assessment sequence.

**Direct measure:** Assessment method that directly examines student work or performance.

**Goal:** Broad statement about desired ends.

**Indirect measure:** Assessment method that indirectly examines student work or performance.

**Institutional effectiveness (IE):** The systematic and ongoing process of collecting, analyzing and acting on data. Results should be used for improvement and decision-making purposes.

**Institutional effectiveness plan:** A plan that documents a unit's expected outcomes, assessment methods and targeted criteria.

**Measure:** Method to gauge achievement of expected results.

**Mission statement:** Broad statement of purpose that describes the mission and function of a given unit.

**Rubric:** Tool specifying criteria for evaluation. Criteria include descriptions of performance ability for which value levels are assigned. Levels range from an excellent to unsatisfactory product.

**Target criteria:** Description setting level of achievement.

## Resources

American Association for Higher Education and Accreditation

<http://www.aahea.org/aahea/>

Assessment Changes Everything

<http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2008/02/21/graff>

Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education

<http://www.aalhe.org/>

Association of American Colleges and Universities

<http://www.aacu.org/resources/assessment/index.cfm>

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

<http://www.chea.org/>

Louisiana Board of Regents

<http://regents.state.la.us/>

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

<http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/>

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges

<http://www.sacscoc.org/>

University of Louisiana System

<http://www.ulsystem.net/>

University of New Orleans Institutional Effectiveness Sharepoint Site

<https://sharepoint.uno.edu/committee/ie/default.aspx>

WEAVE

[www.weaveengaged.com](http://www.weaveengaged.com)

## References

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