**WSU Program Assessment: Required information, definitions, guiding questions, and pitfalls**

**Dr. Cathy Barrette, WSU Director of Assessment**

[**c.barrette@wayne.edu**](mailto:c.barrette@wayne.edu)

**(313)577-1615**

***Compliance Assist*** is the online repository for all of the program assessment information described in this document. Please contact the WSU Director of Assessment if you would like access to Compliance Assist.

Video tutorials and PowerPoint presentations explaining the contents of assessment plans and the use of Compliance Assist are online at <http://wayne.edu/assessment/media/>.

**I. The mission statement is:**

* A brief description of the program’s:
  + Purpose - Why the program exists, including its *unique or signature features*
  + Offerings– What students or clients will gain from the program (in broad terms, but specific to the discipline)
  + Target audience/Stakeholders – Who benefits from the program
* **The mission statement should be:**
  + Aligned with the University and division missions
  + Realistic and achievable

**Guiding questions:** To help you get started on your mission statement, you can discuss the following questions with your colleagues:

* What need(s) does the program fulfill?
* What will the students know, value, and be able to do as a result of your program?
* What does this program uniquely offer that differentiates it from other programs?

**Pitfalls to avoid:** When writing your mission statement, avoid wording that is:

* Too general to lead to any specific learning outcomes
* Not clearly related to the program’s learning outcomes
* Focused on teaching rather than student learning
* Written for a specialist/expert audience rather than a general audience

**II. Learning outcomes are:**

Statements of the intended results of the program

* Specific, measurable statements of what graduating students *should know, be able to do, believe, or value*
  + Derived from the mission statement
  + Focused on the results of student learning, not on the learning process or on teaching
* At least one assessment (i.e., a source of evidence or data) is needed per learning outcome; two or three is better.

**Guiding questions for academic and academic support programs:**

To help you identify your program’s learning outcomes, consider the following questions:

* What kinds of information does an ideal graduate/client from your program *know*?
* What can s/he *do*?
* What does s/he *value* or *care about*?
* What kinds of job skills does s/he take into the workforce and the community?

(Choose a few of your answers for your first round of learning outcomes and add others later.)

**Guiding questions for Student Services units:**

* What programs, services, or activities does your unit provide?
* How is each intended to support or improve students’ experience or success?
* What do you want stakeholders to do (or possibly *not* do) as a result of interacting with your unit?

**Pitfalls to avoid:**

* Combining two or more ideas into one outcome
* Describing an outcome that is not measurable
  + Too vague
  + Too broad or inclusive
* Writing for a specialist audience rather than a general audience
* Writing the outcome in the Title box rather than the Description box. (Please type a short title in the Title box and the full outcome in the Description box.)

**III. A curriculum map:**

Identifies the relationship between courses students take and the program’s learning outcomes and potential points in students’ experience at which to collect data.

* Which course(s) contribute to each learning outcome?
* To what degree?
  + Introduced
  + D-Developed/Practiced/Reviewed
  + M-Mastery demonstrated

**Guiding questions**

* Which course(s) contribute to each learning outcome?
* To what degree?
* Introduced
* D-Developed/Practiced/Reviewed
* M-Mastery demonstrated

**A template with an example of a curriculum map is available online at** [**http://wayne.edu/assessment/document/**](http://wayne.edu/assessment/document/)**.**

**IV. Assessments are:**

Data sources (information, evidence, metrics, performance indicators, proof) that demonstrate whether students are learning what your program intends at the desired level

* + Draw on information you already have to make data collection more practical and less time-consuming
    - Derived from the mission statement
    - One source might serve as data for multiple learning outcomes, but shouldn’t overlap completely
  + Direct assessments (e.g., exams items, projects, presentations) are usually better than indirect assessments (e.g., surveys, interviews, institutional data) at demonstrating student performance. Both, in combination, can provide a good perspective on students’ learning.

**Guiding questions**

To help you select appropriate sources of evidence or data, consider the following questions:

* What information does the assessment provide that helps identify how well students are meeting expectations for a particular learning outcome?
  + Does it include extraneous information that will bias the data?
* What *criterion level of performance* will you set (e.g., 85% pass rate, 75% score, 80% agree or strongly agree)?
* Is it practical to gather this information (not too time-consuming or costly)?

**Pitfalls to avoid:**

* Using an overall exam or project score that is affected by performance beyond what’s included in the learning outcome
  + You can use a score from an appropriate section or just from some items, however!
* Focusing on information from a single course
  + Learning outcomes should stretch across a program and multiple courses, therefore so should the assessment data

**In “Assessment Method” in Compliance Assist, please identify:**

1. what the data source is (scores from exams, surveys, presentations, etc.)
2. who the data is collected from (e.g., students in course X, majors in their final semester)
3. how the data will be gathered and by whom
4. how often/when data will be gathered
5. who will evaluate/score it
6. what criteria will be used to evaluate/score it
7. what the evaluation scale is (%? SD – SA? 0-5? P/F?)
8. the criteria for acceptable performance (e.g., 85% pass rate, an average 75% score, 80% agree or strongly agree)
9. who will review the results and when they will be reviewed

**In “Results” in Compliance Assist, please provide:**

An objective statement of the degree to which students met the program’s performance criteria for each learning outcome

* + A summary of scores or responses for the group
    - Concrete, specific information (e.g., “*63% of students met the criterion for assessment 1*”)
  + Include reference to data files you’re attaching
    - Omit student identifiers (e.g., names, ID numbers)

(“Baseline Results” refers to the survey software named Baseline)

**In “Action” in Compliance Assist, please state your action plan: what steps you will take based on the results of each assessment, such as:**

* Incorporating more of content X in a course
* Communicating with advisers to have students take course X before course Y
* Adding a new course
* Collecting the same data next year to see if good performance is maintained over time
* Changing the way concept X is taught and practiced

**In the “Timeline” section in Compliance Assist, please state the program’s schedule for implementing the action plan and achieving the learning outcome, and identify the parties responsible for each element of the action plan.**

**In the “Reporting Results” section in Compliance Assist, please state:**

* + The program’s plan for communicating the results of the program assessment to stakeholders (e.g., students and their parents, administrators, community members and supporters)
    - The report should summarize the assessment process (i.e., which learning outcomes were assessed, how, what the data showed, what action the program will take based on those results, and when those actions will be taken).
  + Audience-appropriate information about what you did, why, what you found, and how and when you will use it.
    - Format and content may vary across groups
    - Program websites are a good venue for reports
  + Includes how/where/when you will disseminate the report (e.g., post it on the program’s website)