

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT CONVERSATION CALENDAR: IDEAS FOR PROGRAM FACULTY AND STAFF

(SINGLE PROGRAM FOCUS)

INTRODUCTION

As part of their regular practices, faculty and staff frequently work toward improving parts of their program within their area of expertise. However, many are unfamiliar with program assessment, which is a separate area of expertise from their own.

The calendar below provides information and ideas for discussion topics ***among faculty and staff focused on assessment in a single program*** to make assessment more manageable and useful within the program's context. The ideas align with the university assessment timeline (below) 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?

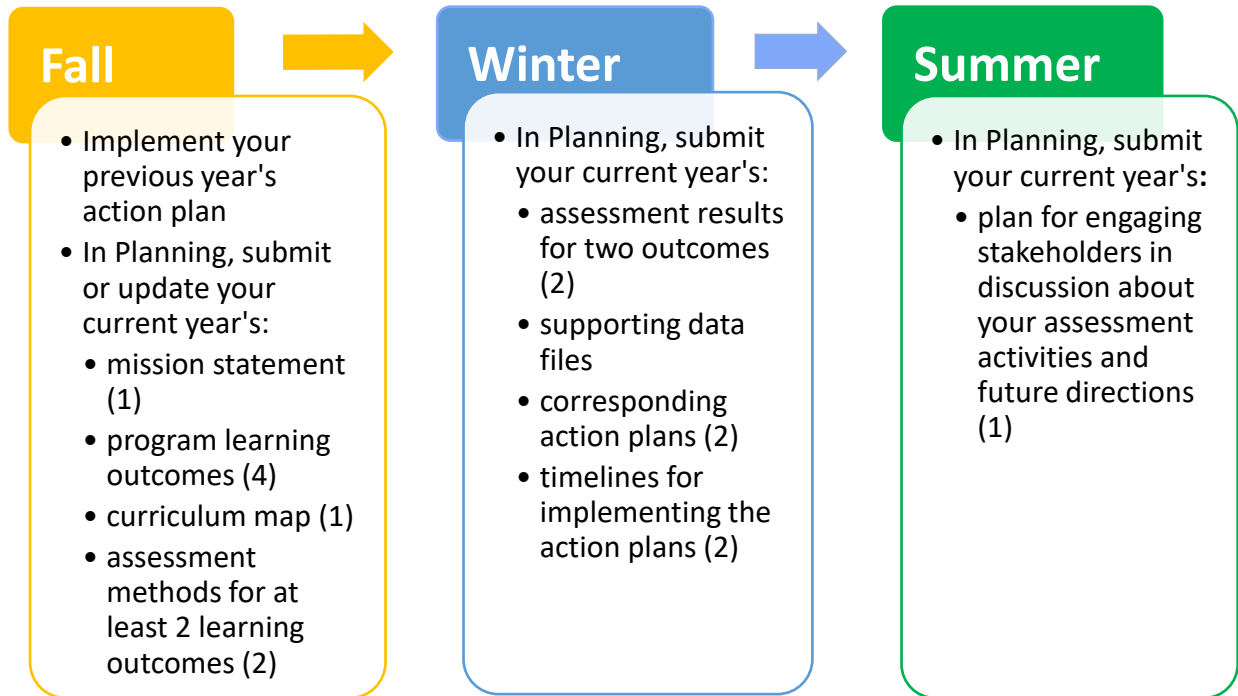
The goal of program assessment is to support students, faculty, and staff by helping programs to:

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

RESOURCES:

- There is a complementary Conversation Calendar for committees that discuss assessment in multiple programs within a department, college, or other unit.

- 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 generally aligns with our academic cycle:



I hope this conversation calendar helps build common goals and a shared understanding of how assessment can support student learning and student success in your program. At any time throughout the year, [please contact me](#) with any questions you may have. My role in the Office of the Provost 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,
 Cathy Barrette, WSU Director of Assessment
 Associate Professor of Spanish
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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.
 - Who will be working on your program's assessment this year?
- Read your previous year's assessment plan.
 - What actions (if any) are needed to implement the action plan? Who is responsible for taking those actions? How will be sure they know they're responsible?
- If the plan includes collecting data in the Fall semester, proactive communication is important.
 - Which colleagues will be asked to collect data?
 - Who will notify colleagues of any data they will need to gather and how to submit it? When do they need that information? (See December for more detail.)
- 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: Which would be useful to you?
 - Use the resources on the [WSU Assessment website](#)
 - Attend workshops at the [Office for Teaching and Learning](#)
 - Contact the [WSU Director of Assessment](#) for program-specific feedback or training
- *Planning* is the name of our assessment reporting system, and it is restricted to those with permissions. (Request permission as needed from the [Director of Assessment.](#))
 - Who will be updating or submitting new information about your program's assessment efforts?
 - Would you like additional people to be able to view the submitted information?
 - Does anyone need a refresher for using *Planning*? [Instructions](#) are online, or you can contact the [WSU Director of Assessment](#) for a live training.
- Remind colleagues of 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 items do not.)
 - Which, if any, of the rolled over items do you need to update?
- Look for assessment workshops, peer forums, and other activities at <http://events.wayne.edu>.

SEPTEMBER: WHAT SHOULD OUR STUDENTS LEARN?

- Update or add your program's mission statement (minimum 1), learning outcomes (or program goals for Student Services) (minimum 4), and curriculum map (minimum 1; optional for Student Services):
 - 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 changes will you make to each?
 - Edit your documentation in *Planning* to reflect any changes.
- See the [Learning Outcomes Toolkit](#) and the [Curriculum Map Toolkit](#) for more information and examples.
- Communicate the [university assessment timeline](#) to colleagues.

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

- Decide which two outcomes or goals to assess this academic year. Consider what matters most to you with respect to student learning. Some questions to get you started include:
 - Do the faculty/staff have common concerns about students' knowledge or skills in a particular area that you want to work on collectively?
 - Are there outstanding examples of achievement in student knowledge or skill that you'd like to expand to more students?
 - Do you wonder whether the right prerequisites or course sequences are in place?
 - Are all subgroups of students (e.g., by demographics, academic pathway, or class standing) similarly successful in your program?
- Review the previous year's assessment methods or choose new ones:
 - Do they provide useful, credible data about student performance on the program's learning outcomes?
 - What improvement(s) to the methods could be made? Use the handbooks and the [Assessment Practices Feedback Rubric](#) to identify ways to improve assessment methods or contact the [WSU Director of Assessment](#) if you'd like individualized feedback or a consultation to explore assessment options.

- Is the documentation of your assessment methods descriptive enough that colleagues would know what to do if you were unavailable to explain it or if someone else takes over assessment responsibilities? (See [What to write in each section of Planning](#) for a list of simple questions to follow.)
- Add Assessment items in *Planning* (if needed) to bring the program up to the minimum number of methods required (2).
- Edit your assessment methods in *Planning* to reflect any updates.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER: WHAT'S MY PART IN GATHERING EVIDENCE OF LEARNING?

- Finish updating the Mission Statements, Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Maps, and Assessment Methods items in *Planning* as a record of your decisions.
- Communicate key information to relevant colleagues:
 - What assessment information, evidence, or data should each person submit for program assessment for Fall and Winter semesters?
 - Where/To whom/In what format should that information be submitted?
 - By when should it be submitted?
 - Who is responsible for aggregating and analyzing the submitted information?
 - Who should colleagues contact if they have questions?
- Start to compile any Fall assessment data.

JANUARY: WHAT CAN WE DO TO BE PROACTIVE AND MINIMIZE OVERALL EFFORT?

- Communicate the [university assessment timeline](#) to colleagues.
- Remind colleagues what their role in assessment is for the Winter semester. (See details from November/December.)
- Identify any actions needed to implement last year's action plan and delegate responsibility to appropriate individuals.
- Finish compiling any Fall assessment data.
- Carry out a first-pass analysis of data gathered in the Fall semester while it's on hand and fresh in your mind. Summarize it in the Results section in *Planning* and attach any supporting data files. (Data files should be de-identified.)
 - See the [Data Interpretation Toolkit](#) for some basic analysis ideas.

FEBRUARY: HOW CAN WE USE WHAT WE'VE LEARNED SO FAR?

- Discuss any problems encountered in your Fall assessment methods or results and record them in your Results section in *Planning*.
- Submit a proposal about your assessment work to an [assessment conference or a journal](#) that publishes on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). (Many disciplines also have journals that publish articles on assessment!)
 - [Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education](#) (AALHE) - June conference
 - [IUPUI Assessment Institute](#) - October conference

MARCH: HOW CAN OUR STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATE IN AND SUPPORT OUR PROGRAM?

WHY SHOULD WE ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS?

Stakeholders can provide more diverse perspectives about your program and your assessments that can help you improve your program. They can also bring additional skills and resources to the process. In addition, your invitation for them to participate can build a more active, supportive relationship with you and your program.

- Common stakeholder groups include students, faculty and staff colleagues, administrators, advisory boards, community partners, employers accrediting bodies, etc.

HOW CAN WE ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS?

- Pick at least one stakeholder group with whom to discuss this year's assessment design, implementation, results, or action plan.
 - Common topics to discuss with stakeholders include possible contextual factors that influenced a set of results, any changes in the discipline or in related careers that should inform the program's learning outcomes or assessments, and priorities for upcoming assessment cycles.
- Identify a format and target time period for engaging with that group to get their input.
 - Common formats include open discussions, surveys, focus groups, and written feedback.
- Add or update your *Stakeholder Engagement* item in *Planning*.
- See the [Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit](#) for more information and examples.

- The Office of the Provost has a vested interest in your assessment efforts. Start planning now to apply for a [WSU Program Assessment Grant](#) (May 31 deadline). Collaboration with colleagues and other stakeholders is one of the grant review criteria!
 - Contact the [WSU Director of Assessment](#) to brainstorm project ideas, get feedback on a draft proposal, or to learn more about the grant program.

APRIL: WHAT DO THE DATA TELL US ABOUT STUDENT LEARNING?

- Aggregate and analyze all assessment data for the academic year.
 - Remember that the focus of learning outcomes assessment is on the program level, not on individual courses or faculty. If you've collected data from a single course or activity, then use the information in your curriculum map to contextualize the results in terms of how well students were prepared for success in that course/activity, how well prepared they will be for subsequent courses and activities, and how the design or implementation of the program can be improved to enhance that preparation.
- See the [Data Interpretation Toolkit](#) for ideas and examples of how to summarize, interpret, and use assessment data to inform your program's decisions.

MAY: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING IN OUR PROGRAM?

- Complete analyses of assessment data and discuss the results.
 - Were there any contextual factors that played a role in the results?
 - Were your targets met?
 - If so, how will you maintain or expand on that success? When will you re-assess?
 - If not, what step(s) will the program faculty and staff take to improve student learning and student success going forward? When will you re-assess to see if your changes had a positive impact?
- Set a timeline and delegate responsibilities for implementing the action plans.
- Add relevant information to your Results, Action Plan, and Timeline sections in *Planning*.
- Submit a proposal for the [WSU Program Assessment Grant](#) by May 31 to develop or improve your assessment practices next year.

JUNE/JULY/AUGUST: WRAPPING UP

- Compile and analyze any Spring/Summer assessment data. Add the relevant information to *Planning*.
- August 31 is the end of the annual cycle.
 - Your core planning items (Mission Statement, Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Map, and Assessment Methods) will be rolled over into the new reporting year at the start of September.

CONGRATULATIONS ON A YEAR'S PROGRESS AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK TO SUPPORT
STUDENT LEARNING AND STUDENT SUCCESS!