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**UNIT EFFECTIVENESS PROCESS  
ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK  
UT ARLINGTON  
SPRING 2023 EDITION**

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## **Section I: Introduction to the Handbook**

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The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with an orientation to and an overview of academic and administrative outcomes assessment as it is conducted at The University of Texas Arlington. The assessment process at UT Arlington is called the Unit Effectiveness Process (UEP). This handbook aims to provide information, resources, and examples to assist you in preparing for assessment activities, creating the UEP assessment plan, and documenting your assessment activities and subsequent improvements.

## **Layout of the Handbook**

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The UEP Handbook is divided into multiple sections.

- Section I states the purpose of the UEP Handbook and describes the sections of the Handbook.
- Section II describes the history of outcomes assessment at UT Arlington and explains how outcomes assessment fits into the larger scope of institutional effectiveness. You will find useful definitions as well as a “big picture” overview of the UEP in this section.
- Section III offers guidance in preparing for assessment, including a description of what should be in place in order to formulate the UEP assessment plan.
- Section IV delineates the information that should be included in the UEP assessment plan and provides multiple examples.
- Section V details the information that should be included in the results portion of the Assessment Activity Report, which documents the results of assessment and any proposed improvements based on the results. This section also details the information that should be included on the Annual Improvement Update Report, commonly referred to as the Improvement Report, which documents improvements that were implemented based on data gathered through assessment.
- Section VI is a brief description of Nuventive Improve, which is the reporting system for the UEP.
- Section VII provides direction on where you can find additional assessment resources.

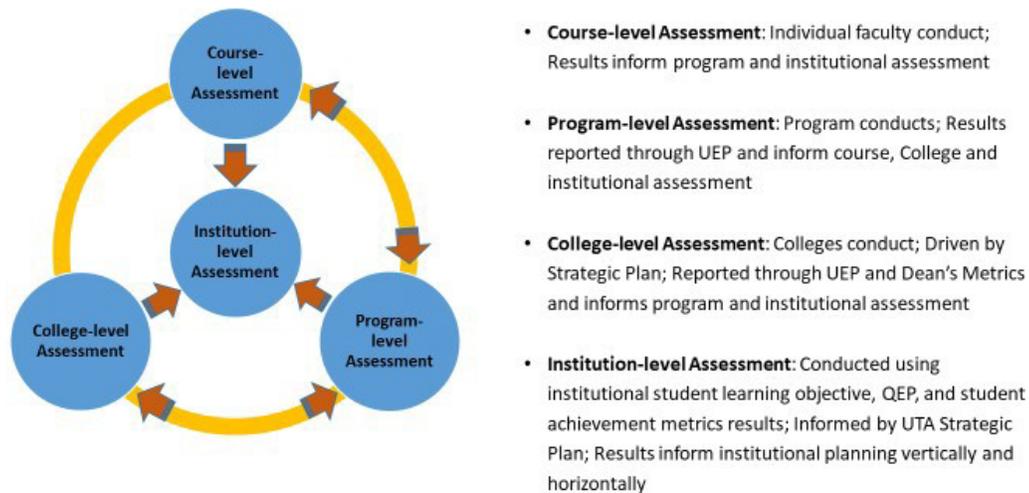
## Section II: Assessment Overview

### Relationship between Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) states that institutional effectiveness occurs as “the institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systemic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission” (SACSCOC, 2018, p. 19).

Institutional effectiveness at UT Arlington is reflected as an integrated model that includes course level assessment, program level assessment (Unit Effectiveness Process (UEP)), college level assessment and institutional assessment. These various elements interact and interrelate in numerous ways, to support the broader institutional priorities included in the UT Arlington Strategic Plan 2020.

## UTA Integrated Institution-wide Assessment Model



**Figure 1.**

*UTA Integrated Institution-wide Assessment Model*

Recognizing that strategic planning needs more specificity at the unit level, the UEP supports the development and implementation of unit plans. These unit plans provide a framework for each unit of the University to engage in activities and initiatives that support the University’s strategic plan and address the institutional priorities. As a result, energies and resources will be used effectively across the University can be directed toward a shared vision and common goals. Each administrative and academic unit of the University participates in the UEP. Units are given the opportunity to map unit outcomes to strategic planning objectives.

### Brief History of Assessment at the University of Texas at Arlington

In 1997, the University implemented a comprehensive, ongoing, campus-wide planning and evaluation process in response to expectations set forth by SACSCOC. In 2001, the University moved to a biennial system of assessment. In 2005, the Unit Effectiveness Plans were postponed accommodating the University-wide strategic planning process. It was decided that the revision of University priorities, goals, and objectives should be completed first in

order to provide the foundation for the unit plans. Coinciding with the strategic planning process was the formation of the UT Arlington Institutional Effectiveness Advisory Committee that was charged with improving the Unit Effectiveness Plan process. The committee met several times during fall 2005 and eventually agreed on six recommended areas of improvement. Recommendations addressing those areas of improvement were devised and some changes in the process were addressed in the spring 2006 edition of the Handbook.

Prior to 2006, the University's effectiveness and improvement process was referred to as the UEP, which was an acronym for Unit Effectiveness Plan, the main report for the process. In 2006, the process was given an official name, the Unit Effectiveness Process (UEP). Very similar to Unit Effectiveness Plan, it maintains name recognition while acknowledging that continuous improvement and effectiveness is a process, in and of itself, encompassing planning, assessment, analysis and improvement. The Unit Effectiveness Process plan formation resumed in 2006 for assessing the 2006-2007 academic year. During the fall of 2009, the Online Assessment Tracking System (OATS) was implemented in order to house UEP reports. Nuventive Improve was implemented in fall 2014. Nuventive Improve is the current central repository that houses the UEP reports.

The Assessment Input Group (AIG) was formed in 2013 to offer input and guidance on institution-wide assessment at UTA. AIG considers institutional assessment from multiple perspectives and how assessment activities may directly or indirectly impact multiple stakeholders. The group has diverse representation from all 9 academic colleges, administrative units, students, and alumni. Major institutional and academic operations also represented include enrollment management, members of institutional oversight groups and governing bodies such as faculty senate.

### **SACSCOC Expectations**

In 2001, UTA's accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), set forth its new guidelines for accreditation that more explicitly outlined expectations regarding continuous improvement and institutional effectiveness than it had done previously. SACSCOC's most recent edition of *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* (January 2018) continues the emphasis on continuous improvement and institutional effectiveness. The following are excerpts from the 2018 edition that illustrate the emphasis the accrediting body places on assessment.

### **SECTION 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness**

Effective institutions demonstrate a commitment to principles of continuous improvement, based on a systematic and documented process of assessing institutional performance with respect to mission in all aspects of the institution. An institutional planning and effectiveness process involve all programs, services, and constituencies; is linked to the decision-making process at all levels; and provides a sound basis for budgetary decisions and resource allocations.

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is an integral component of the reaffirmation of accreditation process and is derived from an institution's ongoing comprehensive planning and evaluation processes. It reflects and affirms a commitment to enhance overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue the institution considers important to improving student learning outcomes and/or student success.

1. The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission. (Institutional Planning)  
[CR]
2. The institution has a QEP that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

3. The institution identifies expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved. (Administrative effectiveness)

### **SECTION 8: Student Achievement**

Student learning and student success are at the core of the mission of all institutions of higher learning. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support student learning outcomes for its educational programs. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution provides appropriate academic and student services to support student success.

1. The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success. (Student achievement) [CR]
2. The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below: a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs. (Student outcomes: educational programs) b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs. (Student outcomes: general education) c. Academic and student services that support student success. (Student outcomes: academic and student services)

### **Assessment Basics**

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Although assessment and the UEP has a substantial history at UT Arlington, confusion and uncertainty about the purpose and function of outcomes assessment is not uncommon, especially among new faculty and staff members. This section is intended to provide a common base of understanding about assessment, both in general and as it is practiced at UT Arlington.

### **Assessment Defined**

Assessment is a systematic and ongoing process of gathering and interpreting information to discover if programs/services are meeting intended outcomes and then using the information to enhance/improve the programs/services (adapted from Virginia Commonwealth, 2002, and Marchese, 1987).

Assessment of **student learning outcomes (SLOs)** is a learner-centered process ensuring that students are learning what we intend for them to learn. It does not evaluate individual student performance, nor does it focus on individual faculty/staff performance. Palomba and Banta (1999, p. 4) indicate that assessment helps us answer the following key questions about student learning:

- What should graduates know, be able to do, and value?
- Have the graduates of our institution acquired this learning?
- What are the contributions of the institution and its programs to student growth?
- How can student learning be improved?

Assessment of **administrative outcomes** is also a crucial part of the UEP and assesses outcomes related to strategies for implementing the UTA Guiding Aspirations. This approach ensures that each department on campus is working from the same set of expectations. Essentially, each unit on campus promotes student learning in some form or fashion. Consider the advantages of assessing administrative outcomes:

1. Decisions about improvement can be based on documentation rather than assumption.
2. Stakeholder expectations such as reliability, efficiency, quality, and cost effectiveness can be improved.
3. Areas for improvement can be identified.
4. Improvement progress can be optimized (Selim et al., 2005a).

Assessment, when undertaken seriously and purposefully, provides a return on the time invested in the following ways:

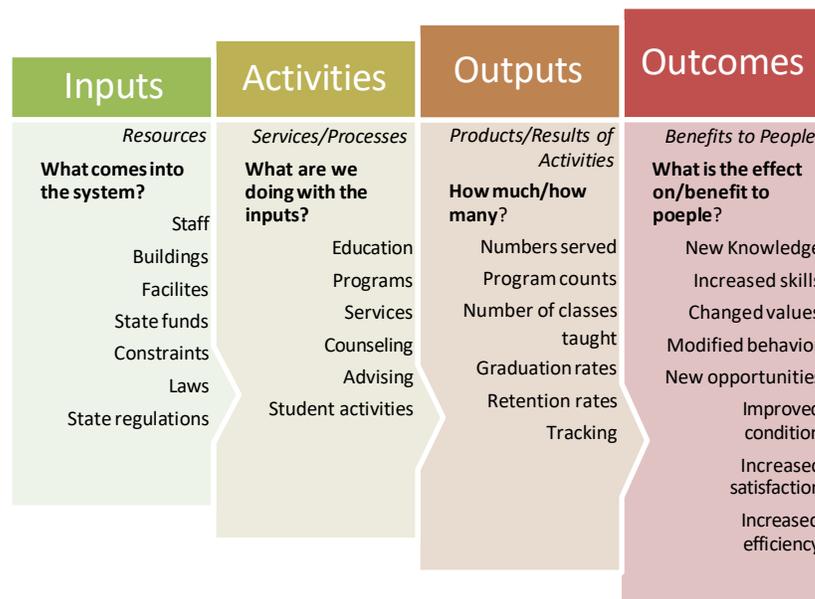
1. Faculty (especially adjuncts) become clearer about learning objectives for the degree program,
2. Rationale for curriculum design/course sequencing is clearer,
3. Students learn better when faculty and students are clear about learning expectations, and
4. Faculty and staff learn more about student learning as well as providing services to students and are thus able to direct their respective efforts accordingly (from Kansas State University, n. d.).

**Assessment Purpose**

Assessment serves institutional effectiveness through its four main purposes, it:

1. **Improves** programs/services through assessment results that indicate areas for change.
2. **Informs** students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders of the state of a program/service and its impact.
3. **Validates** that a program/service is accomplishing what it says it is accomplishing through a demonstration of assessment results.
4. **Supports** campus-decision making processes, strategic planning, program review and additional accountability activities such as SACSCOC reaffirmation and re-accreditation of academic programs by professional accrediting bodies (adapted from Selim et al., 2005b and Virginia Commonwealth, 2002).

The assessment process focuses on the outcomes, rather than the outputs of work processes, thus the process is intended to measure outcomes over outputs. Figure 2 illustrates the distinction between outputs and outcomes. Outcome data is generally superior in providing information that can be used to improve programs and services. For instance, simply knowing how many students are processed through Financial Aid says little about Financial Aid processes.



**Figure 2.** Program output versus outcome model

## Assessment Principles

A task force formed by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) formulated the AAHE Nine Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Student Learning (Bauer, 2003). Below are the nine principles along with an explanation of how our institution demonstrates commitment to these principles.

### Principle 1: Assessment of student learning begins with educational values.

Our educational values are set forth in our mission statement, specifically” ...the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of excellence.” The University is committed to the promotion of lifelong learning through its academic and continuing education programs...”

The values are further affirmed by our commitment to several educational objectives. The University prepares students for full, productive lives and informed and active citizenship. To that end, we have developed undergraduate and graduate curricula and classroom practices that engage students actively in the learning process. Outside the classroom a wide range of student organizations and activities contribute to the learning environment. Our service-learning program offers students the opportunity to supplement their academic study with internships in a variety of community settings, testing their skills and aptitudes and challenging their values. State-of-the-art teaching technologies, distance education, and off-site instruction afford access to off-campus as well as traditional students. Non-degree certificate and continuing education programs offer practical, aesthetic, and intellectually stimulating opportunities for community learners, for individual courses or a sustained program of study (UTA Mission Statement).

### Principle 2: Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.

The University acknowledges that learning is multidimensional and integrated and caters to this undergirding concept through a host of programs. The University is devoted to research, which in many cases is student driven. In addition, there are several programs and initiatives that allow students to learn in non-traditional environments such as the Smart Hospital and study abroad opportunities.

Faculty, both tenure and non-tenure track, are encouraged to participate in a variety of instructional support sessions. Some of these sessions are aimed at broadening a faculty member’s pedagogical style to facilitate teaching and learning beyond the traditional lecture mode.

Non-academic units, such as those within the Division of Student Affairs also offer learning opportunities through their co-curricular activities such as the Leadership Center, student governance, and opportunities provided by Camus Recreation.

UTA’s QEP, *Collaborate UTA*, works to enhance and assess teamwork through Professional Learning Communities. While the *Maverick Advantage* through the Five Distinguishing Activities (Leadership, Undergraduate Research, Career Development, Community Engagement, and Global Connections) continues as a major university initiative, *Collaborate UTA*, through a narrow focus on teamwork, provides a focused platform for assessing and enhancing the quality of those experiences through the Student Learning Outcomes and Program Outcomes. The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Program Outcomes (POs) for Collaborate UTA are as follows:

SLO 1a: Students will recognize effective teamwork,

SLO 1b: Students will practice effective teamwork,

SLO 1c: Students will value effective teamwork,

SLO 2: Students will connect teamwork experiences to the classroom.

PO1: Students will report that their teamwork experience has prepared them for the real world.

PO2: PLC Fellows will report the value of the collaborative experience on their teaching and on the interaction between them and their students

**Principle 3: Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.**

Program purposes are found in the mission/purpose statements of administrative, academic and educational support units. Administrative and educational support units further articulate and specify their purpose through delineation of core functions, which are statements of major responsibility of the unit. Academic units detail unit purpose through articulation and delineation of student competencies, which are statements of broad knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors that program majors should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the degree program.

**Principle 4: Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also, and equally, to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.**

UT Arlington emphasizes the experiences that lead to outcomes by requiring units to articulate action steps/objectives within the assessment process.

**Principle 5: Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.**

Our annual assessment process includes planning and reporting through the Nuventive System on Assessment Activity Reports, and Improvement Reports on actions taken to affect needed improvements indicated by assessment results. UT Arlington has conducted the UEP since 1997.

**Principle 6: Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives across the educational community are involved.**

Our commitment to wide involvement in the continuous improvement process is demonstrated in part by the involvement of all units on campus, including administrative, academic and educational support units in the UEP. In addition, units describe how assessment results are communicated to members of the unit as well as describing the process for engaging all members of the unit in the feedback loop of the assessment process. The Assessment Input Group (AIG) plays an important role in the campus wide assessment communication and improvement process.

**Principle 7: Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates' questions that people really care about.**

Units choose the outcomes that are important to the members of the unit. Only in cases where the accrediting or supervising educational authority mandates points of consideration do we impose requirements for specific aspects of programs and services that must be evaluated.

**Principle 8: Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.**

“Effective institutions demonstrate a commitment to principles of continuous improvement, based on a systematic and documented process of assessing institutional performance with respect to mission in all aspects of the institution” (SACSCOC, 2018). Our institutional effectiveness system at the University consists of strategic planning, the Unit Effectiveness Process (UEP), and academic program review. These three processes are connected through shared information and their impact on the budget; however, they differ in cycle length and purpose. The strategic planning process establishes organizational priorities and unit-level strategies to support those priorities. The UEP is a process focusing on assessment of outcomes, both student learning outcomes and administrative outcomes. The administrative outcomes assessed in the UEP relate back to the guiding aspirations of the UT Arlington strategic plan. The academic program review process evaluates the quality and effectiveness of programs in supporting the University’s mission on a 10-year cycle. All three of these processes focus on continuous improvement.

**Principle 9: Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and the public.**

We meet our responsibilities to students and the public by implementing improvements based on results of assessment (i.e. data driven decision-making). This is demonstrated through the required documentation of implemented improvements

## **Assessment Myths**

Often there are misconceptions about the function and purpose of assessment. The University of Central Florida (2008) assessment team has compiled a list of some of the most common myths and dispelling explanations about program assessment.

### **Myth 1: The results of assessment will be used to evaluate faculty/staff performance.**

Nothing could be further from the truth. Faculty and staff awareness, participation, and ownership are essential for successful assessment, but assessment results should never be used to evaluate or judge individual faculty or staff performance. The results of the assessment are used to improve programs and services.

### **Myth 2: Our program is working well; our students are learning; we don't need to bother with assessment.**

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve the quality of services and educational programs to improving student learning. Even if you feel that the quality of your services and program are good, there is always room for improvement. In addition, various discipline specific accrediting bodies mandate conducting student outcomes assessment. To not conduct assessment is not an option.

### **Myth 3: We will assign a single faculty/staff member to conduct the assessment. Too many opinions would only delay and hinder the process.**

While it is a good idea to have one or two faculty/staff members head the assessment process for the unit, it is important and beneficial to have all faculty/staff members involved. Each person brings to the table different perspectives and ideas for improving the academic programs/services. Also, it is important that all faculty/staff members understand and agree to the mission (or purpose) and goals of the unit.

### **Myth 4: The administration might use the results to eliminate some of the unit's programs or services.**

There are two types of evaluation processes: summative and formative. The purpose of summative program evaluation is to judge the quality and worth of a program. On the other hand, the purpose of formative program evaluation is to provide feedback to help improve and modify a program. The UEP is intended as a formative evaluation and not a summative evaluation. The results of UEP assessment will not be used to eliminate programs.

### **Myth 5: Assessment is a waste of time and does not benefit the students.**

The primary purpose of assessment is to identify the important objectives and learning outcomes of your program for the purpose of improving student learning. Anything that enhances and improves the learning, knowledge and growth of your students cannot be considered a waste of time.

### **Myth 6: We will come up with an assessment plan for this year and use it every year thereafter.**

For program assessment to be successful, it must be an ongoing and continuous process. Just as your program should be improving, so should your assessment plan and measurement methods. Each academic department must look at its programs and its learning outcomes on a continual basis and determine if there are better ways to measure student learning and other program outcomes. Your assessment plan should be continually reviewed to remain relevant and able to be used to provide data that can be used to inform programs and services.

### **Myth 7: Program assessment sounds like a good idea, but it is time consuming and complex.**

It is impossible to "get something for nothing." Effective program assessment will take some of your time and effort, but there are steps that you can follow that can help you to develop an assessment plan that will lead to improving student learning. This Handbook is intended to assist you in conducting meaningful and purposeful assessment.

### About the UT Arlington Process

Assessment activities associated with the UEP are coordinated through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting (IER). All academic/non-academic, business, and student services units at UTA participate in the UEP. The process is annual (for most units) whereby outcomes are assessed every academic year. Prior to 2000, assessment was conducted every year. Fourteen cycles have been completed since UEP inception in 1997. Table 1 is a listing of completed UEP cycles.

Table 1

Assessment Cycle	Academic Year Assessed
1 <sup>st</sup>	1997-98
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1998-99
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1999-00
4 <sup>th</sup>	2001-02
5 <sup>th</sup>	2003-04
6 <sup>th</sup>	2006-07*
7 <sup>th</sup>	2008-09
8 <sup>th</sup>	2010-11
9 <sup>th</sup>	2012-13
10 <sup>th</sup>	2014-15
11 <sup>th</sup>	2016-17
12 <sup>th</sup>	2017-18
13 <sup>th</sup>	2018-19
14 <sup>th</sup>	2019-20

\*Assessment of academic year 2005-06 was postponed to 2006-07 to complete the University-wide strategic plan.

### Assessment Phases and Key Elements of the UEP

IER conceptualizes the UEP as a multi-phase, multi-element process, which can be described in three-phases: Planning, Implementation, Assessment, Analysis, Reporting and finally Improvement.

#### ***Phase I: Planning***

This is the phase when UEP plans are devised, submitted to deans/vice presidents/vice provosts and IER and should include the following elements:

- statement of mission or purpose,
- intended outcomes,
- related core function and/or guiding aspiration (for administrative outcomes); related student competency and guiding aspiration, when appropriate (for student learning outcomes),
- action steps to achieve each intended outcome, and
- assessment methodology/methodologies for each intended outcome related criterion/criteria of success, timeline, and responsible individuals.
- Selection of outcomes mapped to Strategic Plan Guiding Aspirations and Texas Core Curriculum Objectives (as appropriate)

***Phase II: Implementation,  
Assessment, Analysis,  
and Reporting***

During this phase, planning should already be complete, and the actions steps designed to achieve the intended outcomes are implemented. Assessment data is collected, analyzed, reviewed, and reported. Proposals for improvement are developed and reported.

***Phase III Improvement***

Proposed changes are implemented and reported. This part of the process completes the planning and evaluation cycle by looking back over the change proposals of the previous cycle(s) and listing improvements that were implemented. The report generated for this phase of the process serves as documentation that the University is “closing the loop” by using assessment results for improvement.

**Reporting**

Assessment activities are documented in Nuventive Improve. There are two reports available in Nuventive Improve to document assessment planning, results of assessment and improvements implemented based on the results of assessment, the Assessment Activity Report and the Annual Improvement Update Report (commonly referred to as the Improvement Report).

The **Assessment Activity Report** is comprised of unit mission/purpose statement, student competencies or core functions, rationale statement, assessment type, the assessment plan, results of assessment and proposed improvements. This report is completed annually for most units.

The Improvement Report documents any improvements that were implemented based on information gathered through assessment. This report is completed annually. [Nuventive Improve](#) can be accessed directly or the link can be found on the [UEP web page](#). Figure 3 illustrates the UEP detail, tying together the phases, elements and corresponding reports.

### Phase I – Planning

- Review & revise (if needed) unit’s mission/purpose & unit’s student competencies (for academic units) &/or core functions (for administrative & educational support units)
- Formulate student learning outcomes
- Formulate administrative outcomes
- Determine methodology
- Establish criteria for success (i.e. benchmark that success will be measured against)
- Outline action steps designed to accomplish outcome

This information is documented in Nuventive Improve on:

- **Assessment Activity Report**, Academic Plan (i.e. student learning outcomes)
- **Assessment Activity Report**, Administrative Plan (i.e. administrative outcomes)

#### Who should formulate a student learning outcome plan?

1. Academic Departments complete one for each degree program, certificate, and stand-alone minor administered.
2. Schools complete one for each degree program, graduate certificate, and stand-alone minor/certificate administered.
3. Colleges complete one for each degree program, graduate certificate, and stand-alone minor/certificate administered directly by the college rather than by a department within the college.
4. Administrative Support Units complete one if student learning is part of the unit’s functions.

#### Who should formulate an administrative plan?

1. Colleges and Schools
2. Administrative Support Units
3. Academic units that conduct advising.

### Phase II – Implementation, Assessment & Analysis

- Implement the plan developed in Phase I
- Record the data collected through assessment
- Analyze the data collected through assessment
- Determine if the data indicates the outcome is successful
- Propose improvements based on the results of assessment

### Phase III – Improvement

Implement improvements proposed during Phase II

OR

Implement improvements based on any other assessment not documented through the UEP

This information is documented on the annual Improvement Report in Nuventive Improve (all units complete)

**Figure 3. Unit Effectiveness Process detail.**

#### Report Submission

UEP Plan owners need to please/must notify IER via email when plan is ready to review. **However, prior to submitting either part of the Assessment Activity Report (either the plan or results), should be reviewed by the unit’s dean/vice president/vice provost.** Review and communication between the unit and the respective dean/VP is a process internal to the unit. It is **not** necessary to route the Improvement Report to the dean/VP before submitting to IER.

Submission deadlines are noted on the [UEP cycle calendar](#) located on the IER website.

**Report Feedback**

Once your plan/report is submitted to IER, it enters the review process. IER may request revisions or finalize the plan/report as submitted. IER communicates this information via email to the individual(s) designated as UEP primary and secondary contacts.

For specific instructions and details on accessing Nuventive Improve, contact IER at [uep@uta.edu](mailto:uep@uta.edu).

### Section III: Preparing for Assessment

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Planning is the first phase of the UEP, and its importance is not to be underestimated as it directs a unit's assessment activities for the following academic year. It is advisable to organize and prepare your planning tools prior to devising the UEP assessment plan. The following are recommended steps in preparing for assessment:

- Designate planning responsibility,
- Revise or reaffirm unit mission/purpose,
- Revise or reaffirm administrative core functions or student competencies,
- Review the strategies being developed by your college/school/administrative unit for the strategic planning exercise, and
- Inventory existing and needed assessment methods and tools.

#### Designating Planning Responsibility

Assessment is the responsibility of all levels of the University although most assessment activities will likely be conducted by faculty and staff. Figure 6 is the Wheel of UEP Assessment Responsibility, and it describes the role of Deans/Vice Presidents; Chairs/Directors; Faculty/Staff; Unit Assessment Coordinators and UEP Contacts; Students; and IER. You will note on Figure 4 that continuous improvement is at the center of assessment responsibility.

Units should appoint an assessment committee, designate an existing committee to assume the assessment responsibilities, or use the entire unit as a committee-of-the-whole. If a committee assumes the assessment responsibilities, it should report the recommendations to the entire unit. It is important that unit planning be as broad-based as possible, and not just the work of one person.

At a minimum, primary and secondary unit effectiveness contacts are the communication liaisons between the unit and its administration to IER. **The primary contact should be a faculty member or administrator and the secondary contact is one who provides support to the primary contact (this person may also be a faculty member/administrator or administrative support).** Primary contacts are generally individuals who have or have been appointed a leadership role in the UEP.

**If you need to add, update, or change contact information, please send notification to [uep@uta.edu](mailto:uep@uta.edu).**

#### Revising or Reaffirming Unit Mission/Purpose

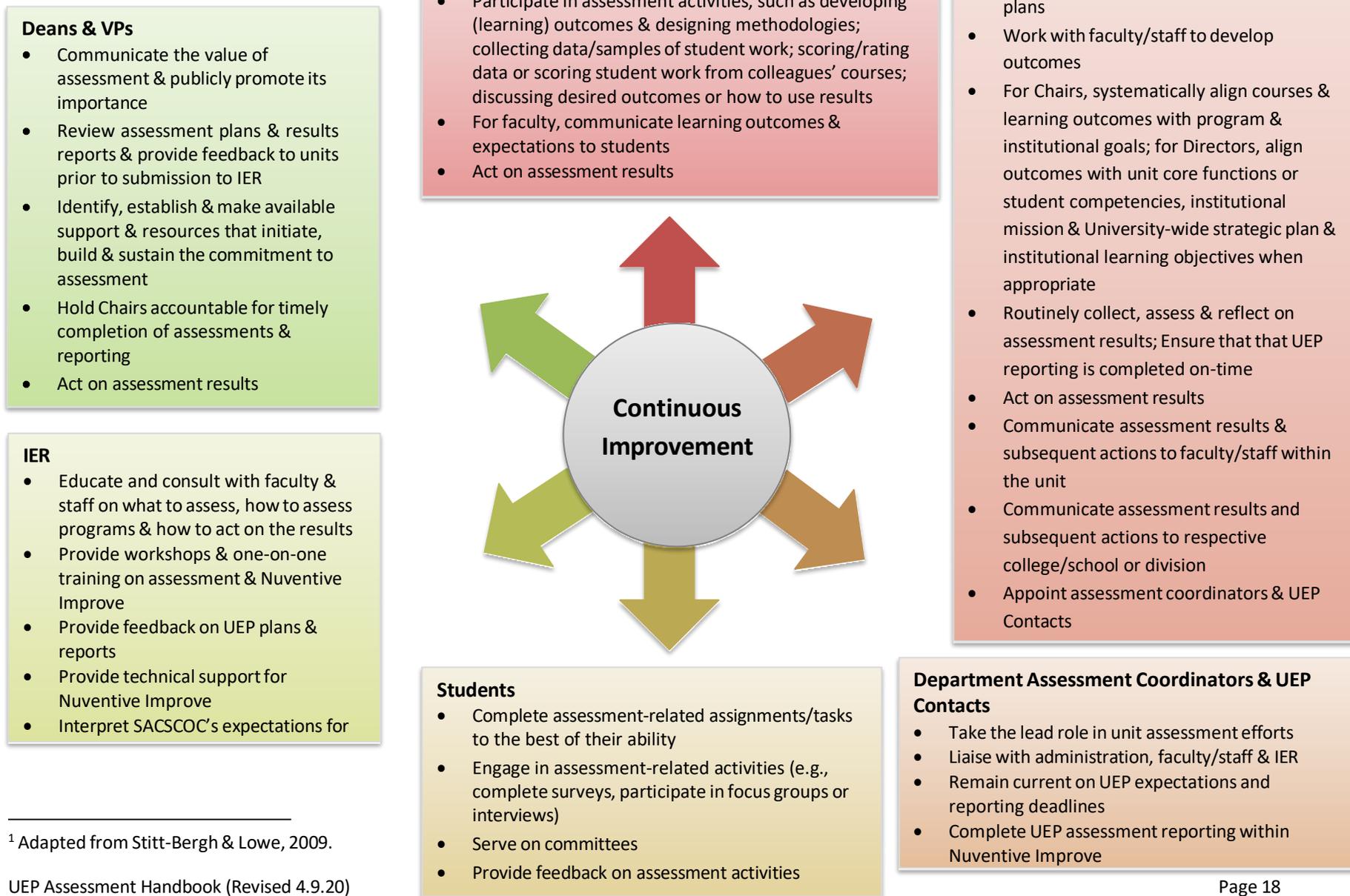
Stating the unit mission is a required piece of the UEP Assessment Activity Report. An effective mission is a broad statement of purpose that guides the activities of an organization. The following are guidelines for writing a well-defined mission statement (modified from Selim et al., 2005b):

- briefly state the purpose of the unit,
- indicate the primary functions or activities of the unit,
- indicate the stakeholders,
- ensure that the mission statement supports the institution's mission as well as the missions of superior units in its hierarchy, and
- distinguish your unit from all other units.

#### **Example 1**

*The mission of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Reporting (IER), a component of the Office of the Provost, is to*

Figure 4. Wheel of UEP assessment responsibility. <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Stitt-Bergh & Lowe, 2009.

*conduct research and analysis in order to provide information to support institutional planning, assessment, policy analysis and decision making.*

**Example 2**

*The Department of Biology is dedicated to the University mission of teaching, research and service. Our goals are to provide rigorous, modern training in the biosciences to undergraduate and graduate students to enable them to pursue directly careers in biology, biomedical and allied health sciences, or enter graduate programs leading to research careers in the biosciences or related medical sciences. Faculty scholarship and research are integral to our mission and improve the quality of our undergraduate and graduate training. Outreach to local public schools and other public institutions serve to promote the University's activities and increase community awareness of the role of science in our society.*

**Revising or Reaffirming Core Functions or Student Competencies**

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Core functions are the major responsibilities of a unit encapsulated in a few succinct statements. Student competencies are statements of broad knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviors that program majors should be able to demonstrate upon completion of a degree program. Units should review student competencies and/or core functions to determine if updates are needed.

**Academic Administrative Units (Colleges/Schools)**

Colleges/Schools are administrative in nature; therefore, the core functions should include research, service, development, and other outcomes reflecting administrative support functions. These functions must be reflected on the UEP plan by outcomes derived from each function. Advising may also be a core function of a college/school, if it is not the purview of individual academic units.

**Example**

*Obtain gifts and development funds to support future development of the College.*

**Academic Instructional Units**

Academic instructional units are to come to consensus on approximately three to five competencies that state the broad knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors that program majors should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the degree program. Competencies may also be adopted in whole or part from discipline specific accrediting bodies.

**Example**

*Upon graduation, students are expected to be competent in identifying, formulating, and solving engineering problem.*

**Administrative Support Units**

Each administrative support unit is to designate approximately three to five core functions for which it is accountable.

**Evaluating Existing and Needed Assessment Methods**

Review assessment methods that have been used in the past and discuss other activities embedded in coursework that can be used to assess student learning. Determine if additional assessment methods need to be developed. For further information and resources in assessment methodology, see [Section IV](#) of this Handbook.

#### **Section IV: Preparing the Assessment Plan and Implementing Assessment Activities**

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A crucial part of the assessment plan is the intended outcome statements. These statements are often a reflection of unit priorities, or they provide focus for the upcoming assessment activities. At UT Arlington, intended outcomes are conceived in two ways, 1) as student learning outcomes or 2) as administrative outcomes. These two types of outcomes are distinguished through definition. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are operational statements of demonstrable knowledge or skill that students will possess upon completion of a program/course. For UEP purposes, these statements should be more specific statements derived from the student program competencies. An example of an intended student learning outcome is given below.

**Student Learning Outcome – Example**      *Upon graduation, English majors will demonstrate the ability to analyze a text critically.*

**Administrative Outcomes** are operational and specific statements derived from a unit's core functions that describe the desired quality of key services within an administrative unit and define exactly what the services should promote (modified from Selim et al., 2005b, p. 19). An example of an intended administrative outcome is given below.

**Administrative Outcome – Example**      *UT Arlington faculty and staff will be highly satisfied with Facilities Management's response time on service calls.*

Academic departments should formulate and assess student learning outcomes for each degree program, stand-alone certificate, and stand-alone minor. A stand-alone program is one that is not a sub-set of a degree or minor. Colleges/schools should formulate and assess student learning outcomes for each degree program, stand-alone certificate, and stand-alone minor that is administered by the college/school. Administrative support units should formulate and assess student learning outcomes if student learning is part of the unit's functions.

Colleges/schools, administrative support units, and academic departments that conduct advising should formulate and assessment administrative outcomes. In the case of colleges/schools, research, faculty service, and development must be assessed each assessment cycle. Faculty service can be service within and outside the University. Outreach, as a form of service should call on the faculty member's expertise. Some examples of outside service include convention hosting, consulting, policy analysis, demonstration projects, translation consulting, exhibits and performances, and lectures.

Advising should also be assessed each cycle by the college/school if it is conducted at the college/school level, otherwise it should be conducted at the academic department level.

The next two subsections offer guidance and suggestions for developing and writing intended outcome statements.

#### **Developing Intended Outcomes**

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The first step in developing intended outcome statements is to determine what you want to know about student learning or your unit's programs and services. The two bulleted lists that follow, the first for learning outcomes and the second for administrative outcomes, contain several more specific questions to consider when devising your intended outcomes.

Learning Outcome Guiding Questions:

- What skills/abilities/values do you think students should have as they approach graduation from their program of study? What should students be able to do when they “know”?
- What quality of work will students produce when they “know”?
- How will students behave when they “appreciate” or “value” something?
- What evidence can be used to measure that students are doing what we expect them to be able to do?
- How can the quality of student work or behavior be confirmed?
- Will data be obtained that can be used to improve programs and services?

Administrative Outcome Guiding Questions:

- What types of things is your unit striving for?
- In what direction do you want your unit to move?
- What would you like to accomplish during the upcoming academic year and why?
- In terms of intended outcomes, what would the “perfect” unit look like?
- Will data be obtained that can be used to improve programs and services?

While you are considering what to assess keep in mind the following list of “*musts*” that have to be met in the intended outcome development process.

1. Assessment of the intended outcome *must* be within the capability of the unit to achieve without requiring significant participation at a broader level.
2. Intended outcomes *must* be related to Student Competencies in the case of SLOs, or to Core Functions and Planning Priority Strategies in the case of administrative outcomes.
3. Intended outcomes *must* be measurable during the upcoming academic year and based on strategies that can be implemented during or prior to the same academic year.
4. Intended outcomes *must* be developed with the idea that the results data has practical significance.

(Bulleted and numbered lists in this subsection were sourced from University of Connecticut, n. d.; Northeastern Illinois University, n. d.; Hoy, 2006; UCF Administrative Unit Assessment Handbook, 2008).

If you are developing intended student learning outcomes, you may want to consider using Bloom’s taxonomy to further guide your efforts.

**Bloom’s Taxonomy**

Historically, discussions about student learning have been guided by a taxonomy of learning that has come to be known as Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). This taxonomy is a hierarchical structure representing six levels of thinking and learning skills that range from basic learning objectives such as knowledge of content through higher-order learning such as synthesis, evaluation, and creativity. Bloom’s taxonomy formed the basis for early work on the development of instructional objectives for classes and curricula (Excerpted directly from University of West Florida, n. d., para. 1).

Recent decades have given rise to numerous criticisms of Bloom’s original taxonomy, implying that the model was out of date. These criticisms included concerns with setting applicability, contemporary language, and process conceptualization. Emphasis has shifted from *instructional objectives*, which describe what instructors do and the content of material presented during classroom instruction, to *student learning outcomes*, which describe what students can do as a result of their educational experiences.

Instructional objectives were typically described as things (knowledge, understanding, content, facts) that could be delivered during a lecture or presented in written text. In contrast, student learning outcomes are described using concrete verbs (behaviors that can be observed in the student) rather than nouns. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001)

have adapted Bloom's model to reflect the needs of today's outcome-oriented language by changing nouns to active verbs. Most notably, *knowledge* has been converted to *remember*. In addition, the highest level of development is *created* rather than *evaluate* (Above paragraphs excerpted and modified from University of West Florida, n. d. para. 1; Smythe and Halonen, 2009). Figure 5 is a side-by-side comparison of the original Bloom's model and the revised model. Table 3 is a list of explanatory questions that describe the New Bloom's terminology and corresponding action verbs.

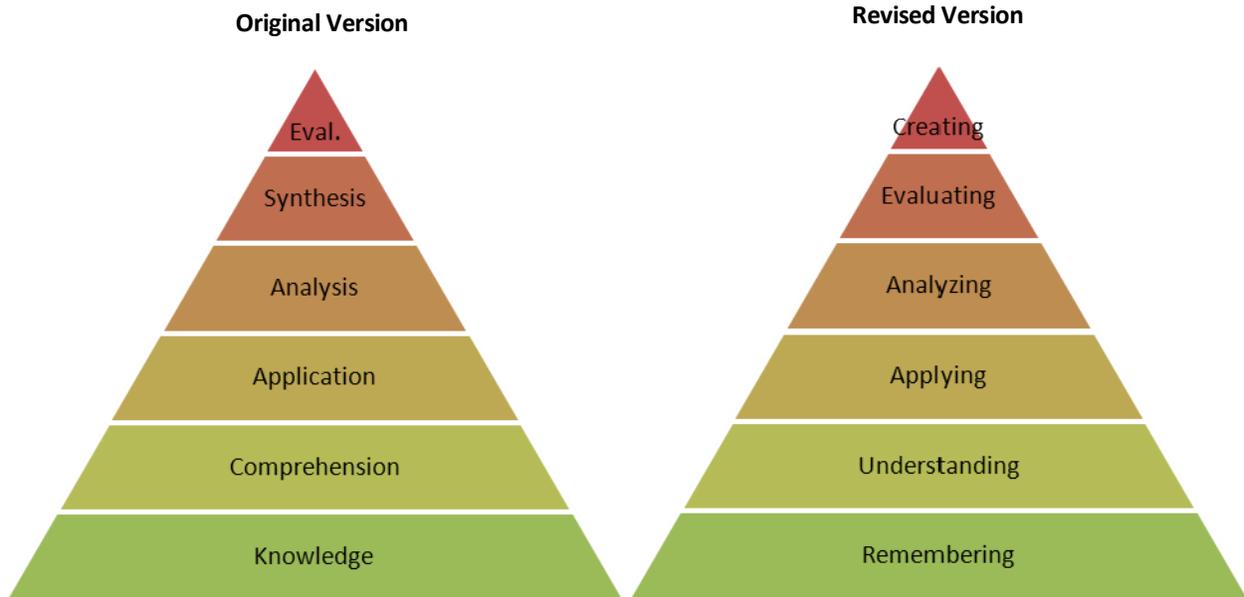


Figure 5. Side-by-side comparison of the original Bloom's taxonomy and the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy.<sup>2</sup>

Table 2<sup>3</sup>

Bloom's Taxonomic Level & Explanatory Question	Corresponding Action Verbs
<b>Remembering:</b> can the student recall or remember the information?	arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce state
<b>Understanding:</b> can the student explain ideas or concepts?	classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate
<b>Applying:</b> can the student use the information in a new way?	apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write
<b>Analyzing:</b> can the student distinguish between the different parts?	analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test
<b>Evaluating:</b> can the student justify a stand or decision?	appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose to compare, defend estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate

<sup>2</sup> Illustration from Overbaugh and Schultz, n. d.

<sup>3</sup> Table from Overbaugh and Schultz, n. d.

**Creating:** can the student create new product or point of view?

arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write

### Writing Intended Outcome Statements

Intended outcomes statements have a prescribed format and are stated in terms of what students, faculty, staff or services will accomplish (not do, but accomplish). When writing intended outcomes statements, use the following list of “*musts*” that outcomes statements must meet.

1. Intended outcome statements **must** be written as a result to be achieved rather than an action (program, process, etc.) to be implemented and must be written using action verbs.
2. Intended outcomes statements **must** be written from the learner, participant, client, customer or stakeholder perspective.
3. Intended outcome statements **must** be written in specific, measurable terms.
4. Intended outcome statements **must** be written such that you do not join elements in one outcome statement that cannot be assessed by a single method.

Example (What To Do): Customers will indicate a high level of satisfaction with services received at the walk-up service window (*measure using a satisfaction survey using a Likert-like scale*)

Example (What Not To Do): Satisfaction will improve (doesn't specify desired outcome, with whom, in what environment, and is not easily measured)

(Point 4 is directly from University of Connecticut, n. d. Other sources for points 1-3 include Northeastern Illinois University, n. d.; Hoy, 2006; UCF Administrative Unit Assessment Handbook, 2008).

Writing statements from a result perspective may not be intuitive for you, and you may find using an outcome writing model beneficial. The next section is a presentation of the ABCD Outcome Writing Model.

### ABCD Outcome Writing Model

You may wish to consider using the ABCD Outcome Writing Model (Henrich et al., 1996), especially if you are new to outcome writing. ABCD is an acronym whereby “A” represents audience, “B” represents behavior, “C” represents condition, and “D” represents degree of mastery. Audience is concerned with whom the outcome pertains. Behavior is shorthand for what you expect students/stakeholders to know, be able to do, value or experience. Condition identifies the circumstances under which the learning or experience occurs. Degree of mastery connotes how much will be accomplished and to what degree.

According to the model, ABCD are the four parts of a well-written outcome. Below is the ABCD intended outcome statement template (Caretta and Rice, 2010).

A     **Students/stakeholders will...**  
B     **<know/be able to do/value/experience what>**  
C     **<under these circumstances/conditions>**  
D     **<to this level of competency/effectiveness/satisfaction>.**

Below are three sample intended outcome statements where the ABCD portions of the statement have been colored coded to correspond to the colors used in the template above (color code concept from Penn State Learning Design Community Hub, n. d.).

**Example 1** Resident Assistants will recognize most policy violations after Resident Assistance training.

**Example 2** Given a set of common rocks and minerals, students in the Mineralogy and Petrology courses should be able to provide the name and classification of each and explain how and where each typically occurs with high accuracy.

**Example 3** University Center visitors who use dining services will be highly satisfied with the condition of the physical facilities.

**Of Note**

While this ABCD Outcome Writing Model prescribes that the degree of competency/achievement be included in the intended outcome statement, it is acceptable to include that only as the criterion for success in the methodology description. For more on assessment methodology, see page 28.

**Sample/Example Intended Outcome Statements**

**Example 1 (Undergraduate Learning Outcome)** Upon graduation, English majors will demonstrate the ability to analyze a text critically.

**Example 2 (Undergraduate Learning Outcome)** Graduating seniors in the Department of Modern Languages will demonstrate cultural awareness associated with the language of their major.

**Example 3 (Undergraduate Learning Outcome)** Undergraduates will demonstrate organizational skills in formal presentations.

**Example 4 (Graduate Learning Outcome)** Masters students will be able to determine methods of testing a hypothesis.

**Example 5 (Graduate Learning Outcome)** Students will be able to present the results of their research.

**Example 6 (Graduate Learning Outcome)** Graduate students will be proficient in the use of the scientific method for original research.

**Example 7 (Research)** External dollars generated by faculty in the department will increase.

**Example 8 (Service)** The departmental faculty will be involved in programs aimed at disseminating information to community organizations.

**Example 9 (Development)** Financial contributions to the College, resulting from increased development efforts in support of scholarship, research and teaching will increase.

<b>Example 10 (Advising)</b>	<i>Students will be aware of the range of career opportunities for those with a liberal arts degree.</i>
<b>Example 11 (Advising)</b>	<i>Students will receive timely academic advising that facilitates degree completion.</i>
<b>Example 12 (Advising)</b>	<i>Students will be satisfied with the advising services they receive from the department.</i>
<b>Example 13 (Administrative)</b>	<i>The number of positive news stories regarding UTA in the Dallas Morning News, specifically, and in the national news media in general will increase.</i>
<b>Example 14 (Administrative)</b>	<i>Administrators who request information/assistance from IER will receive accurate, timely, and useful information.</i>
<b>Example 15 (Administrative)</b>	<i>UT Arlington faculty and staff will be satisfied with Facilities Management's response time on service requests.</i>

Units may repeat the assessment of outcomes from the previous cycle's plan if both the outcome statement and the assessment method meet the current cycle's guidelines. Many assessment activities require more time and/or resources than may be available in a single academic year. Consider breaking the project into increments and addressing one or two of the increments during the academic year.

#### **Linking Intended Outcomes to Related Student Competencies or Core Functions**

The UEP Assessment Plan requires that each intended outcome be anchored by a broader priority. As mentioned previously, academic units may use student competencies as intended student learning outcomes, but a better practice is to derive student learning outcomes as more specific statements of student knowledge, skill or ability from the student competencies.

Administrative Support Units and Academic Administrative Units should tie intended outcomes to the appropriate core function.

#### **Example**

#### **Core Function**

*Coordinate Planning and Assessment Activities*

#### **Intended Administrative Outcome**

*Unit effectiveness contacts will acquire the knowledge needed to complete Unit Effectiveness Process reporting appropriately*

#### **Outlining Action Steps**

Action steps specify what the unit will do to facilitate the achievement of the outcome. Action steps must be implemented:

- within the time constraints of the designated UEP cycle,
- with current and secured resources, and
- with approval from administrative bodies within the unit at the time of plan submission.

#### **Example 1**

*Student Learning Outcome: Upon graduation, undergraduate Biology majors will have the ability to read and analyze a scientific publication.*

**Example 2**

*Action Steps:* Assign students in a section of BIOL 3310 to read topical papers and complete written reports.

*Administrative Outcome:* Faculty grant submissions will increase by 5% each year.

*Action Steps:* Encourage faculty to increase grant submissions and reward successful applicants with salary increases.

**Determining Assessment Methodology**

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Assessment methods outline what data will be collected, from what sources, using what methods, by whom, and in what approximate timeframe. The following is a list of guiding questions to use when determining the assessment methodology (Hoy, 2006):

- What type of data will provide the needed information?
- What type of research design and sample will best provide this information?
- What data displays, comparisons or statistics will be appropriate?
- How often will this information be collected and who will collect it?

The criteria below should be thoroughly considered when choosing an assessment strategy (Hoy, 2006; Palomba and Banta, 1999):

1. Consider the relationship to the assessment question. Does the method have the ability to answer the assessment question? Some assessment methods are better than others at answering the same question. An example of using a measure that does not consider the assessment question would be to use a student satisfaction survey to measure student knowledge.
2. Consider the reliability of the assessment method. Reliable measures are ones that produce consistent results through time. Measurement errors can occur through the individuals responding, through the administration and scoring of the instrument and through the instrument itself. Some errors can be minimized or avoided by ensuring that the instrument is well written and without ambiguity.
3. Consider the validity of the instrument. Validity refers the instrument's ability to measure what we want it to measure. Are we measuring what we say we are measuring?
4. Consider the timeliness and cost effectiveness of the method. When choosing an assessment strategy, consider if the measure will allow your unit to conduct assessment within the confines of the academic year. Also consider if your unit has the funds/personnel on hand to conduct the assessment using the method in question.
5. Consider the significance of the data that will be produced. Will the data that will be produced be good enough to use for decisions and improvement? Is the data going to be useful for making improvements at the unit level (as opposed to improvements that must be made on a larger scale)?
6. Other Considerations. Think about whether the assessment strategy will provide results that are clear to understand and interpret. Consider if fluctuations in the results could be related to the assessment issue or other correlating factors. Will the results provide the type of information your unit needs to promote change?

While you are considering the essential criteria above, make sure you keep close at hand the methodological "**musts**" listed below. The selected methodology must meet each of these essential points (as applicable).

1. Assessment methodology **must** evaluate the extent to which the Intended Outcome is achieved, not whether the Action Steps were or were not completed.
2. Assessment methodology intended to measure student learning **must** examine a student work product (student performance in response to a specific project, assignment, knowledge test, etc.). This is referred to as using a direct measure of student learning. Indirect measures can be used to support

the data derived from the direct measure. Table 3 lists examples of direct and indirect types of assessment methods.

3. Assessment methodology for learning outcomes **must** utilize objective information (based on direct measures) and not rely *solely* on self-reports or other subjective information, which are referred to as indirect measures (see Table 3 for samples of indirect measures). If indirect measures are used to measure student learning, then they must be accompanied by a direct measure. Indirect measures can be used as the sole measure for administrative outcomes.

Table 3. Direct and Indirect Measure Examples

Direct Measure Examples	Indirect Measure Examples
Exams (National; Pre-test/Post-test; Licensure, etc.)	Surveys of Attitudes
Portfolios	Interviews
Juried Activities	Focus Groups
Grading Rubrics	Questionnaires
Practical exams	Graduation and retention rates
Research papers, thesis & dissertations	Graduate follow-up studies
Exhibitions and demonstrations	Job placement data
Oral exams or presentations	Curriculum and syllabus analysis

Because measurement in education is not an exact science, it is a good idea to identify more than one method of assessment for each intended outcome. Finding that two assessment methods produce similarly positive (or negative) results lends some degree of validity for the results and conclusions drawn from those results. This is especially true when using indirect methods. Using multiple measures to increase the degree of validity is referred to as triangulation of data.

**Example 1**

Student Learning Outcome: Upon graduation, English majors will demonstrate the ability to analyze a text critically.

Direct Assessment Method: Senior students taking ENGL 43XX will write a paper critically analyzing a selected text. An external expert (or experts) will review a sample of student work by utilizing a departmentally developed rubric, which identifies students’ areas of strengths and weaknesses. Department faculty will review the resulting reports to determine how many students met the criteria of success. For the outcome to be considered achieved, 90% of papers assessed must **score** “Proficient” or “Distinguished” in at least three of the four elements of critical analysis.

### **Example 2**

Student Learning Outcome: Graduates will have the ability to apply knowledge of mathematics, science, and engineering.

Direct Assessment Method 1: 75% of all Architectural Engineering graduates will score a minimum score of 70 through the Tested Explicitly (TE) Course Reports in AREN 2221 and AREN to evaluate their knowledge of mathematics and science as related and applied to the architectural engineering practice.

Indirect Assessment Method 2: 75% of Architectural Engineering graduates will select average, very good or excellent on the senior exit interview questionnaire regarding their self-evaluation of their perception and competency to apply knowledge of mathematics and science in civil engineering problems and practice.

### **Sources of Assessment Measurements**

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When devising measures for your intended outcomes consider what your unit may already be doing that could be used or modified for assessment purposes. For administrative units, potential measurement tools could be satisfaction surveys or tracking measures. For academic units, potential measurement tools could be capstone projects, lab assignments, or licensure exams. Using already existing student assignments, projects, and exams is often referred to as embedded assessments.

You may also consider what is being used at other institutions, but within your field. Administrative units may consider the use of regional or national benchmarking tools. An example of such is the Educational Benchmarking, Inc.'s survey of Residence Life (<http://www.webebi.com/>). One part of this survey measures student satisfaction with on-campus housing. Student responses are then benchmarked to other institutions results.

In-house developed tools generated by faculty/staff can be efficient, informative and cost effective. In your search for an appropriate and effective assessment methodology, you are likely to encounter rubrics or the suggestion to devise a rubric for assessment purposes. The section that follows is a brief primer on assessment rubrics.

### **Rubrics**

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In the bevy of educational terminology aimed at improved student learning and accountability, "rubric" has emerged as a buzzword. The educational field has co-opted the term to describe "a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work...; it also articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor" or some such gradation (Goodrich, 1997: 14).

As a type of criteria-based assessment and/or grading, rubrics are a valuable educational tool that can provide benefits to both faculty and students. Sadler (2005) indicates that the arguments for criteria-based assessment and/or grading in relevant literature can be summed in two major points: 1) students are graded on the basis of their work alone without being compared to or competing with other students and 2) students deserve to know the criteria upon which their work will be judged. Sadler goes on to explain that the traditional grading model measuring overall achievement (i.e. the A-F model) can be argued to be a criteria-based model; however, the aggregate nature of traditional grades obscure patterns of strengths and weaknesses in student performance.

Rubrics, on the other hand, can be used to determine student grades as well as patterns of strengths and weaknesses. The following are additional reasons to use rubrics:

- make grading consistent and fair.
- save time in the grading process (at least after the rubric has been developed).
- clarify expectations to students.
- provide explanation of grades to students (especially useful if a student contests a grade).
- track changes in student performance.
- generate consistency in teaching and grading among teaching assistants and adjunct faculty.
- form the basis for course and programmatic assessment; and
- assist faculty in agreeing on criteria for common exams, multiple sections, and/or sequential courses (Walvoord & Anderson, 1998).

### **Rubric Types**

Rubrics can be sorted into two main categories, holistic and analytic (Quinlan, 2006). A holistic rubric (Figure 6) evaluates a work product based on the overall, perceived quality of the work. An analytic rubric (Figure 7) disaggregates the criteria expected from the work product and evaluates them individually. Analytic rubrics may also be referred to as Primary Trait Analysis.

Neither type of rubric is better per se than the other, but IER often recommends the use of the analytic rubric for assessment at UT Arlington. Analytic rubrics allow for trends to be tracked individually. Using the samples in Figures 8 and 9, plot, setting and character can be analyzed individually, and this allows for differing scores for each; the holistic rubric, however, only allows for one **score** for all three areas. So, you may have a paper with very strong character development, but minimal plot development. The **score** for work should be an average of those two elements when using a holistic rubric. The weakness of plot development is lost among the strengths of the work. The analytic rubric allows for each area content area to receive its own rating. This is often quite helpful when using the data in a formative way, to improve programs and services.

### **Fiction Writing Content Rubric**

- **5** – The plot, setting, and characters are developed fully and organized well. The who, what, where, when, and why are explained using interesting language and sufficient detail.
- **4** – Most parts of the story mentioned in a score of 5 above are developed and organized well. A couple of aspects may need to be more fully or more interestingly developed.
- **3** – Some aspects of the story are developed and organized well, but not as much detail or organization is expressed as in a score of 4.
- **2** – A few parts of the story are developed somewhat. Organization and language usage need improvement.
- **1** – Parts of the story are addressed without attention to detail or organization.

Figure 6. Holistic rubric

Fiction Writing Content Rubric				
Criteria	4	3	2	1
PLOT: "What" and "Why"	Both <i>plot</i> parts are fully developed.	One of the <i>plot</i> parts is fully developed and the less developed part is at least addressed.	Both <i>plot</i> parts are addressed but not fully developed.	Neither <i>plot</i> parts are fully developed.
SETTING: "When" and "Where"	Both <i>setting</i> parts are fully developed.	One of the <i>setting</i> parts is fully developed and the less developed part is at least addressed.	Both <i>setting</i> parts of the story are addressed but not fully developed.	Neither <i>setting</i> parts are developed.
CHARACTERS: "Who" described by behavior, appearance, personality, and character traits	The main <i>characters</i> are fully developed with much descriptive detail. The reader has a vivid image of the characters.	The main <i>characters</i> are developed with some descriptive detail. The reader has a vague idea of the characters.	The main <i>characters</i> are identified by name only.	None of the <i>characters</i> are developed or named.

Figure 7. Analytic Rubric.<sup>4</sup>

### Rubric Components<sup>5</sup>

Rubrics are composed of four basic parts. In its simplest form, the rubric includes:

1. **A task** description. The outcome being assessed, or instructions students received for an assignment.
2. The characteristics to be rated (*rows*). The skills, knowledge, and/or behavior to be demonstrated.
3. Levels of mastery/scale (*columns*). Labels used to describe the levels of mastery should be tactful but clear. Commonly used labels include:
  - Not meeting, approaching, meeting, exceeding
  - Exemplary, proficient, marginal, unacceptable
  - Advanced, intermediate high, intermediate, novice.
  - 1, 2, 3, 4
4. The description of each characteristic at each level of mastery/scale (*cells*).

### Steps for Developing a Rubric<sup>6</sup>

Rubrics can be developed using common office productivity software, such as Word or Excel, or you can create them using free or proprietary software. Listed below are a couple of free rubric building websites:

- Rubistar: <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>
- Rcampus: <http://www.rcampus.com/indexrubric.cfm>

<sup>4</sup> From "Fiction-Writing Content Rubric," n. d.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpted verbatim from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, n. d., sect. What are the parts of a rubric?

<sup>6</sup> Steps are excerpted verbatim from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, n. d., sect. Developing a rubric.

Regardless of which tool you use to build a rubric, the steps you take in development of the rubric are the same.

The remainder of this section is a step-by-step approach for developing a rubric

- Step 1** Identify what you want to assess
- Step 2** Identify the characteristics to be rated (rows)
- Specify the skills, knowledge, and/or behaviors that you will be looking for.
  - Limit the characteristics to those that are most important to the assessment.
- Step 3** Identify the levels of mastery/scale (columns).  
Tip: Aim for an even number (4 or 6) because when an odd number is used, the middle tends to become the "catch-all" category
- Step 4** Describe each level of mastery for each characteristic (cells)
- Describe the best work you could expect using these characteristics, which describes the top category
  - Describe an unacceptable product, which describes the lowest category
  - Develop descriptions of intermediate-level products for intermediate categories
- Step 5** Test rubric
- Apply the rubric to an assignment
  - Share with colleagues
- Tip: Faculty members often find it useful to establish the minimum **score** needed for the student work to be deemed passable. For example, faculty members may decide that a "1" or "2" on a 4-point scale (4=exemplary, 3=proficient, 2=marginal, 1=unacceptable), does not meet the minimum quality expectations. They may set their criteria for success as 90% of the students must score 3 or higher. If assessment study results fall short, action will need to be taken.
- Step 6** Discuss with colleagues, review feedback and revise
- Important: When developing a rubric for program assessment, enlist the help of colleagues. Rubrics promote shared expectations and grading practices which benefit faculty members and students in the program.

You may find it useful to borrow, in part or in its entirety, a rubric that another institution has already developed. The internet is full of a variety of rubric samples as well as informational sources for developing, building, and testing rubrics. Table 4 is a list of online resources that you might find helpful in your exploration to rubrics. IER is also available to assist you in this endeavor.

Table 4 Rubric Resources

Association of American Colleges and Universities	<a href="http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index_p.cfm?CFID=35718428&amp;CFTOKEN=86166291">http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index_p.cfm?CFID=35718428&amp;CFTOKEN=86166291</a>
California State University Fullerton (Mihaylo College of Business and Economics)	<a href="http://business.fullerton.edu/centers/CollegeAssessmentCenter/RubricDirectory/other_rubrics.htm">http://business.fullerton.edu/centers/CollegeAssessmentCenter/RubricDirectory/other_rubrics.htm</a>
Texas A&M University (Division of Student Affairs)	<a href="http://sllo.tamu.edu/">http://sllo.tamu.edu/</a>
University of Rhode Island	<a href="http://www.uri.edu/assessment/uri/guidance/rubrics.html">http://www.uri.edu/assessment/uri/guidance/rubrics.html</a>
Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education	<a href="https://www.aalhe.org/assessment-resources">https://www.aalhe.org/assessment-resources</a>
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa	<a href="http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/rubrics.htm">http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/rubrics.htm</a>

### Rubric Orientation and Calibration<sup>7</sup>

When using a rubric for program assessment purposes, faculty members apply the rubric to pieces of student work (e.g., reports, oral presentations, design projects). To produce dependable scores, each faculty member needs to interpret the rubric in the same way. The process of training faculty members to apply the rubric is called "norming." It's a way to calibrate the faculty members so that scores are accurate. Below are directions for carrying out the norming process. IER can also coordinate the norming process.

Suggested materials for a scoring session:

- copies of the rubric
- copies of the "anchors": pieces of student work that illustrate each level of mastery. Suggestion: have 6 anchor pieces (2 low, 2 middle, 2 high)
- score sheets
- extra pens, tape, post-its, paper clips, stapler, rubber bands, etc.

Hold the scoring session in a room that allows the scorers to spread out as they rate the student pieces and has a chalk or white board

Process:

1. Describe the purpose of the activity, stressing how it fits into program assessment plans. Explain that the purpose is to assess the program, not individual students or faculty, and describe ethical guidelines, including respect for confidentiality and privacy.
2. Describe the nature of the products that will be reviewed, briefly summarizing how they were obtained.
3. Describe the scoring rubric and its categories. Explain how it was developed.
4. Analytic: Explain that readers should rate each dimension of an analytic rubric separately, and they should apply the criteria without concern for how often each score (level of mastery) is used. Holistic: Explain that readers should assign the score or level of mastery that best describes the whole piece; some aspects of the piece may not appear in that score and that is correct. They should apply the criteria without concern for how often each score is used.
5. Give each scorer a copy of several student products that are exemplars of different levels of performance. Ask each scorer to independently apply the rubric to each of these products, writing their ratings on a scrap sheet of paper.
6. Once everyone is done, collect everyone's ratings and display them so everyone can see the degree of agreement. This is often done on a blackboard, with each person in turn announcing his/her ratings as they are entered on the board. Alternatively, the facilitator could ask raters to raise their hands when their rating

<sup>7</sup> Excerpted verbatim from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, n. d., sect. Scoring rubric group orientation and calibration.

category is announced, making the extent of agreement very clear to everyone and making it very easy to identify raters who routinely give unusually high or low ratings.

7. Guide the group in a discussion of their ratings. There will be differences. This discussion is important to establish standards. Attempt to reach consensus on the most appropriate rating for each of the products being examined by inviting people who gave different ratings to explain their judgments. Raters should be encouraged to explain by making explicit references to the rubric. Usually consensus is possible, but sometimes a split decision is developed, e.g., the group may agree that a product is a "3-4" split because it has elements of both categories. This is usually not a problem. You might allow the group to revise the rubric to clarify its use but avoid allowing the group to drift away from the rubric and learning outcome(s) being assessed.
8. Once the group is comfortable with how the rubric is applied, the rating begins. Explain how to record ratings using the score sheet and explain the procedures. Reviewers begin scoring.
9. If you can quickly summarize the scores, present a summary to the group at the end of the reading. You might end the meeting with a discussion of five questions.
  - Are results sufficiently reliable?
  - What do the results mean? Are we satisfied with the extent of students' learning?
  - Who needs to know the results?
  - What are the implications of the results for curriculum, pedagogy, or student support services?
  - How might the assessment process, itself, be improved?

### **Establishing the Criteria for Success**

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The criterion for success is the benchmark or target that serves as an indicator for accomplishment. Criteria for success should be concrete levels of achievement based on the measures employed through the assessment tool. These targets are established during the planning process of Phase I (i.e. prior to implementation of the action steps).

Units should consider the use of primary and secondary criteria for success (Nichols and Nichols, 2000). The primary criteria for success are the overall levels of success and the secondary criteria are the detailed levels of success that contribute to the overall level of success. For instance, an administrative unit may establish a criterion of success for client satisfaction and then establish additional criteria to address each element contributing to overall success, such as customer service, quality of work/product, timeliness of service, etc. An academic unit may also use primary and secondary criteria for success. As an example, consider the assessment of a written composition. The primary criterion may be that 90% of students are able to compose a 'Good' to 'Excellent' essay. The secondary criteria may be that 85% students are to perform at a level of 'Good' to 'Excellent' in each area of a composition including composition, grammar, and use of references.

**Of Note** Plan samples are available in the [Quick Guide to Plan and Results Reporting](#).

### **The Relationship of Assessment to Grading**

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Assessment is not a substitute for grading and grading is not a substitute for assessment. While the processes each focus on the evaluation of student work products with the goal of improved student learning, each process is a means to a different end. Grading is aimed at evaluating individual student performance while assessment is aimed at improving the overall learning process for students. Further, a course grade is an overall evaluation of a student's performance in a course that is comprised of multiple learning outcomes. Outcome assessment is focused on evaluating a single outcome at a time; therefore, **course grades should not be used as the criteria for success in outcomes assessment.**

Course grades do not provide the level of detail necessary to discern patterns of strengths and weaknesses in student performance. Course assignments, also referred to as embedded course work (homework assignments, tests, quizzes, in-call exercises, etc.), can be used for assessment. However, consideration should be given to the grading method when the student work product will also be used for assessment. It may be necessary to modify the grading method or to use an additional method to make embedded course work useful for assessment purposes.

Grading systems that employ unstated criteria, such as “it feels like a B” (Walvoord and Anderson, 1998) or pass/fail grade designations should not be used as the sole criteria for success for the same reason as overall course grades should not be used. These grading methods may be used as a criterion only in conjunction with more detailed secondary criteria. Walvoord and Anderson (1998) recommend a grading method called Primary Trait Analysis (PTA) which creates a scoring rubric that can be used to assess any student performance. More information about PTA and scoring rubrics can be obtained through resources maintained in the IER library (including Walvoord and Anderson, 1998), the resources section of the UEP website as well as information made available online by other institutions.

### Mapping

Before submitting the assessment plan, faculty/staff first map the outcomes included in the plan to the UTA Strategic Plan Guiding Aspirations (academic and administrative plans) and/or Texas Core Curriculum (TCC) Objectives (academic reporters only). Mapping allows the reporting unit to quickly identify the ways in which the measured outcomes align with and support the Aspirations and/or TCC. To complete the map, select the set of priorities (Strategic Plan or TCC) from the drop-down menu at left, and then simply check appropriate boxes to map an outcome (example seen below).

**Figure 8: Example of mapped outcomes as shown in Nuventive**

 Related Core Function and/or Strategic Planning Priority? Administrative units should tie intended outcomes to one of the Core Functions. For more information see the Handbook. 

Core Curriculum Objectives	*Intended Outcomes				
Core Curriculum Objectives	1 Students will be competent in the field of Computer Architecture.	2 Students will be competent in the field of Sensor Networks.	3 Outcome: Students will be competent in the field of Database Systems-Cloud Computing.	4 Students will be competent in the field of Database Systems-Cloud Computing.	5 Students will be competent in the field of Software Engineering
Core: Communication To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Core: Critical Thinking Skills To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Core: Empirical and Quantitative Skills To include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Core: Teamwork To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Core: Personal Responsibility To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.					
Core: Social Responsibility To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national...	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Section V: Documenting Assessment & Using Results

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### Documenting Assessment

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When documenting the results of assessment activities, include a full description detailing the data collected. Be sure to include:

- a description of the group that was assessed
- the sample size of the assessed group
- a description of the data collected (e.g. the number of articles, the number of references, the number of satisfied responses, etc.)
- the results obtained, and
- a description of how the unit examined the results.

In addition, results documentation must also contain the following:

- the extent to which the intended outcome was achieved (i.e. achieved, not achieved, or partially achieved).
- the person(s)/group that analyzed and interpreted the assessment results (e.g. assessment committee, department chair, outside consultant, entire staff or faculty of a unit), and
- an interpretation of the results. What does the data mean? Were there extenuating circumstances affecting the results?

### Using Results

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Improvement is at the heart of outcomes assessment. The need for improvement is revealed generally by the assessment results but may be discovered during the assessment process itself. Hence, the use of assessment results is paramount in the assessment process. The UEP expects that results of assessment and subsequent interpretation will be disseminated to members of the unit. Further, it is hoped that the unit will illicit feedback from the members of the unit, especially in cases where improvement is warranted.

### Proposing Changes for Improvement

Once feedback is obtained from unit members, changes for improvement can be proposed. Since proposed changes for improvement are put forth for consideration by deans, vice presidents or other decision-making persons, it is important to include decision factor information, specifically the timeframe for implementation and resources needed to implement the change(s). Proposals for improvement are documented in Nuventive Improve on the Assessment Activity Report.

#### Of Note

In cases where outcomes are not achieved or partially achieved, it is expected that an improvement will be proposed. If an improvement is not proposed, the results description should contain an interpretation of the results that makes it clear why an improvement is not being proposed.

#### ***Resources Needed for Proposed Changes***

*Needed resources must directly relate to the implementation of the Proposed Improvement as well as the Intended Outcome.*

Implementation of Proposed Improvements may come from these three sources:

1. Proposed improvements that can be implemented by your unit with existing resources.
2. Assistance needed from other units in the University (e.g., policy changes, space, communication or collaboration with another unit, etc.) to implement improvements (e.g., staffing or equipment) with existing resources.

3. Proposed improvements that require additional resources for implementation and the estimated cost for each.

### **Improvement Reports**

The final step in the assessment cycle is to implement changes based on assessment results, in order to improve programs and services. While proposed changes and resources needed are described in Phase II of the UEP, the changes are implemented in Phase III and documented in Nuventive Improve through completion of the Annual Improvement Report.

Please note that improvements reported on the Improvement Report can be based on assessment results from other assessments in addition to the UEP (e.g., results of a departmental survey, academic **program review**, or other activity not included on the UEP assessment plan).

## **Section VI: Nuventive Improve**

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Nuventive Improve is the central repository that houses UEP reports. Nuventive Improve provides a centralized location to document assessment and demonstrate continuous improvement. UEP Assessment Activity Reports and Improvement Reports from academic year 2008-2009 forward are available in Nuventive Improve.

User access to Nuventive Improve is controlled through password administration (NetID) authentication. UEP contacts have edit access within Nuventive Improve. Deans and vice presidents/vice provosts have, at minimum, the ability to view all reports for the units under their purview.

Nuventive Improve can be accessed using your single sign on IER website at: <https://go.uta.edu/uep>. Contact IER at [uep@uta.edu](mailto:uep@uta.edu) if you need access to Nuventive Improve.

For full technical instructions on how to use Nuventive Improve, please email IER at [uep@uta.edu](mailto:uep@uta.edu) for training.

## **Section VII: Resources**

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### **Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting Staff**

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The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting provides technical support for planning and assessment. IER staff is available to provide consultation in developing outcome statements and assessment methods as well as supplying some survey data.

### **Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting Website**

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The IER web page contains this Handbook, the UEP quick guides (quick reference guides for completing UEP reports) as well as links to planning resources from other campuses and much more. You can find the IER home page at <http://www.uta.edu/ier/> and the UEP home page <http://www.uta.edu/ier/UEP/index.php>.

## Glossary

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This glossary contains terms and names that you may encounter during the UEP. Most entries are defined based on their user in the UEP. All definitions from Sweeny, 1994 unless otherwise cited.

A

<b>Administrative Outcomes</b>	Operational and specific statements derived from a unit's core functions that describe the desired quality of key services within an administrative unit and define exactly what the services should promote (modified from Selim et al., 2005, p. 19).
<b>Aggregated Scores</b>	The combined scores for a population of students often expressed as an average. Aggregating scores requires that all the scores be based on the same or equivalent assessments administered in uniform ways.
<b>Alignment</b>	The process of assuring that learning outcomes, local curriculum and instruction and the system of assessment all support and match each other.
<b>Analytic Scoring</b>	The use of specific criteria or features to evaluate and assign points to each essential part of a product or performance. Analytic scoring is diagnostic, allowing planning for specific remediation. (See Holistic Scoring for the alternative approach.
<b>Annotated Rubric</b>	<p>The notes from an assessment development group, often after a field test and initial scoring, which explain the meaning of criteria or distinctions between the criteria on a rubric.</p> <p>Annotation is an important tool to increase scoring reliability and to train others to score consistently.</p>
<b>Anchors</b>	Actual samples of student work, which illustrate the essential characteristics of work typical for each scoring level on a scoring rubric. Anchors can also be captured on video or audio tapes of performances or may be video or photographic images of a larger product. The top anchor is often called an "exemplar" as it represents exemplary work.
<b>Assessment</b>	A systematic and ongoing process of gathering and interpreting information to discover if programs/services are meeting intended outcomes/objectives and then using the information to enhance the programs/services (adapted from Virginia Commonwealth University, 2002 & Marchese, 1987).

<b>Authentic</b>	A characteristic of assessments that have a high degree of similarity to tasks performed in the real world. The more authentic the assessment, the less inference required to predict student success after graduation.
<b>B</b>	
<b>Benchmark</b>	A standard by which something can be measured or judged (Lexico Publishing Group, n. d.).
<b>C</b>	
<b>Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools</b>	The regional accrediting body of higher education institutions in the Southern States (AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX and VA).
<b>Complex-Generated Response</b>	An assessment that asks a student to perform or produce in order to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Such assessments will not have one right answer, but instead will result in student work, which is across a range of quality. The assessment requires that the student engage in a task of multiple parts or steps. Scoring of the assessment involves teacher judgment based on stated criteria for performance. See Performance-Based Assessment.
<b>Comprehensive</b>	All dimensions of a learning goal with regard to scope, content, specificity, skills, and types of thinking required are addressed.
<b>Consultative</b>	Conducted in a manner that solicits input from various groups but does not require actual participation in decision-making.
<b>Core Functions</b>	The major responsibilities of the unit stated in a few succinct statements (also known as Primary Functions).
<b>Competency</b>	See Student Competency
<b>Core Requirement</b>	With regard to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, a basic qualification that an institution must meet to be accredited with the Commission on Colleges.
<b>Course Mapping</b>	See Curriculum Mapping
<b>Course-Level Assessment</b>	Assessment to determine the extent to which a specific course is achieving its learning goals. (For comparison, see <a href="#">Program Assessment</a> and <a href="#">Institutional Assessment</a> .)

<b>Criterion-Referenced Test</b>	A measurement of achievement of specific criteria stated as levels of mastery. The focus is performance of an individual as measured against a standard or criteria rather than against performance of others who take the same test. See Standardized, Norm-referenced Tests.
<b>Curriculum Mapping</b>	A matrix showing the coverage of each program learning outcome in each course. It may also indicate the level of emphasis of each outcome in each course (from Bridgewater State College, n. d. as Course Mapping).
<b>Cut Score</b>	The number of points needed which represents the criteria for successful completion of an assessment task, such as eight out of 10, or the percent that must be attained to be determined as successful in performing an assessment task (e.g., 80%). Cut score also refers to the critical point for dividing scores into two groups in reference to some criterion. It is possible to set multiple cut scores from differing criterion (e.g., meets, does not meet and exceeds).
<b>D</b>	
<b>Direct Assessment</b>	Method of gauging student achievement of learning outcomes through evaluation of student work products (Bridgewater State College, n. d.). For comparison, see <a href="#">Indirect Assessment</a> .
<b>Direct Measure of Learning Outcome</b>	Students demonstrate an expected learning outcome (California Polytechnic State University, n. d.)
<b>Disaggregated Group</b>	Any group of students within a population from which a group score is computed as a group separate from the total assessed population.
<b>Documentation</b>	Written descriptions, reports or summaries of the steps taken and the rationale for those actions.

## E

### **Exemplar**

Actual samples of student work that illustrate the essential characteristics of work typical of exemplary student work at the top scoring level on a scoring rubric. Several exemplars are desirable to promote creativity so that students see multiple products/performances are possible.

### **Embedded Assessment Methods**

A method in which evidence of student learning outcomes for the program is obtained from assignments in particular courses in the curriculum (Bridgewater State College, n. d.).

### **Expectation**

An estimate of the percent of students who will meet the defined standard for a learning outcome

## F

### **Feasibility/Reasonableness**

A characteristic of scoring criteria ensuring that the judging of student work is appropriate for the conditions within which the task was completed.

### **Formative Assessment**

The assessment of student achievement at different stages of a course or at different stages of a student's academic career. The focus of formative assessment is on the documentation of student development over time. It can also be used to engage students in a process of reflection on their education (modified from Bridgewater State College, n. d. & California Polytechnic State University, n. d.). For comparison, see [Summative Assessment](#).

### **Forced-Choice Assessment**

Testing where responses to an item, questions or prompts are placed against a set answer key. Scoring does not require judgment on the part of the scorer because there is one right answer to the item. Multiple choice, true/false, cloze, and matching are examples of forced choice/short answer assessments.

## **G**

### **Generalizable**

The results of an assessment are generalizable when the score on one assessment can accurately predict a student score on a different assessment covering the same knowledge or skill. Generalizability across time is promoted by ensuring that assessments focus on general level concepts or strategies, not on facts, topics, or skills, which are found only at one level or in one class.

### **Goals**

The general aims or purposes of a program and its curriculum. Effective goals are broadly stated, meaningful, achievable and assessable. Goals provide a framework for determining the more specific educational objectives of a program and should be consistent with program and institutional mission.

## **H**

### **Holistic Scoring**

Scoring based upon an overall impression (as opposed to traditional test scoring, which totals specific errors and subtracts points based on them). In holistic scoring, the rater matches his or her overall impression to the point scale to see how the portfolio, product or performance should be scored. Raters usually are directed to pay attention to particular aspects of a performance in assigning the overall score.

## **I**

### **Indicator**

A statistic that reveals information about the performance of a program or a student. For a statistic to be an educational indicator there must be a standard against which it can be judged. Educational indicators must meet certain substantive and technical standards that define the kind of information they should provide and the features they should measure. The primary educational indicator is student performance; other secondary indicators include attendance, graduation, mobility, and dropout rates.

### **Indirect Assessment**

Assessment that deduces student achievement of learning outcomes through students' reported perception of their own learning. May also be the opinions or thoughts of others about student knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, and perceptions. Examples of indirect measures include student surveys about instruction; focus groups; alumni surveys; employer

surveys (modified from Community College of Aurora, n. d., California Polytechnic State University, n. d., & Bridgewater State College, n. d.0). For comparison, see [Direct Assessment](#).

**Indirect Measure of Learning Outcome**

Students or others report their perception of how well a given learning outcome has been achieved (California Polytechnic State University, n. d.).

**Institutional Assessment**

Assessment to determine the extent to which a college or university is achieving its mission. (For comparison, see Course-level Assessment and [Program Assessment](#).)

**Institutional Effectiveness**

A continuous set of the processes of planning, assessment and review aimed at ongoing improvement (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2004).

**Item**

An individual question or exercise in a test.

J

K

L

M

**Map**

A chart that summarizes the major elements of a system and shows the relationships between the parts of a system.

**Measurement**

The process of gathering information, in assessment of student learning, about student characteristics. Educators use a wide variety of methods such as paper and pencil tests, performance assessments, direct observation, and personal communications with students. See Evaluation.

**Methods of Assessment**

Tests and procedures used to measure student performance in meeting the standards for a learning outcome. These assessments must relate to a learning outcome, identify a particular kind of evidence to be evaluated, define exercises that elicit that evidence and describe systematic scoring procedures. Methods of assessment are classified as either forced choice/short answer or complex generated (performance-based) response.

**Mission Statement**

Define the purpose or broader goal for being in existence (Wikipedia, n. d.).

## N

**Non-Discrimination** Evidence that differences of race or ethnicity, gender, or disability do not bias results of assessment instruments or procedures.

**Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE)** Standard scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of approximately 21. The use of an NCE is an attempt to make different assessments comparable.

## O

**Objective** Precise statement that specifies the performance or behavior a student is to demonstrate relative to a knowledge or skill. Objectives typically relate to lessons or units, not "big ideas" such as described by an outcome.

**Observer Effect** The degree to which, the presence of an observer influences the outcome (California Polytechnic State University, n. d.).

**Outcome** An end result; a consequence (Lexico Publishing Group, n. d.). See Administrative Outcome and/or Student Learning Outcome.

**Overall Performance Level** A combination of the cut-scores or proficiency levels of the various assessments used to determine whether students do not meet, meet, or exceed the standard set for a whole learning outcome. Different assessments may be given greater weight when determining an overall performance level. See Weighting.

## P

**Performance Based Assessments** A methodology requiring reasoning about recurring issues, problems and concepts that apply in both academic and practical situations. Students actively engage in generating complex responses requiring integration of knowledge and strategies, not just use of isolated facts and skills. See Complex Generated Response.

**Pilot** A large-scale administration of an assessment, usually with several classes of students if not all students in a program. The purpose of the pilot is to detect any flaws in the assessment before the assessment is considered "done" and is fully implemented. See Field Test for contrast.

<b>Portfolio</b>	A purposeful collection of artifacts that demonstrate a student’s development or achievement. Using portfolios as an improvement assessment tool requires the ability to score both individual works and the whole portfolio against a standard for each modified form (Sweeny, 1994 & Bridgewater State College, n. d.).
<b>Primary Functions</b>	See Core Functions.
<b>Proficiency Level</b>	The equivalent of a cut score (on a forced-choice assessment) but for a performance/complex assessment. The proficiency level for a performance assessment is set by determining the required performance criteria (such as the required level on a rubric) for a specific grade level. Such a proficiency level could be achievement of all the criteria required for a scoring level, or it could be a set number of points achieved by combining scores for each feature on the rubric.
<b>Program Assessment</b>	Assessment to determine the extent to which students in a departmental program can demonstrate the learning outcomes for the program. For comparison, see Course-level Assessment and <a href="#">Institutional Assessment</a> .
<b>Program Review</b>	The process of evaluating the quality and effectiveness of a program (University of Texas at Arlington, 1998).
<b>Prompt</b>	In a narrow sense, a prompt is a statement to which a student responds in an assessment, often a reading passage, picture, chart or other form of information. In the fullest sense, a prompt is the directions that ask the student to undertake a task. Prompts should include the context of the situation, the problem to be solved, the role the student takes, and the audience for the product or performance.
<b>Q</b>	
<b>R</b>	
<b>Rationale</b>	Written statements providing the reasons for steps taken and choices made.
	<b>Raw Score</b>

The number of items that are answered correctly out of the total possible.

**Reliability**

Consistency or stability of assessment results. Of particular importance for performance assessment is inter-rater reliability. It is the estimate of the consistency of the ratings assigned by two or more raters because they agree on the criteria used to evaluate the performance.

**Representativeness**

A factor of performance tasks and of scoring criteria ensuring that the task and criteria focus on the significant elements, concepts and strategies in the outcome(s) assessed.

**Rubric**

A set of criteria specifying the characteristics of a learning outcome and the levels of achievement in each characteristic (Bridgewater State College, n. d.).

**S**

**Score**

The result obtained by a student on an assessment, expressed as a number. Each score is recorded as a positive number, with a larger numerical value implying a better result.

**Scoring Rubric**

A set of related scoring scales used for judging student work and awarding points to reflect the evaluation of the work.

**Scoring Scale**

Assessment criteria formatted as levels of quality ranging from poorest to best, used to judge student work on a single feature such as "clarity of main idea." Scales may combine several traits within a feature. Scoring levels on the scale are assigned points, each level specifying the characteristics of the quality of content or skills needed to attain the points.

**Self-Assessment**

Students reflect about their own abilities and performance, related to specified content and skills and related to their effectiveness as learners, using specific performance criteria, assessment standards, and personal goal setting. The intent is to teach students to monitor their own learning continuously.

<b>Self-Efficacy</b>	Students' judgment of their own capabilities for a specific learning outcome (Bridgewater State College, n. d.).
<b>Standard for Learning Outcomes</b>	The qualitative and quantitative assessment criteria by which it is decided if students have attained a specified level of performance related to an outcome. The parts of a standard include: a) the learning outcome, (b) the assessment tasks which will measure student learning relative to the learning outcome, (c) the cut-score or proficiency level required to "pass" the assessment and (d) the overall level of performance needed to combine assessments and indicate whether a student has mastered the whole outcome.
<b>Standardized, Norm-Referenced Test</b>	A form of assessment in which a student is compared to other students. Results have been normed against a specific population (usually nationally). Standardization (uniformity) is obtained by administering the test to a given population under controlled conditions and then calculating means, standard deviations, standardized scores, and percentiles. Equivalent scores are then produced for comparisons of an individual score to the norm group's performance.
<b>Standard Score</b>	A score that is expressed as a deviation from a population mean.
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	The process of developing strategies to reach a defined objective (Wikipedia, n. d.).
<b>Student Competency</b>	Statement of broad knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors that program majors should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the degree program.
<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>	Operational statements of demonstrable knowledge or skill that students will possess upon completion of a program or course. For UEP purposes, these statements may be the student program competencies or more specific statements derived from the student program competencies.
<b>Sufficiency</b>	A judgment on whether an assessment task is comprehensive enough to produce a sample of student work broad enough in depth relative to a body of knowledge or skill to be considered an adequate measure of whether the student has attained the knowledge or achieved the skill. For forced choice assessments, the number of items used to decide this is the crucial issue for sufficiency.

<b>Summative Assessment</b>	The assessment of student achievement at the endpoint of their education or at the end of a course. The focus of summative assessment is on the documentation of student achievement by the end of a course or program. It does not reveal the pathway of development to achieve that endpoint, but rather provides an evaluative summary (Bridgewater State College, n. d.). For comparison, see <a href="#">Formative Assessment</a> .
<b>T</b>	
<b>Task</b>	A goal-directed assessment activity or project, which prescribes that the student uses their background knowledge and skill in a somewhat long-term process to solve complex problems or answer a multi-faceted question.
<b>Triangulation</b>	Involves the collection of data via multiple methods in order to determine if the results show a consistent outcome (California Polytechnic State University, n. d.).
<b>U</b>	
<b>Utility</b>	A characteristic of scoring criteria that ensures the criteria are diagnostic and can communicate information about performance quality with clear implications for improvement.
<b>V</b>	
<b>Validity</b>	The degree to which an assessment measures (a) what is intended, as opposed to (b) what is not intended, or (c) what is unsystematic or unstable, thus producing accurate, meaningful, and useful measures of the skills and knowledge it was designed to assess. The primary issue is content validity, which is whether an assessment and instructional program align (match) (Bridgewater State College, n. d. & Sweeny, 1994).
<b>Validation</b>	The process of developing, field testing, refining, piloting and refining assessment items, tasks, scoring tools, directions, etc. to increase validity, reliability, fairness and instructional usefulness.

## **W**

### **Weighting**

A method to combine the results of two or more assessments used in calculating the percent who meet the standard for a learning outcome. If some assessments are deemed more important due to the amount of time for completion or the number of items included in the assessment, etc. the cut-scores on those assessments may be given greater consideration or weight in determining the overall performance level.

## **X**

## **Y**

## **Z**

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