Assessment of Student Learning

The assessment of student learning, an essential part of the larger assessment of institutional effectiveness, is key to creating a campus culture of investigation and reflection aimed at improving student learning. Assessment seeks to determine if students have learned what our learning experiences are designed for them to learn and if the improvements that we have made to learning experiences (based on assessments) have had the desired effects. At Ramapo College, academic programs respond to four interrelated questions:

- What should our students know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program lists its learning outcomes.
- Where do students learn what we hope they will know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program maps its outcomes to its curriculum.
- How do we know that they have learned what we hope they will know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program assesses student learning.
- How do we know that improvements have had desired effects? To answer this question, a program reassesses outcomes by comparing past and present assessment findings.

Faculty groups assessing student learning may find these resources helpful.

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Committees

The College Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC)

The College Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC) brings together faculty, administration and staff from across the college to provide holistic oversight and guidance on academic assessment.

- Reviews goals and outcomes in information literacy to ensure alignment with institutional and general-education learning goals and outcomes in collaboration with CWAC and GECCo;
- Implements independent assessments of information literacy using institutional and/or general-education learning goals and outcomes, review assessment results, and provide feedback for improvement of student learning;
- Collaborates as needed with convening groups, SACs, GECCo, and CWAAC to implement assessments of information literacy, to review assessment results, and to provide feedback for improvement of student learning; and
- Submits assessment plans and reports of independent library assessments for peer review by CWAAC and for archiving.

School Assessment Committees

The School Assessment Committee (SAC), comprised of faculty from the school, oversees and coordinates assessment activities in the school. The chair of the committee, who is also the school assessment coordinator, serves on the College-Wide Assessment Committee (CWAAC).

Specific activities of SAC include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Work with convening groups to ensure alignment of program (goals and) outcomes with institutional learning goals;
- Coordinate and/or implement school assessment activities, such as syllabi audits and assessment retreats;
- Review program-level assessment plans and reports to provide peer feedback, to promote collaboration, and to determine overall progress made towards achieving school goals; and

In addition, SAC members will divide themselves among the convening groups in the school so that individual SAC members can work closely with one or more convening groups to establish and/or revise program learning (goals and) outcomes, to map program curricula, and to plan, implement, and evaluate program assessments. The chair of SAC will work regularly with all convening groups in the school on these assessment activities.

General Education

The Chair of the General Education Curriculum Committee serves on the College Wide Academic Assessment Curriculum Committee. In addition to the general roles outlined above, the GECCo chair coordinates and manages General Education assessment, facilitates

communication between CWAAC and GECCo, submits assessment plans and reports to GECCo for feedback and archiving, and makes regular assessment reports to appropriate stakeholders. Please see the

- General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo)

Quick Start

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Assessment Timeline

By October 1: Programs submit draft assessment plans to their school assessment coordinators. A plan includes:

An updated list of student learning goals and outcomes;
An updated curriculum map;
A plan for the academic year (outcomes, measures, and achievement targets).

By October 15: School Assessment Committees (SACs) provide feedback and programs

By November 1: Programs submit final plans to school assessment coordinators.

By June 1: Programs submit assessment reports to their school assessment coordinators. A report includes, in addition to the items in the plan:

Assessment results and actions for each unmet target;
Reassessment: comparing findings over time for the measures (if applicable);
Report on past actions (if applicable).

By June 15: School Assessment Committees (SACs) provide feedback to programs.

By June 30: Programs submit finalized reports to their school assessment coordinators, Deans (for review) and Academic Assessment.

Learning Goals and Outcomes

Program Goals

A learning is a general statement about student learning that provides a framework for what programs want students to learn or do.

- Goals may have words like understand, appreciate and participate.
- Examples
    - Culinary arts majors will understand the fundamentals of food science.
    - Culinary arts majors will value interdisciplinary perspectives
    - Culinary arts will prepare students for the job market and a future career by completing an internship.
- All learning goals should have at least one measurable student learning outcome
- Learning goals may have multiple measurable student learning outcomes.

Student Learning Outcomes

A student learning outcome (sometimes called an objective)2 re G 546.82tfb0912,11(ect)-4/F2 11.04 Tf1 0 0 1 205.85 546

- We can assess outputs at the end of a learning experience, at the end of a course, at different points of a program, o

goals and outcomes major, minor, and so forth should support aspects of the all-college goals and outcomes.

Outcomes for Majors, Minors, and Graduate Programs can be found in the college College Catalog

Outcomes for the College Honors Program

Outcomes for Information Literacy

Ramapo College Program Curriculum Map

General Education Curriculum Map

Assessment Template

Assessment Template Submit the Assessment Plan by October 2 Submit the Assessment Report by June 3	
Program Name:	Convener:
Curriculum Map:	

Support or Resource Request What support or resources, if any, would help facilitate implementing these assessment actions (e.g., none, request faculty line, purchase software, purchase laboratory equipment, hire adjunct, etc.)?	

Curriculum Mapping

A curriculum map is a visual tool showing the alignment between outcomes and courses. Typically, a curriculum map is a matrix with courses arranged vertically and outcomes arranged horizontally (or the reverse). Curriculum maps help programs:

- Identify relationships between learning outcomes and courses
- Identify program strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Determine whether students have enough opportunities to meet program learning outcomes by the time they graduate. For example, a learning outcome that appears for the first time in a capstone course may not give students adequate opportunity to develop the knowledge or skills of that outcome as they progress through the program.
- Identify likely places to collect assessment data and implement program improvements
- Develop new program proposals by illustrating how existing and new courses will fit together to deliver the intended new curriculum.
- Differentiate between required and elective courses

Tips for Successful Curriculum Map

- Include program requirements that all students must complete to graduate in the curriculum map
- Each program learning outcome should appear in at least two courses to provide multiple learning opportunities.
- Courses do not need to have all program outcomes. In general, courses should include a learning outcome when a portion of the course or student grades is related to the outcome. A curriculum map that has all outcomes covered in all courses suggests that program outcomes may not be finely tuned enough for assessment purposes.
- Should electives be in curriculum maps? Yes, but it may not be necessary to list all courses that serve as electives for most programs. Suskie (2018) states that programs do not need to include electives in program maps because these learning experiences are designed to be different for each student. To provide for flexibility, programs can consider the following regarding curriculum maps:
    - Electives do not have to be included if a majority of student credits are earned through program requirements that all students must complete.
    - What if your program requires students to choose classes from within a category or list of courses? Programs can include a single entry in their curriculum map for the category or list similar to a program course. This avoids having a long list of courses in a map that may obscure important patterns.
    - Programs may include all electives in their maps if they determine do1 0 0 1 393.31 11.04 Tf1 0 0 1 14te f

- Revise the achievement target up or down.

- Get back to the basics:
  - Write outcomes that articulate what your program truly values in student learning.
  - Think of assessment as a research project: What are you curious about?
  - Select measures likely to yield results that you can confidently use.
  - Set achievement targets that reflect your program's standard for acceptable performance.

- Consider the full range of measures available to you.
  - Direct assessment measures include scoring papers or other student products on rubric, embedding questions in exams or quizzes, multiple-choice questions, open-ended prompts, essays, projects, portfolios, presentations, performance, pre- and post- tests and other approaches.
  - You can conduct indirect assessment by measuring student perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, confidence, and more through surveys, journals, focus groups, interviews, course evaluations, and other methods.
  - Want to use student opinion surveys and course evaluations for assessment? Contact Claire Naparano or Jeff Delos Santos (Applications Programmer - ITS) for online student opinion surveys. Paper evaluations are available from Ramapo's IR office.
  - Ramapo's IR office has a number of surveys and analyses that are appropriate for indirect assessment measures including alumni surveys, student surveys and enrollment trends.
  - Did the program consider conversations with with students, convening group discussions, FRC summer sessions on remote education, IDC programming, Canvas sessions, survey results shared by the Provost's Office, and/or trends in the discipline (e.g., successes at other institutions, professional conferences or published re0 0 1 eMC /Spay4(p)epay4(p)10(enp)epay4

In what courses or which student populations will they measure (e.g., CA 456)? How many student products will they assess? Please report the total number of student products assessed.

- Include past actions and previous findings for the outcomes being assessed to facilitate reassessment.

Checklists

Planning Phase

- The plan includes a full list of current goals and outcomes with years assessed.
- The plan includes a current curriculum map.
- Majors will assess at least two outcomes. Freestanding minors will assess at least one outcome.
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Frequently Asked Questions

The following provides some answers to commonly asked questions. When it comes to your assessment plans and activities, there may be no single or best answer. Your school assessment coordinator, your School Assessment Committee, and the Provost's Office will work with your program to help you construct a plan that works for you.

Q. What is the difference between a goal and an outcome?

A. Both a goal and an outcome are statements about student learning. Typically, a goal is more general than an outcome, which is not only specific but also measurable.

Q. What is the difference between an outcome and an objective?

A. Generally speaking, Ramapo College uses 'outcome' more frequently than 'objective' to refer to specific, measurable statements about what we want students to know or be able to do. However, the two terms are often used interchangeably.

Q. What is the difference between direct and indirect assessment, and what are some examples of each?

A. Direct assessment examines students' actual learning, while indirect assessment typically examines students' perceptions of their learning.

Q. Is a licensure exam an appropriate assessment instrument?

A. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education considers a licensure exam a direct measure of student learning. However, this type of instrument is most helpful when a program can link parts of the exam to specific program outcomes.

Q. What if my program is externally accredited?

Externally accredited programs should develop an assessment strategy that is consistent with the needs and expectations of external accrediting bodies. This could be the Ramapo College template or it may be another format. Externally accredited programs should submit a one to two paragraph summary of their School Assessment Committee (SAC) that summarizes the program's assessment activities including actions, reassessment and loop closing.

Q. Why can't we use grades for direct assessment?

A. In the words of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education: "In and of themselves, … grades are not direct evidence of student learning. That is, a numeric or a letter grade alone

Assessment Terminology

Achievement target: The number, rate, percentage, and so forth that your program would consider an acceptable assessment finding.

Actions: What your program plans to do with your assessment results to improve teaching and learning or to improve your assessment methodology.

Assessment: A form of research designed to determine if students have in fact learned what our courses and other learning experiences are designed for them to learn.

Closing the Loop: responding to assessment results by implementing appropriate actions and determining if these actions improved student learning through comparing assessment results over time.

Curriculum map: A visual tool showing the alignment between program-level outcomes and program courses.

Direct assessment: An assessment o

Learning outcome: A succinct statement of what you would like students to know or be able to do. Sometimes called an objective, an outcome may also refer to an attitude or a disposition. An outcome is measurable.

Learning goal: A statement about student learning that is more general than an outcome.

Measure: The tool that you plan to use to assess your selected outcome.

Reassessment: Comparing assessment results over time to analyze trends and determine whether implemented actions improved students learning.

Rubric: An assessment tool that combines assessment criteria (e.g., correct grammar) with descriptions of different levels of achievement (e.g., meets expectations: a few non-distracting mechanical errors).

Scoring Products or Evidence of Student Learning: The process by which faculty determine if a sample of students or other evidence meets convening group standards.

Student Product: what students make or faculty submit for scoring. This can be an embedded assignment like a class paper, test or quiz or something made by students like a presentation or performance.

Triangulation: More than one piece of evidence comes to the same conclusion about student learning.

Additional Resources

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Praise for Assessment

Ramapo College's assessment activities have been praised by leading higher education entities and accrediting bodies.

The Middle States Higher Education Commission Team Report (2020):

> "Ramapo College is to be commended for the progress it has made since the last self-study in the use of assessment results to improve educational effectiveness. The level of commitment to and engagement in academic program assessment and in general education assessment by Ramapo College's full-time faculty serves as a model for enhancing an authentic culture of assessment. Ramapo College has implemented a system of sustained assessment practices across programs and levels that is focused on continuous improvement and that is aligned with institutional mission and values."--Team Report, Middle States Commission on Higher Education" (p. 13)
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> "The team commends the process pursued by the faculty in developing Ramapo's new General Education Program. The use of data-driven assessment and coherence with the mission and strategic plan have resulted in a program well-integrated and consistent with the vision of the college."--Team Report, Middle States Commission on Higher Education (p. 9).

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Team Report (Summer 2021):

> ASB has a well-developed, comprehensive and systematic student learning outcomes assessment program that utilizes both direct and indirect assessment methods. The undergraduate program is assessed within the fourteen-course core, in which they measure student learning in five areas: communication, ethics, foundational knowledge, perspectives, and reasoning. Using a rotating schedule, they ensure assessment of each learning goal twice in a five-year period. They have a well-coordinated assessment matrix that indicates which courses will be assessed, a clear reporting format and a closing the loop retreat each semester.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

- Collecting, analyzing, summarizing and providing robust, valid and reliable data that demonstrates candidates meet rigorous professional standards as beginning teachers and school leaders;
- Developing, maintaining, and expanding effective, mutually beneficial partnerships with the K-12 community;
- Providing exceptional support to candidates at every stage in their programs;
- Demonstrating a commitment to recruiting and retaining diverse candidates who meet employment needs; and
- Developing and maintaining a sound quality assurance system that engages faculty and stakeholders in regularly and systematically reviewing data and making recommendations to aid in continuous improvement.

Additionally, the site visit team noted in their site visit report that, "Interviews with candidates, completers, and other stakeholders confirmed the outstanding dedication of faculty and administrators to student success, to collaboration, and to a caring atmosphere."

The Teacher Education and Certification Program's faculty, staff, students, alum, K-12 partners, and various other stakeholder groups played an integral role in achieving CAEP accreditation, which is known nationally for its stringent standards. The Teacher Education and Certification Program is accredited under CAEP through Spring 2027.