

# PROGRAM ASSESSMENT CONVERSATION CALENDAR: IDEAS FOR DEPARTMENT- OR COLLEGE-LEVEL COMMITTEES

(MULTIPLE PROGRAM FOCUS)

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for serving on a committee that discusses or has oversight of assessment in multiple programs. While individuals often have considerable experience assessing their own students or other participants, the role of an assessment committee may not be as familiar.

The calendar below provides information and ideas for discussion topics ***within committees comprised of members representing multiple programs***. The ideas align with the university assessment timeline and focus on making assessment efforts as useful as possible. Hopefully some of the ideas will generate productive conversations between you and your colleagues.

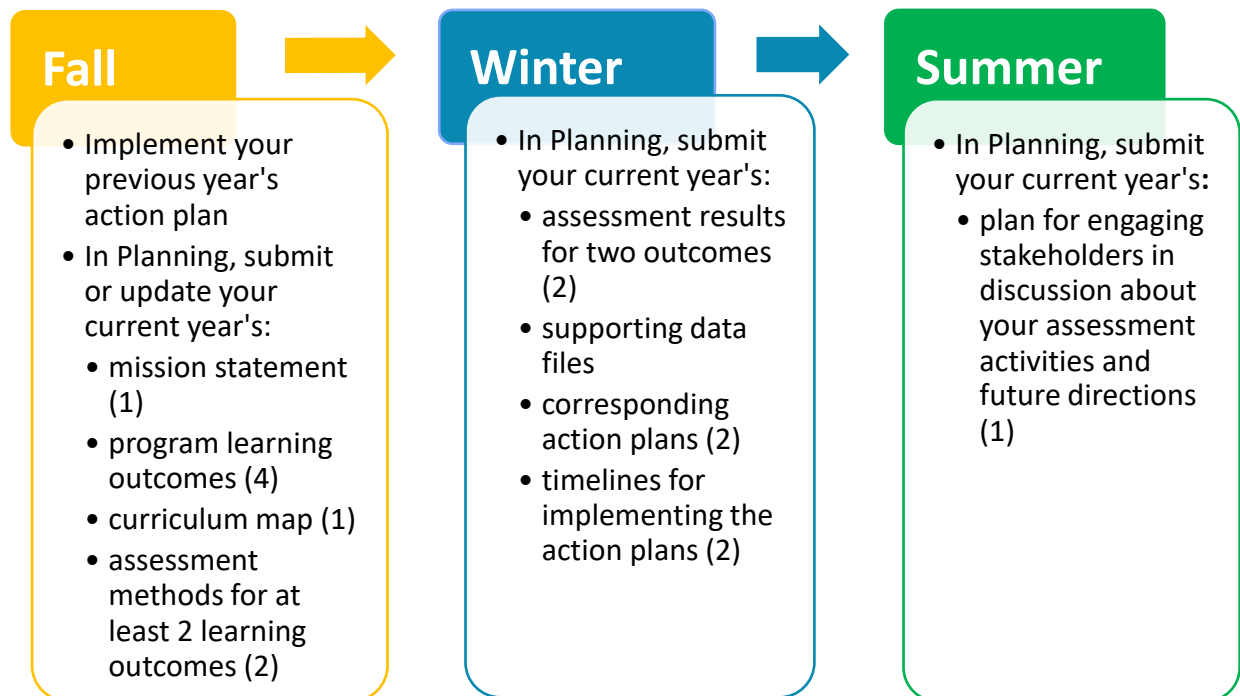
## PROGRAM ASSESSMENT: WHAT IS THE GOAL?

The goal of program assessment is to support students, faculty, and staff by helping programs to:

- Articulate their goals
  - **Find your program's learning outcomes for [2021-2022](#) (PDF)**
- Assess how well programs are achieving those goals
- Use assessment processes and results to improve program quality
- Communicate programs' successes and needs effectively

## RESOURCES:

- There is a [complementary Conversation Calendar for individual programs](#) that helps them incrementally build and carry out their assessments over the academic year.
- Also, the **assessment handbooks** for [Academic Programs](#) and [Student Services](#) are useful resources throughout the year. They include explanations and examples of good assessment from Wayne State programs.
- The annual assessment timeline aligns with our academic cycle:



At any time throughout the year, please contact me with any questions you may have. My role is to provide assessment expertise to complement your disciplinary expertise in the assessment planning process, and I am more than happy to help!

With best wishes,

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# CONVERSATION CALENDAR

## AUGUST: WHAT'S ASSESSMENT ABOUT, AND WHAT DO WE DO FIRST?

- Refresh your memory about the goals (above) of and [timeline](#) for program assessment.
- Identify goals for this year's committee work (e.g., provide feedback to programs about their assessment plans, monitor program's progress along the university assessment timeline, increase departmental knowledge and skill in assessment, offer peer mentoring, recognize exemplary assessment work)
  - Assessment is a specialized area of expertise, and there is a learning curve for many faculty and staff. Fortunately, there are many professional development opportunities:
    - Use the resources on the WSU Assessment [website](#)
    - Contact the [WSU Director of Assessment](#)
    - Attend workshops at the [Office for Teaching and Learning](#)
- Review feedback from the University Assessment Council or from other sources if one of your department's or college's programs was selected for review.
- Request access to *Planning* (our assessment reporting system) as needed from the [WSU Director of Assessment](#).
- Remind colleagues to review the items copied into the new reporting year during the [September 1 rollover in Planning](#).
  - Mission statements, learning outcomes, curriculum maps, and assessment methods submitted by August 31 roll over to the new academic year; other information does not.
- Look for assessment workshops, peer forums, and other activities at <http://events.wayne.edu>.

## SEPTEMBER: WHAT SHOULD OUR STUDENTS LEARN?

- Communicate the [university assessment timeline](#) to colleagues.
- Review one or more program's mission statement (1), learning outcomes (minimum 4), and curriculum map (1):
  - Do they accurately describe the current state of the program? If not, what updates or changes are needed?
  - Do they reflect best practices? Use the assessment handbook and the [Assessment Practices Feedback Rubric](#) to identify ways to improve the mission statement, learning outcomes, and curriculum map.

- What specific recommendations could you make to the program's faculty or staff?
- *An alternate approach is to read all programs' mission statements and learning outcomes one month, and all the curriculum maps another month, for example.*
- See the [Learning Outcomes Toolkit](#) and the [Curriculum Map Toolkit](#) for more guidance and examples.

## OCTOBER/NOVEMBER: HOW WILL WE KNOW WHETHER STUDENTS LEARN WHAT WE WANT THEM TO?

- Review programs' assessment methods:
  - Do the methods clearly align with the stated learning outcomes?
    - Is the description of the assessment methods informative enough that you understand what information will be gathered, from whom, and how it will be evaluated? (See [What to write in each section of Planning](#) for a list of simple questions.)
  - Will the methods provide useful, credible data about student performance on the program's learning outcomes?
  - What improvement(s) to the methods could be made? Use the [Assessment Practices Feedback Rubric](#) to suggest ways to improve programs' assessment methods.
- Verify that each program has the required minimum number of outcomes (4) and assessment methods (2) in the assessment plan.
- Based on the committee's review of assessment plans so far, arrange for professional development in assessment by contacting the [WSU Director of Assessment](#), attending workshops at the [Office for Teaching and Learning](#), or using the [online assessment resources](#).

## DECEMBER: WHAT'S OUR PART IN IMPROVING ASSESSMENT PRACTICES?

- Share examples of good assessment planning with department and college colleagues. More than 30 WSU [examples](#) are available on the WSU Assessment website.
- Communicate with colleagues:
  - What suggestions for improving the assessment plan(s) does the committee have for their colleagues?
  - What resources are available to help them improve their assessment efforts?
  - Who should colleagues contact if they have questions?

## JANUARY: HOW CAN WE BE PROACTIVE ABOUT ASSESSMENT ANNUALLY AS WELL AS FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION?

### Proactive approach to the annual assessment cycle:

- Communicate the [university assessment timeline](#) to program colleagues.
- Remind program leaders to communicate with colleagues about their role in assessment for the Winter semester.

### Proactive approach to the link between annual assessment Academic Program Review and accreditation:

- Explain why assessment is important to colleagues so they understand why we spend time on it:
  - Programs' annual work on assessment helps us to maintain high quality programs, serve our students better, and maintain accreditation. Share these goals with colleagues to help them understand why work on assessment is important.
  - Annual assessment of student learning outcomes is a part of programs' self-study for [Academic Program Review](#) (APR). As such, annual assessment documentation serves as ongoing preparation for the self-study, which asks programs to review their annual assessments across multiple years to inform and support their self-evaluation and strategic planning efforts.
  - Assessment of student learning outcomes is also a requirement for most specialized accreditations and for our institutional accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. In almost all cases, the work required for specialized accreditation can be copied or adapted to the reporting required for the Higher Learning Commission. Contact the [WSU Director of Assessment](#) about strategies for efficiently aligning those tasks.
    - In addition to demonstrating institutional quality, accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission allows Wayne State access to federal funding.
    - Learn more about our [institutional accreditation](#) with the Higher Learning Commission.
      - Learning outcomes assessment falls under Criterion 4B (all programs) and Criterion 3B (General Education Program).

## FEBRUARY: HOW CAN WE SUPPORT OUR COLLEAGUES?

- In lieu of a meeting, committee members might choose to meet with the faculty, staff, and students of the programs they represent to provide individual support and ensure that the assessment plan is on track.
- Invite the [WSU Director of Assessment](#) to your meetings to start a dialogue, answer questions, provide feedback, or give a workshop tailored to your unit.
- Encourage colleagues to submit a conference proposal about their assessment work and to consider applying for a WSU Program Assessment Grant.
  - [Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education \(AALHE\)](#) - June conference
  - [IUPUI Assessment Institute](#) - October conference
  - [WSU Program Assessment Grants](#) – May 31 deadline
  - Note that limited funds to support conference presentations about learning outcomes assessment may be available. Contact the [WSU Director of Assessment](#) with requests.

## MARCH: HOW DO OUR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES COMPARE TO OTHER SCHOOLS' AND COLLEGES' TRENDS?

- Discuss the [WSU Assessment Annual Report](#) and its implications for your department or college and committee.

## APRIL: WHAT DOES OUR UNIT'S DATA MEAN IN THE AGGREGATE?

- Strategize: How can you use your department's or college's cumulative assessment data to promote your programs, support requests for resources, recruit students, improve processes, etc.?
  - See the [Data Interpretation Toolkit](#) for some basic analysis ideas.

## MAY: WHEN CAN EVERYONE WORK TOGETHER?

- Organize an assessment day on which colleagues get together to complete their submissions to Planning. Invite the [WSU Director of Assessment](#) to serve as tech support and to answer questions if you like.

## JUNE/JULY/AUGUST: HOW CAN WE USE THE RESULTS FROM MULTIPLE PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE LEARNING AND RECOGNIZE GOOD WORK?

- Review assessment findings and action plans across programs or departments to identify any shared successes or needs that can inform decisions made at the department level or beyond.