

Arkansas State University

Office of Assessment

Student-Learning
Assessment Manual

2021-2022

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Arkansas State University Student-Learning Assessment Manual 2021-22

Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to articulate Arkansas State University's (A-State) processes for executing student-learning assessment to its various constituencies. The overall intent of student-learning assessment at A-State is continuous improvement of the curriculum and student-learning opportunities. A process of assessment is essential to continuous improvement, and therefore commitment to assessment must be deeply embedded in our core values. Assessment applies not only to student learning and educational outcomes, but to our institution's approach to improvement of institutional effectiveness (See Appendix A for relevant HLC standards).

Our commitment to assessing student learning proceeds from the institution's mission and learning outcomes, involves faculty and co-curricular leaders at all points in the process, and analyzes the assessment results. Faculty and co-curricular leaders are subject-matter experts and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment. Furthermore, the assessment results are used to improve A-State's academic programs, co-curricular learning opportunities, ancillary services, and/or other operations on the basis of those analyses. A-State is committed to improvement review of our academic programs and co-curricular learning opportunities, and seeks external judgment, advice, and/or benchmarks in our assessments. This manual provides the minimum guidelines for student-learning assessment by outlining the following: (1) A-State's assessment infrastructure; (2) processes for conducting student-learning assessment; (3) procedures for documenting student-learning assessment; and (4) University transparency. Various supporting appendices are also included.

A-State's Infrastructure for Student-Learning Assessment

The organizational committee structure that guides student-learning assessment at A-State consists of four committees: (1) A-State Assessment Committee; (2) General Education Committee; (3) Program Assessment Committee; and (4) Co-Curricular Assessment Committee. The purpose statements, duties, and membership are outlined as follows.

A-State Assessment Committee

The A-State Assessment Committee (AAC) at A-State is charged with the primary responsibility of planning and directing assessment at the university level and for the university learning outcomes. The AAC recognizes that faculty and co-curricular leaders are subject-matter experts and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment at A-State.

The AAC was derived from the Learning Outcomes Advisory Council (LOAC) in spring 2016 and implemented in fall 2016 (see minutes from the March 2 and April 13, 2016 meetings at <http://www.astate.edu/a/assessment/archive/>).

The duties of the AAC are as follows:

- Reviewing the university learning outcomes and recommending revisions when needed
- Developing an assessment process for the university learning outcomes
- Recommending the development, acquisition, and use of student self-reported evaluations and other types of surveys/questionnaires as institutional assessment instruments
- Providing leadership for the development and implementation of campus-wide institutional assessment procedures
- Establishing and monitoring the University's annual assessment calendar
- Evaluating the institutional assessment procedures and making recommendations to the University's executive leadership (Chancellor, Provost, VC Student Affairs, VC Finance, etc.)
- Recommending the types of information that can be routinely communicated campus-wide and to the external constituencies/stakeholders and the appropriate channels for communicating this information
- Coordinating all assessment committees on campus—the Program-level Assessment Committee, General Education Committee, and Co-Curricular Assessment Committee
- Utilizing the A-State shared governance oversight process when appropriate for issues related to campus-wide assessment issues and/or procedures

Membership consists of the following individuals and representatives:

- Elected representative/s from the Program Assessment Committee
- Elected representative/s from the Co-Curricular Assessment Committee
- Elected representative General Education Committee
- Elected representative Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
- Elected representative Graduate Council
- Undergraduate student who is appointed from Student Government Association
- Graduate student who is appointed from the Graduate Student Council
- Director of Assessment and the Assessment Office team
- Representative from Academic Affairs

General Education Committee

The purpose of the General Education Committee (GEC) is to provide guidance and direction to the VCAAR to improve the quality and relevance of the University's general education curriculum. The GEC considers proposals for modification of the general education curriculum and reviews each course in the general education program once every four years to determine its acceptability as a general education course. The GEC will review assessment data on the general education program provided by the Assessment Office and make recommendations to the

VCAAR. The GEC acknowledges that faculty are subject-matter experts and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment of A-State's general education curriculum.

Membership on the GEC consists of one faculty representative from each of these Colleges: Agriculture, Business, Communications, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, Honors, Nursing and Health Professions, and University College. The College of Liberal Arts and Communication will be represented by three faculty representatives (from different departments) and the College of Sciences and Mathematics will be represented by two faculty representatives (from different departments). The Independent Department of Military Science will have one nonvoting, ex-officio faculty representative. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Services and Director of Assessment Services will serve as ex-officio, nonvoting members. [The GEC recognizes its current membership reflects the historical College organizational structure and not the College organizational structure implemented in fall 2016. The GEC also recognizes there are on-going discussions about the current College organizational structure. The GEC looks forward to clarifying its membership in the near future once the campus structure is solidified.]

The chair, who must be tenured, will serve a three-year term and may not be reappointed to a consecutive three-year term. Members of the committee will be tenured faculty with a minimum of three-years of continuous service prior to serving on the committee. Each college will be responsible for determining the selection of its representative(s).

In those cases where there is an issue affecting a broad area of the general education core that is not represented by the composition of the current committee, a representative from the area not represented must be invited to attend the meeting and be afforded the opportunity to participate in the discussions before action is taken.

The committee reports to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research and is considered a shared governance committee (<http://www.astate.edu/a/shared-governance/shared-governance-committees/general-education-committee-/index.dot>).

Program Assessment Committee

The Program-Assessment Committee (PAC) at Arkansas State University is charged with the primary responsibility of planning, advising, and directing program-level assessment. The PAC acknowledges that faculty are subject-matter experts and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment of each program offered at A-State.

The PAC was derived from the LOAC in spring 2016 and implemented in fall 2016 (see minutes from the March 2 and April 13, 2016 meetings at <http://www.astate.edu/a/assessment/archive/>). The duties of the PAC are as follows:

- Review submitted assessment plans and reports and recommend revisions as appropriate
- Verify that assessment results have been used for programmatic improvements (close the loop)
- Facilitate Professor-of-the-Month awards

- Facilitate the Assessment Grant
- Facilitate Learn@Astate
- Discuss assessment processes and make recommendations that would improve student-learning assessment
- Communicate with AAC, Assessment Office, and Academic Affairs on all matters related to program-level assessment

Membership is created from recommendations from deans, directors, and/or vice chancellors. The PAC membership is comprised of one or more representatives from all Colleges and the Honors College combined with all personnel from the Assessment Office and two representatives from the Academic Affairs Office.

Co-Curricular Assessment Committee

The Co-Curricular Assessment Committee (CCAC) at Arkansas State University (A-State) is charged with the primary responsibility of planning and directing the assessment of co-curricular units. The CCAC acknowledges that co-curricular leaders are experts in their field(s) and their input is respected and critical for thorough and effective student-learning assessment of the co-curricular units at A-State.

The CCAC was derived from the LOAC in spring 2016 and implemented in fall 2016 ((see minutes from the March 2 and April 13, 2016 meetings at <http://www.astate.edu/a/assessment/archive/>). The duties of the CCAC are as follows:

- Defining co-curricular assessment
- Developing assessment planning processes that are meaningful for personnel in all co-curricular areas
- Providing leadership by identifying co-curricular outcomes and directing assessment efforts within the co-curricular areas
- Reviewing submitted assessment plans and reports and recommend revisions on an ongoing basis

Membership is based on recommendations from directors and/or vice chancellors. The CCAC membership is comprised of multiple representatives from the Division of Student Affairs, Honors College, Library, Learning Commons, and Wilson Advising, combined with all personnel from the Assessment Office and one representative from the Academic Affairs Office.

Assessment Fellows

Quantitative Survey Analysis Assessment Fellow

Annual Goals:

- Serve as advisor to the A-State Assessment Committee (AAC) and Assessment Office
- Collaborate with AAC and Assessment Office to develop survey instruments
- Present quantitative survey analyses to AAC and other groups as needed
- Collaborate with AAC and Assessment Office to develop an institutional assessment plan and report

- Provide guidance on ethical use of survey results

Specific Objectives:

- Collaborate with Assessment Office personnel to execute the *Return to Learn, Leaving the Den*, and alumni surveys through Qualtrics
- Provide statistical analysis of survey results for each iteration of the survey and for academic year
- Collaborate with Assessment Office on developing an ethical and effective communication plan for the *Return to Learn, Leaving the Den*, and HEDS Alumni Survey (and possibly an in-house alumni survey) results

Qualitative Survey Analysis Assessment Fellow

Annual Goals:

- Serve as advisor to the A-State Assessment Committee (AAC) and Assessment Office
- Collaborate with AAC and Assessment Office to develop survey instruments
- Present qualitative survey analyses of open-ended questions to AAC and other groups as needed
- Collaborate with AAC and Assessment Office to develop an institutional assessment plan and report
- Provide guidance on ethical use of survey results

Specific Objectives:

- Collaborate with Assessment Office personnel to execute the *Return to Learn, Leaving the Den*, and alumni surveys through Qualtrics
- Provide statistical and/or qualitative analysis of survey results for each iteration of the survey and for academic year
- Collaborate with Assessment Office on developing an ethical and effective communication plan for the *Return to Learn, Leaving the Den*, and HEDS Alumni Survey (and possibly an in-house alumni survey) results

Co-Curricular Retention Analyses Assessment Fellow

Annual Goals:

- Serve as advisor to the Co-Curricular Assessment Committee (CCAC) and Assessment Office
- Collaborate with CCAC and Assessment Office to develop statistical models for co-curricular participation effect on retention
- Present quantitative survey analyses to CCAC and other groups as needed
- Collaborate with CCAC and Assessment Office to develop an institutional assessment plan and report
- Provide guidance on ethical and efficacy use of statistical model results

Specific Objectives:

- Collaborate with Assessment Office personnel to build new statistical retention models
- Provide statistical analysis of results for each iteration where the model is applied

- Collaborate with Assessment Office on developing an ethical and effective communication plan for accreditation reports and co-curricular unit personnel

Processes for Conducting Student-Learning Assessment

The process for conducting student-learning assessment includes developing outcomes, assessment plans, annual assessment reports, timelines, and curriculum or activity maps. Best practices for conducting assessment is referenced in Appendix D of this manual and on the Assessment Office's website. The following section outlines the process for the University-level Learning Outcomes (ULOs), General Education Core, programs, and co-curricular learning opportunities.

University-level Learning Outcomes

The A-State University Learning Outcomes (ULOs) were revised by the AAC and presented to the campus through the shared governance process with a formal proposal (17SP-03) in Spring 2017 (<https://www.astate.edu/a/shared-governance/>). Dr. Whitlock approved the proposal in May 2017 and the revised ULOs are as follows:

Short Title	University Learning Outcome
Creative and Critical Thinking	Students will demonstrate the creative and critical thinking skills needed to evaluate relevant information and/or ideas, formulate innovative strategies, and solve problems.
Communication	Students will communicate effectively in social, academic, and professional contexts using a variety of means, including written, oral, numeric/quantitative, graphic, and/or visual modes as appropriate to topic, audience, and discipline.
Social and Civic Responsibility	Students will understand the impact and consequences of their actions upon themselves and others, as well as their roles as citizens of a free democratic society.
Diversity and Globalization	Students will be able to live and work effectively with others as engaged members of a diverse and global society.

Furthermore, the approved shared governance proposal gave the AAC the authority to determine the assessment process associated with the ULOs. That process will be cemented in Fall 2017 but begins with aligning the program-level learning outcomes to create a meta-descriptive analysis of how and where the campus is supporting the ULOs. Additionally, an improved senior exit survey will be constructed and administered in May 2018.

General Education Core Student-Learning Outcomes

The GEC established the quadrennial review process in 2012. At that time the GEC decided that each general education course's faculty was required to make a formal longitudinal assessment report to the GEC. Later in spring 2016 and at the beginning of the second quadrennial review, the GEC requested assessment plans for each course and developed a formal assessment plan and assessment report form. These forms can be found at the GEC's webpage at <http://www.astate.edu/a/shared-governance/shared-governance-committees/general-education-committee-/index.dot>

Furthermore, the GEC refined its assessment process by implementing a mid-quadrennial correction in fall 2017. All courses will do the following:

- Post annually collected assessment data for all general education courses in Taskstream
- Every two years departments will review the past two year's data and post to Taskstream their action plan for the next two years
- The mid-quadrennial review correction will be monitored for compliance by the Assessment Office
- At the fourth year departments will submit their formal, longitudinal quadrennial reports to the GEC

The following table outlines the formal reporting years associated with each general education student-learning outcome and the specific deadline for the formal reports.

Review Year	General Education Goal	General Education Learning Outcomes	Courses	Formal QR II Report Deadline
Formal GEC Report Due Fall 2020 Mid-quadrennial Correction Fall 2022	Students should be able to communicate effectively and correctly, in writing and in speech, for a variety of purposes, using appropriate forms of discourse, organizational strategies, and vocabulary.	Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Construct and deliver a well-organized, logical, and informative oral or written presentation, accurately documented, that demonstrates proficiency in standard American English. 	ENG 1003, Composition I ENG 1013, Composition II COMS 1203, Oral Communication	October 5, 2020
Formal GEC Report Due Fall 2020 Mid-quadrennial Correction Fall 2022	Students should be able to use, understand, and apply basic mathematical skills in practical applications.	Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interpret and analyze quantitative/mathematical information (such as, formulas, graphs, and tables) ○ Apply mathematical methods to solve problems 	MATH 10230 College Algebra MATH 1043, Quantitative Reasoning	October 5, 2020
Formal GEC Report Due Fall 2021 Mid-quadrennial Correction Fall 2023	Students should develop an appreciation for the arts and humanities. They should be aware of the role of art and literature in human civilization and contemporary culture.	Students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recognize works of literature or fine arts and place them in their historical, cultural, and social contexts ○ Interpret works of fine arts or literature 	ART 2503, Fine Arts Visual MUS 2503, Fine Arts Musical THEA 2503, Fine Arts Theatre ENG 2003, Introduction to World Literature I ENG 1013, Introduction to World Literature II	October 4, 2021

Review Year	General Education Goal	General Education Learning Outcomes	Courses	Formal QR II Report Deadline
			PHIL 1103, Introduction to Philosophy	
<p>Formal GEC Report Due Fall 2022</p> <p>Mid-quadrennial Correction Fall 2024</p>	<p>Students should be aware of the diverse systems developed by humans to manage and structure our relationships with one another. Students should prepare for the full range of public and private roles they are expected to fulfill as citizens, decision-makers, and human beings in a democratic America and in a global society.</p>	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explain the processes and effects of individual and group behavior ○ Analyze events in terms of the concepts and relational propositions generated by the social science tradition 	<p>HIST 2763, US History to 1876</p> <p>HIST 2773, US History since 1876</p> <p>POSC 2103, Introduction to US Government</p> <p>POSC 1003, Introduction to Politics</p> <p>PSY 2013, Introduction to Psychology</p> <p>SOC 2213, Introduction to Sociology</p> <p>CMAC 1003, Mass Communication in Modern Society</p> <p>ANTH 2233, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology</p> <p>ECON 2313, Principles of Macroeconomics</p> <p>ECON 2333, Economic Issues & Concepts</p> <p>GEOG 2613, Introduction to Geography</p> <p>HIST 1013, World Civilization to 1660</p> <p>HIST 1023, World Civilization since 1660</p>	<p>October 3, 2022</p>
<p>Formal GEC Report Due Fall 2023</p> <p>Mid-quadrennial Correction Fall 2025</p>	<p>Students should understand how science is conducted and the criteria for scientific evidence so that they will be able to make informed decisions about the health and well-being of their communities and the natural</p>	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apply foundational knowledge of the various sciences to make informed decisions. 	<p>BIOL 1003, 1001, Biological Science and Laboratory</p> <p>BIOL 1033, 1001, Biology of Sex and Laboratory</p> <p>BIOL 1063, 1001, People and the Environment</p> <p>BIOL 1503, 1501, Biology of Plants</p>	<p>October 2, 2023</p>

Review Year	General Education Goal	General Education Learning Outcomes	Courses	Formal QR II Report Deadline
	environment. They should be aware of the ethical and political issues raised by science.		BIO 2013, 2011, Biology of the Cell and Laboratory BIO 2103, 2101, Microbiology for Nursing & Allied Health & Laboratory BIO 2203, 2201, Human Anatomy and Physiology I and Laboratory CHEM 1013, 1011 General Chemistry and Laboratory CHEM 1043, 1041, Fundamental Concepts of Chemistry and Laboratory GEOL 1003, 1001, Environmental Geology and Laboratory PHSC 1014, Energy and the Environment PHSC 1203, 1201, Physical Science and Laboratory PHYS 1103, 1101, Introduction to Space Science/Laboratory PHYS 2034, University Physics I PHYS 2054, General Physics I	

Programs

Program-level assessment is organized and led by faculty within the respective programs (See Appendix A for *Assumed Practices*). Faculty accept responsibility for developing and executing a four-year or less assessment plan that assesses all outcomes at least one time throughout a four-year period. Assessment processes for programs (associate, bachelor, master, and doctorate) include the following:

1. Articulated program-level student-learning outcomes or specialized accreditation standards for student learning

2. An assessment plan that includes program-level student learning outcomes, assessment measures, venue for the assessment measures/data collection, timeline, and responsible parties.
3. Annually submitted assessment reports that include the program-level student learning outcome/s, assessment measures, data (with appropriate explanation of collection methodology), data analysis and interpretation, and recommendations and plans for action.
4. Annual review of previous year's plans for action and an articulated status of those plans.
5. A current curriculum map aligning the program-level student learning outcomes to the program's curriculum.
6. Faculty from each program will evaluate the results of that year's assessment of students and/or alumni to determine if the program's learning outcomes have been fulfilled. The faculty will communicate their findings and conclusions to the unit/program's chair and/or dean, and the Assessment Office, including recommendations (if any) concerning changes in the curriculum, pedagogy, and/or other aspects of the program.
7. At the beginning of the fifth year (approximately 2019-20), program leaders will reaffirm or revise the program-level learning outcomes and/or assessment plans.

Co-Curricular Learning Opportunities

Assessment processes for co-curricular learning opportunities include the following:

1. Using the relevant and appropriate university learning outcomes as the intended outcome for all co-curricular learning opportunities.
2. An assessment plan that articulates the assessment measures, venue for the assessment measures/data collection, timeline, and responsible parties.
3. Annually submitted assessment reports that include the relevant and appropriate university learning outcome/s, assessment measures, data (with appropriate explanation of collection methodology), data analysis and interpretation, and recommendations and plans for action.
4. Annual review of previous year's plans for action and an articulated status of those plans.
5. A current learning opportunity map (or activity map) that aligns activities to the relevant and appropriate university learning outcomes
6. A committee of co-curricular learning professionals who evaluates the results of that year's assessment of students and/or alumni. The committee will communicate its findings and conclusions to the unit/program's professionals, including recommendations (if any) concerning changes in the execution, timing, and/or other aspects of the learning opportunity.
7. At the beginning of the fifth year (approximately 2020-21), co-curricular learning leaders will reaffirm or revise the program-level learning outcomes and/or assessment plans.

Documentation of Student-Learning Assessment

Documentation of student-learning assessment is very important for proving to our various constituencies that we are embracing the values and benefits of continuous improvement of the curriculum and student-learning opportunities. Documentation is also important for continuity of the assessment process in each program and learning opportunity. A-State has purchased

Taskstream, which is an assessment management system. Taskstream allows program leaders (Deans, Department Chairs, and designated assessment leaders) to record their assessment progress and archive a variety of supporting evidence, such as rubrics, exams, papers, presentations, meeting minutes, etc. into one central location that can be accessed by multiple people, such as Deans, Chairs, designated assessment leaders, assessment committees, and/or accreditors, both regional and specialized. The following are necessary actions for documenting the University's assessment efforts and the deadlines for such actions to occur (See Appendix B for Taskstream Annual Reporting Tips):

1. All assessment plans for all programs and the general education core were entered into Taskstream during summer 2016 and annual reporting must be submitting by using the "Assessment Findings, Action Plans, and Status Reports" sections within Taskstream moving forward. (Please see Appendix B and the Glossary for technical definitions)
2. "Assessment Findings" (aka assessment data) must be submitted by no later than **June 15** annually for all programs, general education core, and co-curricular learning opportunities. (Please see Appendix B and the Glossary for technical definitions)
3. "Action Plans" must be submitted by no later than **October 15** annually for all programs, general education core, and co-curricular learning opportunities. (Please see Appendix B and the Glossary for technical definitions)
4. "Status Reports" must be submitted by no later than **October 15** of the year after the "Action Plan" was created for all programs, general education core, and co-curricular learning opportunities. (Please see Appendix B and the Glossary for technical definitions)
5. Curriculum maps for programs and activity maps for co-curricular learning must be reviewed annually for accuracy no later than **October 15**.

Some programs will need an exception to the central assessment reporting calendar outlined here. To date, the following programs have requested alternative deadlines:

Program	Non-Standard Deadline
All Social Work programs	Data due August 1; action plans and status reports due October 15
BA Sociology and Criminology programs	Data due August 1; action plans and status reports due October 15
AAS Occupational Therapist Assistant	All data, analysis, conclusions, and action plans due October 15
AAS Physical Therapist Assistant	All data, analysis, conclusions, and action plans due October 15
BS Radiologic Sciences	All data, analysis, conclusions, and action plans due October 15
All AASN, BSN, MSN and DNP Nursing programs	All data, analysis, conclusions, and action plans due October 15
All Teacher Education programs for initial licensure	All data, analysis, conclusions, and action plans due June 15 with the exception of Certification Exam Reports, due October 15
All Education Leadership programs for advanced licensure	All data, analysis, conclusions, and action plans due June 15 with the exception of Certification Exam Reports, due October 15
MS Sport Administration	All data, analysis, conclusions, and action plans due October 15

If any program needs a non-standard reporting deadline, please call the Assessment Office at extension 2989 to be added to the list.

Appendix B includes a list of helpful annual reporting tips for all users of Taskstream. The Assessment Office is available Monday through Friday 8 to 5 to assist anyone with Taskstream.

Additionally, any user may call the Taskstream help desk at 1-800-311-5656 or email at help@taskstream.com.

University Transparency

University transparency includes documenting student learning assessment efforts, as previously noted in the section immediately above, but also articulating where courses and programs are interconnected and publishing the learning outcomes for our various constituencies. This section will provide guidance for syllabi, which are the primary means of showing students these interconnections between courses and programs, and articulation of learning outcomes on the A-State website.

Syllabi

According to the *A-State Faculty Handbook* (p. 62, III.b.9), syllabi are to be submitted to students in a timely manner and kept on file for review by accreditors. The specific language is as follows:

Faculty members are required to prepare and provide to their department or college as appropriate a syllabus of each course taught. These syllabi will be kept on file for at least seven years and be available to accreditation examining teams. A current course syllabus must be distributed to each enrolled student during the first week of a regular term and no later than the second day of a summer term.

Syllabi serve as documentary evidence for our accreditors to prove a variety of items, such as the relationship between course and program outcomes and credit-hour equivalencies. For the purposes of student-learning assessment transparency, syllabi should include the following:

- Course description from the most recent *Bulletin*
- Program-level outcomes that are supported by the course; put another way, syllabi should match the most current version of the curriculum map on file with the Assessment Office
- Course-level outcomes

The Office of Academic Affairs recommends several other important items be included on each syllabus. Those items are listed in Appendix C.

Website

The Assessment Office maintains a webpage called “student-learning outcomes” to showcase the university learning outcomes, general education outcomes, and program outcomes. This page can be found at <http://www.astate.edu/a/assessment/student-learning-outcomes/>

Appendix A: Relevant HLC Guiding Values, Assumed Practices, and Criteria for Accreditation for Student-Learning Assessment

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), A-State's regional accreditor, states its position on student-learning assessment in its *Guiding Values*¹, *Assumed Practices*², and *Criteria for Accreditation*³. This manual is based on the relevant sections of HLC's *Guiding Values*, *Assumed Practices*, and *Criteria for Accreditation*. These relevant sections are as follows:

Guiding Value Number 4: A Culture of Continuous Improvement

The alternative to continuous improvement is stagnation. Minimum standards are necessary but far from sufficient to achieve acceptable quality in higher education, and the strongest institutions will stay strong through ongoing dedication to improvement. HLC includes improvement as one of two major strands in all its pathways, the other being assurance that member institutions meet the Criteria and the Federal Requirements.

A process of assessment is essential to continuous improvement, and therefore a commitment to assessment should be deeply embedded in an institution's activities. Assessment applies not only to student learning and educational outcomes but to an institution's approach to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

For student learning, a commitment to assessment would mean assessment at the program level that proceeds from clear goals, involves faculty at all points in the process, and analyzes the assessment results; it would also mean that the institution improves its programs or ancillary services and other operations on the bases of those analyses. Institutions committed to improvement review their programs regularly and seek external evaluations, advice or benchmarks in their assessments. Because in recent years the issues of persistence and completion have become central to public concern about higher education, the current Criteria direct attention to them as possible indicators of quality and foci for improvement, without prescribing either the measures or outcomes.

Innovation is an aspect of improvement and essential in a time of rapid change and challenge; through its Criteria and processes HLC seeks to support innovation for improvement in all facets of institutional practice.

Guiding Value Number 5: Evidence-based Institutional Learning and Self-Presentation

Assessment and the processes an institution learns from should be well grounded in evidence. Statements of belief and intention have important roles in an institution's presentation of itself, but for the quality assurance function of accreditation, evidence is critical. Institutions should be

¹ <https://www.hlcommission.org/Criteria-Eligibility-and-Candidacy/guiding-values.html>

² <http://policy.hlcommission.org/Policies/assumed-practices.html>

³ <https://www.hlcommission.org/Criteria-Eligibility-and-Candidacy/criteria-and-core-components.html>

able to select evidence based on their particular purposes and circumstances. At the same time, many of the Assumed Practices within the Criteria require certain specified evidence.

Assumed Practices: Relevant Excerpts

B. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

1. Programs, Courses, and Credits:

e. Courses that carry academic credit toward college-level credentials have content and rigor appropriate to higher education.

2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications

c. Faculty participate substantially in:

- a. oversight of the curriculum—its development and implementation, academic substance, currency, and relevance for internal and external constituencies;
- b. assurance of consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in the expectations of student performance;
- c. establishment of the academic qualifications for instructional personnel;
- d. analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion.

C. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

5. Instructors communicate course requirements to students in writing and in timely manner.

6. Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.

D. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

4. The institution maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information.

Criteria for Accreditation Relevant Excerpts

Criterion Three. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A. The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance

delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

3.B. The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Criterion Four. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A. The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

4.B. The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Criterion Five. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.

Appendix B: Annual Taskstream Reporting Tips

Standing Requirements—required and in most cases, already in place. These items should be reviewed annually to ensure accuracy (mission, outcomes, curriculum map).

Assessment Plan

All items are required annually because this information defines the process of assessment for each outcome.

Field (Outcomes and Measures)	Required or Optional	Recommended Attachments
1. Outcomes— needed because they define WHAT is being assessed	Required	Please upload the actual assessment measure/instrument, i.e. test, test questions, rubrics, assignment sheet, survey, focus group questionnaire, etc.
2. Measure(s)—needed because they define HOW the outcome will be assessed	Required	
3. Details/Description—needed to determine the appropriateness of the measure for the outcome. A description of the measure and the course/venue where it will be assessed should be included here	Required	
4. Benchmark—needed because it defines the target for success	Required	
5. Implementation Plan (timeline)— needed because it defines the schedule for assessing each outcome	Required	
6. Key/Responsible Personnel—needed so we know with whom we should communicate when/if we have questions	Required	

Assessment Findings

All assessment findings (data) are required annually to ensure accountability, continuity, and transparency within departments/disciplines.

Field (Findings per Measure)	Required or Optional	Recommended Attachments
1. Summary of Findings—needed so we know what the data say and the analysis derived from it	Required	Substantiating Evidence-Please upload raw data, a copy of the measure/instrument, narrative explanations related to data, and any other pertinent documentation that helps clarify the data
2. Recommendations—optional as this should be covered in the action plan	Optional	
3. Sampling Methodology— optional... may be used to discuss sampling techniques (if applicable) such as convenience sampling, random sampling, stratified sampling, etc.	Optional	

4. Action Plan (not met, met, exceeded)–needed to determine if programs are meeting their assessment goals	Required	
5. Overall Recommendations and Overall Reflection– Repetitive, but could be used to report big picture, overall recommendations to process, etc.	Optional	

Action Plan

Action plans are required annually to ensure that departments/disciplines are using the data to inform program improvements and “closing the loop” by following through on the action plan and determining what impact the action plan had on student learning within the program.

Field (Actions)	Required or Optional	Recommended Attachments
1. Action Item Title– needed as it provides an abbreviated description of the action plan, e.g., In class activities, Curriculum changes, Changes in Assessment Process, etc.	Required	Please upload meeting minutes, and/or any other documentation that shows that the faculty met, shared/discussed assessment information, and made decisions as a group about what the action plan (future steps) for the program should be
2. Action Plan– needed because it describes what steps a program will take to increase student learning in the future, e.g. curriculum changes, pedagogical changes, changes in the assessment process, etc.	Required	
3. Implementation Plan– needed as it defines WHEN the action plan will be implemented	Required	
4. Key/Responsible Personnel– needed so we know with whom we should communicate when/if we have questions	Required	
5. Measures– optional, users could identify the measures that will be used to assess the impact of the action plan on student learning, e.g. a program may decide to utilize a writing tutor once a week to see how that affects student writing in the future. This field could be used to describe the measure(s) that will be used to determine if the use of the tutor impacted student learning	Optional	
6. Priority Level optional, the assumption is if it's an action plan, it's a high priority	Optional	

Status Report

This section must be updated annually in the following year after action plans are submitted. For example, Status Reports for 2015-16 should be updated the following year, 2016-17. This is necessary because this information fully describes the closing the loop process.

Field (Action Statuses)	Required or Optional	Recommended Attachments
1. Current Status– needed as it defines the <i>status</i> of the action plan-completed, in progress, etc.	Required	Please upload any documentation that details any actions that have been completed during the closing the loop process, e.g. meeting minutes related to the status of the action plans, narrative explanations about the status of the action plans
2. Additional Information– necessary as it DETAILS the status of the action plan, e.g. what has been done, what has yet to be done, issues that have arisen.	Required	
3. Next Steps– needed as it defines WHERE the program goes next with the information it has learned from carrying out the action plan OR if the action plan is being carried out in phases, the next steps in the plan should be articulated here	Required	
4. Status Summary and Summary of next steps– optional and seems repetitive but could be utilized for big picture, overall summaries and next steps	Optional	

Appendix C: Syllabi Recommendations from the Office of Academic Affairs

Each College dean and/or department chair is responsible for outlining syllabi content beyond what is requested by the Assessment Office. For the exact details required in your syllabus, please contact either your department chair or dean. The following list is a suggested list from Academic Affairs and is provided to all new faculty who complete faculty orientation.

- Course prefix/number/section and course name
- CRN
- Semester and Year
- Meeting time and place
- Instructor contact information
 - name
 - office number
 - email address
 - office phone
 - office hours
- Course description from the bulletin
- Course textbooks and readings
- Other required materials
- General Education Courses
 - General Education Goal
 - Student Learning Outcomes
- Upper Level/Graduate Courses
 - Program Goals
 - Student Learning Outcomes
- Course requirements and grading scale
- Course assignments and grading weight (Courses will include detailed assignment descriptions with specific grading requirements outlined).
- Course calendar
 - class discussion topics, activities, lectures
 - due dates for assignments and class activities
- Important university dates including final exam date
- University Policies
 - Plagiarism and cheating
 - Disabilities policy
 - Inclement weather policy
 - Class Attendance
- Instructor Policies and Procedures
 - Statement on full and late credit
 - Exam make-up policy
 - Cell phone and use of other electronic devices
 - Eating/beverages
 - Classroom behavior
- Thorough explanations are recommended:

- Exam format and expectations
- Quizzes--announced or unannounced
- Explain fully how final course grade will be computed

Appendix D: Best Practices in Assessment

Please visit the “how to” and “resources” pages within the Assessment Office’s website at www.astate.edu/a/assessment for a wide variety of helpful presentations, forms, and links to best practices for conducting student-learning assessment.

Glossary of Assessment Terms

Action Plan

A plan of action developed for the purpose of improving student learning based upon assessment data. Action plans are normally developed during the analysis of assessment data and directly related to the findings thereof.

Artifact

An object produced to indicate mastery of a skill or component of knowledge. It is often stored for future use.

Assessment

The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.

Assessment findings

Referred to in Taskstream as the qualitative and/or quantitative summation of the data collected from the assessment tool.

Assessment Management System (AMS)

Software designed to be a repository for assessment information. The AMS employed by A-State is Taskstream.

Assessment Plan

A plan for assessing learning in a program. It generally includes program-level student learning outcomes, measures, venue for the assessment measures, timeline, and responsible parties. At A-State an assessment plan generally spans a four-year cycle.

Assessment Tool

Instrument used to measure the characteristic or outcome of interest. It is the tool used to implement part of a larger assessment plan. Example: assessment tools for learning include presentations, capstone projects, examinations, research papers, portfolio entries, or student performances. Many assessment tools require a rubric to score any student work that is subjective in scoring.

Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives

Six levels arranged in order of increasing complexity (1=low, 6=high):

1. Knowledge: Recalling or remembering information without necessarily understanding it. Includes behaviors such as describing, listing, identifying, and labeling.
2. Comprehension: Understanding learned material and includes behaviors such as explaining, discussing, and interpreting.
3. Application: The ability to put ideas and concepts to work in solving problems. It includes behaviors such as demonstrating, showing, and making use of information.
4. Analysis: Breaking down information into its component parts to see interrelationships and ideas. Related behaviors include differentiating, comparing, and categorizing.

5. Synthesis: The ability to put parts together to form something original. It involves using creativity to compose or design something new.
6. Evaluation: Judging the value of evidence based on definite criteria. Behaviors related to evaluation include: concluding, criticizing, prioritizing, and recommending.

Classroom Assessment

The systematic and on-going study of what and how students are learning in a particular classroom; often designed for individual faculty who wish to improve their teaching of a specific course. Classroom assessment differs from tests and other forms of student assessment in that it is aimed at course improvement, rather than at assigning grades.

Closing the Loop

Closing the loop refers to the use of assessment results to improve student learning through collegial dialog informed by the results of learning outcome assessment. It is part of the continuous cycle of collecting assessment results, evaluating them, using the evaluations to identify actions that will improve student learning, implementing those actions, and then cycling back to collecting assessment results.

Curriculum Map

A matrix that connects goals or objectives to any courses within a particular discipline that allow for achievement of the goals/objectives; it is an auditing tool that helps identify potential gaps in the curriculum.

Descriptive Statistics

Summative methods to depict the data in succinct ways. Some examples of descriptive statistics are: mean, median, mode, average, range, standard deviation, variance etc.

Direct Assessment

Gathers evidence about student learning based on student performance that demonstrates the learning itself. Can be value added, related to standards, qualitative or quantitative, embedded or not, using local or external criteria. Examples are written assignments, classroom assignments, presentations, test results, projects, logs, portfolios, and direct observations.

Embedded Assessment

A means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the teaching-learning process. Often uses for assessment purposes classroom assignments that are evaluated to assign students a grade. Can assess individual student performance or aggregate the information to provide information about the course or program; can be formative or summative, quantitative or qualitative. Example: as part of a course, expecting each senior to complete a research paper that is graded for content and style, but is also assessed for advanced ability to locate and evaluate Web-based information (as part of a college-wide outcome to demonstrate information literacy).

Formative Assessment

The gathering of information about student learning— during the progression of a course or program and usually repeatedly— to improve the learning of those students. Example: reading the

first lab reports of a class to assess whether some or all students in the group need a lesson on how to make them succinct and informative.

Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

The body within the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools with the legal authority to confer accreditation upon higher education member institutions.

Indirect Assessment

Acquiring evidence about how students feel about learning and their learning environment rather than actual demonstrations of outcome achievement. Examples include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and reflective essays.

Inter-rater Reliability

Refers to statistical measurements that determine how similar the data collected by different raters are. A rater is someone who is scoring or measuring a performance, behavior, or skill in a human or animal.

Learning Outcomes

Operational statements describing specific student behaviors that evidence the acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities, attitudes or dispositions. Learning outcomes can be usefully thought of as behavioral criteria for determining whether students are achieving the educational objectives of a program, and, ultimately, whether overall program goals are being successfully met. Outcomes are sometimes treated as synonymous with objectives, though objectives are usually more general statements of what students are expected to achieve in an academic program.

Performance-Based Assessment

A type of student evaluation that requires a student to perform a task and be evaluated using indicators/criteria for performance (rather than traditional testing methods such as selecting an answer from an existing list).

Portfolio

Compilation of evidence demonstrating a level of development of essential competencies and the achievement of specific learning outcomes. The portfolio serves as a tool for both formative and summative assessment. A portfolio is a repository of professional and/or academic work.

Program

The term “program” refers to a degree or certificate offered by the college.

Program Review

A comprehensive review of the effectiveness of a program that is conducted on a regular cycle. Assessment of student learning is one important component of Program Review, but the focus of Program Review is broader, including review of enrollment data, job placement or transfer success, and facilities.

Rubric

Specific sets of criteria that clearly define for both student and teacher what a range of acceptable and unacceptable performance looks like. Criteria define descriptors of ability at each level of performance and assign values to each level. Levels referred to are proficiency levels, which describe a continuum from excellent to unacceptable product.

Status Report

Referred to in Taskstream; details the results of the action plan delineated by a program in the previous assessment cycle. The status report, to be completed annually, details how the action plan from the previous assessment cycle impacted the program/student learning.

Summative Assessment

The gathering of information at the conclusion of a course, program, or undergraduate career to improve learning or to meet accountability demands. When used for improvement, impacts the next cohort of students taking the course or program. Example: examining student final exams in a course to see if certain specific areas of the curriculum were understood less well than others.

Taskstream

The assessment management system (AMS) employed by A-State used as a repository for assessment information. Nomenclature that is unique to Taskstream includes the following:

Assessment Plan: Found in each Assessment Cycle and includes the outcomes assessed in the academic year and a full description of the measures used to determine the level of student learning. An assessment plan is required annually because this information defines the process of assessment for each outcome

Assessment Findings: Summarized assessment data collected for the year and addresses a particular outcome. All assessment findings (data) are required annually to ensure accountability, continuity, and transparency within departments/disciplines.

Action Plan: Action plans are required annually to ensure that departments/disciplines are using the data to inform program improvements and “closing the loop.”

Status Report: This section must be updated annually in the following year status reports are submitted. For example, Status Reports for 2015-16 should be updated the following year, 2016-17. This is necessary because this information fully describes the status of the closing the loop process.

Workspace: An electronic set of fields that creates a student-learning assessment record for each academic and co-curricular program.

Value Added

The increase in learning that occurs during a course, program, or undergraduate education. Can either focus on the individual student (how much better a student can write, for example, at the end than at the beginning) or on a cohort of students (whether senior papers demonstrate more sophisticated writing skills-in the aggregate-than freshmen papers). Requires a baseline measurement for comparison.⁴

⁴ Some definitions were adapted from the following sources:

Butte College
Clark College

College of Southern Nevada
National Teaching & Learning Forum
Palomba, C. & Banta, T. (1999). *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving
Assessment in Higher Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
System for Adult Basic Education Support
Utah Valley University
Additional appreciation is giving to Dr. Topeka Small for her contributions to this manual.