Learning Outcomes Assessment in the Department: Promising Practices

The promising practices outlined in this document are based on procedures that departments have implemented to make the assessment process operate smoothly. This framework explained below can be adapted to meet the needs of an individual department and help it successfully integrate assessment processes into its regular operations.

Department Chairs’ and DATs’ Roles in Assessment

Both the department chair and the DAT members play an important role in the assessment process, so it is critical that they work together to guide the department’s assessment efforts. Regular communication between the chair and DATs is essential. Different departments are staying in touch in different ways (e.g., regular email updates, scheduled meetings, etc.), but all departments that are successfully implementing the assessment plan have found it beneficial to communicate multiple times a month about assessment.

- The DAT chair should keep the department chair abreast of assessment policies and procedures and changes to these policies and procedures by sharing information and documentation he/she receives at AAAC meetings and through emails from the assessment team.

- It is also important that the department chair help the DAT disseminate assessment information to the department’s faculty (full-time faculty and adjuncts) and help facilitate assessment work. This may include setting aside time for assessment discussions in department meetings, helping the DAT identify faculty to create assessments, and ensuring that deadlines are met.

• IMPORTANT NOTE: Members of the department’s DAT should be shepherding the assessment process but should not be the ones primarily responsible for creating assessments unless they teach the class being assessed.

• It is also important to ensure that your full-time and adjunct faculty and all new hires have a clear understanding of the overall assessment process and their own role in that process. A sample PowerPoint presentation and sample handouts that can be adapted and included in a department’s adjunct handbook can be found on the S drive: S:\Assessment\Guidelines and Forms\Sample Department Assessment Materials.

Preparing to Assess a Class for the First Time:

The assessment process requires departments to begin working on an assessment at least one semester before it’s implemented. However, some departments have found it beneficial to begin planning two semesters before the scheduled assessment. This seems to be particularly true when the course being assessed is a
Learning Outcomes Assessment in the Department: Promising Practices

high-enrollment course with many faculty involved. Beginning a discussion about the assessment two semesters before implementation can help to ensure that faculty have enough time for feedback and problem solving. These initial discussions also less the burden on faculty when the actual creation deadlines approach. The following steps outline a process that some departments are using and can be adapted to meet the needs of your department:

Steps to Follow:

1. **Identify the Course to be Assessed:** Using the department’s four-year plan (which can be found at on the S drive: S:\\Departments\\[Your department]\\Program Assessment Plan), the DAT and chair identify the course(s) to be assessed in the targeted semester.

2. **Identify Instructors:** Working with the chair, the DAT/DAT chair identifies who is teaching the course(s) that are going to be assessed.

3. **Create a Committee:** The DAT and/or chair creates a committee made up of faculty teaching the course. **If the course has a large number of sections and including all faculty on the committee is not feasible,** the committee can be made up of representative faculty who teach the course. Ideally, committee members should represent the following (when applicable): full-time faculty and adjunct faculty, faculty from extension centers, faculty who teach online and face-to-face, faculty who teach at different times of the day, etc.

4. **Hold an initial meeting:** Once committee membership is established, the DAT or the DAT and chair call an initial meeting. The following could be done at the initial meeting(s):
   i. Provide an overview of the college’s assessment process. Introduction materials (PowerPoint and adjunct handout) that can be adapted to fit your department’s needs/focus can be found on the S drive: S:\\Assessment\\Guidelines and Forms\\Sample Department Assessment Materials
   ii. Carefully review the course outcomes and brainstorm about what assessment(s) are appropriate for assessing the course outcomes.
      o Feel free to check out the rubrics created by other departments by looking in TK20—Under the courses tab, select assessment tools under the library heading in the left pane.
   iii. Provide faculty the guidelines for creating rubrics and multiple-choice exams, which can be found on the S drive: S:\\Assessment\\Guidelines and Forms.
   iv. Look at the course program measurable outcome (MO) alignment table found on the master course syllabus and discuss whether the alignment seems appropriate given the assessments being planned.
      i. **Special Considerations for General Education classes**—as outlined on the general education templates, general education classes are required to fulfill certain MOs—some requirements apply to all gen. ed. courses and some are discipline specific. These measurable outcomes must be assessed, so special consideration must be given to how the assessment will
Learning Outcomes Assessment in the Department: Promising Practices

accommodate the MOs. For example, every general education course must assess writing. This means that a multiple-choice assessment alone cannot be used to assess a general education course. For more information, see the General Education Guidelines.

5. **Divvy up Work and Create Assessments**: For each course, the faculty will be responsible for the following deliverables:
   1. An assessment description
   2. A rough draft of each assessment
   3. The final version of assessment

Guidelines, templates, and deadlines for each of these can be found on the S drive: S:\\Assessment\Guidelines and Forms

If you are working ahead of schedule, feel free to contact your assessment coach for feedback on your work.

6. **Share Drafts with the Department**: Particularly if the course is taught by a large number of faculty, the committee should try to provide drafts to all the faculty who have taught the class recently, who teach it in the planning semester, or who will teach it in the near future, giving them an opportunity to provide feedback.
   i. Some departments established an e-organization sites on Blackboard so that faculty could post assessment information and provide feedback on assessments.

7. **Submit work for Dean’s approval and submission to AAAC**: Please consult your DAT, chair, and or dean to establish who will collect and vet assessments before they are submitted to the dean. Please remember that due dates to the Dean are set.

8. **Share AAAC feedback**: The department chair/DAT members should share the description and rough draft feedback received from the AAAC.

9. **Finalize draft**: The DAT should assist/guide any changes or modifications that need to be made and help the committee finalize the draft.

10. **Submit final version (if applicable) for Dean’s approval and submission to AAAC**: Please consult your DAT, chair, and or dean to establish who will collect and vet assessments before they are submitted to the dean.

11. **Circulate assessments to faculty and prepare them to conduct the assessment (see tips below)**.

**Facilitating Data Collection**

The following steps can help ensure smooth data collection and meaningful results.

- Before the semester begins, the DAT and chair should make all faculty who may be teaching the course being assessed aware of what is expected of them. Departments have used many different avenues for disseminating such information: face-to-face information sessions, emailed PowerPoints, written instructions included in new-hire materials, postings on Blackboard, etc. Sample materials can be found on the S drive: S:\\Assessment\Guidelines & Forms.
Learning Outcomes Assessment in the Department: Promising Practices

- At the beginning of the semester, send an email to faculty reminding them about assessment and encouraging them to get early training.

For departments using rubrics:
- Make sure faculty know how to use Tk20 BEFORE they need to enter data. Video tutorials are available on the portal (https://my.pgcc.edu/projects/tk20/Pages/default.aspx). Step-by-step written instructions for entering data into TK20 can be found on the S drive: S:\Assessment: Guidelines and Forms.
- After your coach notifies that your rubric has been loaded into Tk20, double check that the rubric is accurate BEFORE faculty begin filling it out.
- Send reminder emails to faculty near the time of the semester when the assignment is to be given.
- Remember that all data must be submitted by the day that grades are due at the end of the semester. Before this due date, check TK20 to see who has entered data, and contact those who have not yet entered the data.

For departments using multiple-choice assessments:
- Be sure that faculty are trained to use the Benchmark system; this includes learning how to name files, how to score tests with an electronic key, and how to instruct students to fill out the test form. Please see the Benchmark quick guide and the Guidelines for Multiple-Choice Assignments, which can be found on the S drive: S:\Assessment: Guidelines and Forms.
- Once the assessment coach has uploaded the electronic key to the S drive, double check that it is accurate BEFORE the faculty start to use it.
- Make sure that the department has enough paper Benchmark forms for students to use and that faculty know where to find scanners.
- Designate a point-person (often the DAT chair) to whom the faculty will submit their data files (this can be done via a folder you create on the S drive outside of the Assessment folder or by email).
- Establish a way for the point person to securely distribute the key to the faculty.
- Explain to faculty the conventions for naming files and where to save their test data. See the Guidelines for Multiple-Choice Assessments: S:\Assessment\Guidelines and Forms.
- Distribute the electronic key to faculty.
- Send reminder emails to faculty near the time of the semester when the assignment is to be given.
- Before grades are due, upload the Benchmark files to the S drive and contact any faculty who have not submitted data.

Preparing a Class for Reassessment: Working with Data and Action Plans

- The Student Learning Outcome Assessment Report (SLOAR): At the beginning of each semester, the DATs, department chairs and deans will
Learning Outcomes Assessment in the Department: Promising Practices

receive a copy of the SLOAR, which will provide data analysis for the classes assessed in the previous semester.

• **Steps to Follow:**

  1. **DAT and chair review SLOAR:** The DAT members and the chair should review the SLOAR data. If multiple courses were assessed, the chair and DAT should select the course(s) that will be reassessed. Information about the number of courses a department must reassess and guidelines are outlined in the FAQ section of *Guidelines-Action Plans*, which can be found in the *Guidelines and Forms* folder on the S drive.

  2. **Reconvene the assessment committee:** Once they have determined which course(s) are to be reassessed, the DAT chair and/or department chair reconvene the committee that created the original assessment and carefully go over the SLOAR data with them.

  3. **Discuss data and create a tentative action plan:** Committee members discuss the data and make a tentative action plan. Information about creating an action plan can be found in *Guidelines-Action Plans*, which can be found in the *Guidelines and Forms* folder on the S drive.

  4. **Discuss plan with department:** Working with the department chair, the DAT members/chair should identify a department meeting that can be used to discuss the data results and the committee’s ideas for an action plan. At the designated meeting, committee members can present the SLOAR report data and their action plan to the department at large and solicit feedback.

  5. **Submit action plan:** Please consult your DAT, chair, and or dean to establish who will collect and vet assessments before they are submitted to the dean. Remember that due dates to the deans are set. If others, e.g., the DAT chair or department chair, vet the documents prior to submission to the dean, provide 1-2 weeks turnaround time to ensure enough time to make any changes needed. See Division Promising Practices for more information: \S://Assessment\Guidelines & Forms.

  6. **Review AAAC feedback on action plan:** Once the DAT/chair receive the AAAC’s feedback on the action plan, DAT members should help guide and assist committee members in making any necessary changes to the action plan.

  7. **Implement action plan:** DAT members should help ensure that the action plan is implemented and that plans are being made to reassess the course in the following semester. Just as with first-time assessments, the department must submit rough and final drafts for reassessments. If the assessment description or drafts have not changed from the previous semester, please indicate this on the rubric form or the multiple-choice answer key-alignment form (there is a box to check).