

Guide for Developing Department Assessment Plans

An assessment plan is a document that specifies how faculty evaluate student achievement of department goals and how the information obtained from that evaluation is used to improve the department.

- 1) Develop, review, or revise the department mission statement. A mission statement should:
 - a) aim to focus the work of faculty and students in the department by clearly stating the purpose of the department.
 - b) align with the university's mission to "... enable all its students to develop intellectually, spiritually, ethically, socially, artistically, and physically in order to enrich their own lives and the lives of others."
 - c) Indicate that the department's efforts are somewhat unique from other departments within the university
 - d) be agreed upon by the faculty in the department
- 2) Develop long-range department goals. Goals should:
 - a) state desired learning outcomes of the department (what students should know, care about, or be able to do)
 - b) have an obvious relationship to the department mission
 - c) direct teaching and learning in the department
- 3) Develop specific learning objectives for students in the department. Learning objectives should:
 - a) be specific statements describing behaviors the department expects its students to demonstrate at the end of instruction
 - b) be measurable (student attainment of learning objectives should be observable)
 - c) comprehensively cover each departmental goal (at least one objective should be developed per goal)
- 4) Develop a list of measures or assessments. These measures should:
 - a) yield useful results (the assessments will actually measure the intended learning objectives)
 - b) be realistic. Make sure the department will be able to develop/purchase/administer/analyze the measures.
 - c) be comprehensive. Taken as a whole, the assessments should measure as many learning objectives as possible.
 - d) represent multiple methods of measuring learning objectives

Possible Measures or Measurement Opportunities: capstone courses, traditional course exams, performance exams, projects, presentations, surveys, interviews, focus groups, standardized tests

- 5) Develop an assessment timeline. This timeline should:
 - a) specify when, where, and by whom assessments will be administered
 - b) specify a plan to gather data from each assessment
 - c) identify how the department will analyze the assessment information
- 6) Gather the measures or assessments.
 - a) Before you create an assessment, search for similar assessments already produced
 - b) Select the best assessment based on the following criteria:

Efficiency: A good assessment requires a relatively small amount of resources to yield useful information

Directness: A good assessment provides direct evidence of the attainment of departmental goals/objectives

Usefulness: A good assessment yields information that will be used by the department for future improvement

7) Administer/conduct the assessments according to the department timeline.

- a) Involve as many students as possible in the department assessment activities
- b) Collect data from the assessments (as described in the timeline)
- c) Evaluate the merits of each assessment (should this assessment be used in the future?)

8) Analyze the information obtained from the assessments.

- a) Analyze data from each assessment separately to see if department goals/objectives are being met
- b) Aggregate data from multiple assessments to provide an overall indicator of progress
- c) Track data from similar assessments over time to identify trends

9) Communicate assessment results.

- a) Gather faculty to discuss information obtained from the assessments
- b) Discuss areas of relative strength and weakness as well as recent trends

10) Evaluate the department (and the assessment plan) based on results from the assessments.

- a) Identify potential areas of improvement for the department.
- b) Modify objectives, assessments, or the timeline to improve the department assessment plan.

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