



Office of Academic Assessment

Assessment for improving student
learning

The Path to *Achievement* and *Excellence* in
Assessing Student Learning at NAU

*A Guide for Faculty,
Sharing our Best Practices*

2007-2008

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NOTE: The NAU *Online Course Evaluation System* is being managed through the Academic Information Office (AIO) as of August, 2007.

CONTENTS

I. Degree-Program Assessment: The NAU Approach.....	3
Our Vision: A Focus on Learning.....	3
Six Principles for Effective Assessment.....	3
Accreditation through <i>NCA</i> : A Peer-Review Process.....	4
Assessment Plans.....	4
Assessment Reports.....	4
Resources and Services: The Office of Academic Assessment.....	5
II. Guide to Writing Annual Assessment Plans and Reports.....	6
Learning Outcomes.....	6
Assessment Methods and Approaches.....	7
Assessment Findings: Sharing Results.....	9
Making Use of Assessment Findings.....	10
Interpretation of Assessment Findings.....	11
Reviewing Your Assessment Process.....	12
III. Seals of Assessment <i>Achievement</i> and <i>Excellence</i>.....	14
Purpose.....	14
Two Levels of Recognition.....	14
Nomination Process.....	14
Frequency of Recognition.....	14
Dissemination to Recognized Academic Programs.....	14
Announcements of Recognized Programs to NAU.....	14
Potential Uses of the Seals.....	14
Requests of Recognized Programs.....	15
IV. Progress in Degree-Program Assessment at NAU.....	16
Assessment Audit for Degree Programs, 2006-2007.....	16
Most Common Learning Outcomes at NAU.....	18
V. References Cited.....	19
VI. APPENDIX.....	20
Assessment Plan Template	
Criteria for Reviewing Assessment Plans	
Annual Report Template	
Criteria for Reviewing Annual Assessment Reports	
Sample Exemplary Annual Reports, 2006-2007 (TBA)	

I. DEGREE-PROGRAM ASSESSMENT: THE NAU APPROACH

Our Vision: A Focus on Learning

Have you ever wondered how well your students are actually learning what you taught? This is certainly a common question among faculty members who focus so much time on teaching. We actually assess learning in numerous ways, from simply interpreting students' reactions in class, to writing feedback on student projects or performances. During the past decade, adaptation of course-level assessment techniques to broader, degree-program outcomes has been greatly refined, and is becoming an exciting way to measure student learning across the curriculum. This Guide will provide you with basic tools, knowledge, and options for maximizing assessments of student learning within your own degree programs, and for making good use of the results. This guide has been a long time in coming, as many of our faculty and leadership have spent a decade of learning themselves to ultimately shape the NAU process.

There are increasing calls for accountability in higher education, especially to demonstrate student successes. Employers are looking for graduates with professional skills as well as academic knowledge. Wisely, regional accrediting agencies such as *North Central Association* now urge member institutions to be accountable in ways that work for us. If we can showcase student successes through our own, faculty-driven process, perhaps external calls for standardized exams across all disciplines will diminish. The good news is that we are already assessing learning and have always done so. Now, we are learning how to *document* these findings in useful and manageable ways. Our collective efforts can therefore serve two mutual purposes: (1) provide us with useful information on what and how our students are learning, and (2) show our external constituents what they increasingly want, and deserve, to see. This dual-audience approach is supported by national assessment advisors, including Huba and Freed (2000, 19):

"It is becoming increasingly clear that the best way for institutions to be accountable to any audience is to incorporate the evaluation of student learning into the way they operate on a regular basis. When faculty collectively take charge of their educational programs, making visible their purpose and intent. . . *the institution itself is the primary beneficiary while external audiences are satisfied as well.*" (emphasis added)

Six Principles for Effective Assessment at NAU

- **Trust Faculty Expertise:** Assessing student learning should be faculty-driven, as it has always been. Faculty members and their respective curriculum committees know their own standards for student success and should consequently be trusted to determine whether their students are meeting those standards.
- **Embrace Diverse Methods and Outcomes:** Learning outcomes, program goals, and assessment methods should be program-driven, determined by the faculty. The immense diversity of learning outcomes and pedagogies at NAU represents a fundamental strength of higher education.
- **Maximize Existing Approaches:** Assessments at the degree-program level should trend toward seamlessness, taking advantage of existing student projects, exams, and performances (i.e. *embedded assessments*). The University Assessment Committee cautions ambitious programs to keep assessments manageable and informative.
- **Solicit Administrative Support:** Assessment efforts can be encouraged through a variety of administrative policies and support mechanisms, including targeted mini-grants and stipends, the inclusion of assessment materials into seven-year reviews, and providing appropriate staff, offices, and committees to oversee the university efforts. All of this is now in place at NAU.
- **Promote a Culture of Encouragement:** The university's assessment approach should be one of encouragement and positive reinforcement, rather than threatening or punitive. Our accreditation agency, *North Central Association* (NCA) agrees. NAU and NCA are concerned foremost with the *documentation and uses* of assessment findings, rather than the actual

- findings themselves. Degree programs should determine their own uses of assessment findings without concern for negative repercussions.
- **View Assessment as Action Research:** There are recognized similarities and differences between traditional scientific research and assessment. While traditional research is designed to test theories to create generalizations, assessment is a type of *action research* designed to inform practice in an iterative, ongoing manner. Still, assessment does not require the same level of rigor (in most cases) that consumes lots of time and effort. It is often sufficient to collect some decent information on student learning that can be used to inform curricular decisions on an ongoing basis.

Accreditation through NCA: A Peer-Review Process

Our accrediting body, *North Central Association of Colleges and Schools* (NCA), is one of six regional accreditors in the United States. Our membership with NCA is voluntary (though still deemed necessary), and NCA is in turn enabled to accredit institutions by the United States Department of Education. NCA membership includes more than 1,000 institutions in the Midwest and West. NCA encourages us to reveal what and how our students are learning and doing well, and to demonstrate that we conscientiously collect and use assessment data to improve curricula.

We can think of the 10-year NCA self-study process as a giant, macro-level peer review. NAU occasionally sends trained faculty members and administrators to review other institutions, just as we are hosting reviewers from elsewhere in October, 2007. NCA now recommends an assessment approach appropriate for our institutional culture – one that is **practical, continuing, faculty-driven, and provides useful evidence of student learning** for public stakeholders as well as ourselves. This accreditation approach was praised recently by a national assessment leader, Peter Ewell (2007, 11) (*see quote below*).

“The kinds of assessment approaches that the regional accreditors have emphasized are compatible with faculty and institutional values; they are mission-centered, institutionally tailored, frequently authentic, and rooted in individual disciplines. So, despite the constant litany of complaint from institutions about ‘what accreditors want,’ we simply would not be where we are in assessment today without them.”

Assessment Plans

All undergraduate and graduate degrees are required to implement manageable assessment plans focusing on some program-specific learning outcomes chosen by each academic unit. While programs are encouraged to keep their plans brief, they must include the academic unit’s mission, a manageable set of broad learning outcomes, methods used to assess those outcomes, and provisions for feedback and uses of assessment findings. The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) requires **one assessment plan for each degree program** at NAU, including graduate and undergraduate degrees, but not for minors or emphasis areas. (Some academic units choose to assess minors or emphasis areas as well.)

Assessment plans should be considered *living documents*, as program mission, goals, and priorities are continuously updated with changing circumstances. No assessment plan should be “written in stone,” and NAU recommends the occasional revision and discussion of assessment plans once every few years if not more frequently. There is consequently room for – and expectation of – trial and error with respect to the methods that are most appropriate for a given academic unit.

The OAA maintains a database and Web site with all updated plans. The faculty-led **University Assessment Committee (UAC)** reviews plans on a schedule aligned with NAU’s 7-year review process and provides praise, suggestions, and recommendations on assessment plans to academic units. Professionally accredited programs can substitute their own assessment plans, presuming their expectations for assessment align with those of NAU. (See Appendix for the NAU Assessment Plan Template.)

Assessment Reports

All academic units at NAU are asked to submit short annual assessment reports in either November or April (unit's choice) to the Office of Academic Assessment. This is the process through which assessment plans are implemented, with findings used as appropriate by the academic units. We have been working to make this process as efficient and useful as possible. Reports should highlight assessment activities during the past year and show how assessment data is being used to help adjust curricula and, especially, to showcase student learning successes. More academic units each year are using favorable findings to promote their programs and student accomplishments, as recommended by NCA. **The University Assessment Committee** provides a useful template for writing reports, and a detailed list of criteria for evaluating them and providing feedback (See Appendix for the NAU Assessment Report Template and Criteria).

This is arguably the most important part of the assessment process, and potentially the most useful for academic units, the faculty, and students. Since 2006 the faculty-led University Assessment Committee has provided helpful feedback on annual reports and will implement a new recognition process for 2007-2008, dubbed the **Seal of Assessment Achievement** and the **Seal of Assessment Excellence** (see Section III). The Office of Academic Assessment maintains a database with all current and past annual reports and displays all recent reports on its Web site, along with their respective assessment plans.

Resources and Services Offered by the Office of Academic Assessment

The Office of Academic Assessment (OAA) seeks to support quality student learning and to foster excellence in educational practices by establishing and maintaining a culture of assessment and improvement at the course, program, and institutional levels. The basic premise (and slogan) of OAA is "Assessment for improving student learning."

We will gladly assist academic programs at NAU with assessment efforts upon request. **Please contact the OAA staff directly** by phone or email (see title page) to solicit and/or schedule the following services:

- *Specialized Consulting Visits:*
 - *With individual Chairs or Directors*
 - *With departmental assessment or curriculum committees*
 - *With entire departments or schools at faculty meetings*
- *Analysis of program-level assessment data: We can run statistics on your rubrics, etc.*
- *Classroom and Web-course assessment techniques*
- *Designing course evaluation questions suitable for assessing learning*
- *Designing manageable degree-program assessment plans and annual reports*
- *Preparing for NCATE assessment requirements*
- *On-line Assessment Resources on the OAA Web Site*
- *Practical books on assessment can be provided upon request*

Additional copies of this **Guide** can be provided to faculty or departments upon request, and it is also available on the OAA Web site as a pdf.

The OAA also provides complimentary copies of Linda Suskie's book, **Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide** to academic units. Suskie's book can be used as a supplement to this Guide, and appropriate pages are referenced throughout for further information. If your academic unit still needs a copy of this useful book, please contact the OAA.

Please see the OAA Web Sites for further online resources: www.nau.edu/assessment.

II. GUIDE TO WRITING ASSESSMENT PLANS AND REPORTS

Learning Outcomes

What will my students know?

What will they understand?

What will they be able to do with their knowledge at the end of the course or degree program?

Your answers to these questions constitute your intended *learning outcomes* (Huba & Freed, 2000).

The “outcomes approach” to education focuses on student learning, whereas many of us are still used to the “inputs approach” that emphasizes various inputs to courses, pedagogy, and curricula. Many of our course evaluation questions often provide little information about student learning because they still focus on inputs – quality of text books, organization of material, and so forth. Though considerations for inputs are still necessary and vital, a greater emphasis on learning outcomes acknowledges the literally thousands of teaching approaches that can potentially lead to designated outcomes.

Outcomes can be written at various levels, including lesson, course, degree program, or institution. We are focusing on degree-program outcomes for purposes here. Typically, these outcomes are broader and fewer in number than course outcomes, and determined collectively by the entire faculty. Although some people would ideally like to assess everything students learn in a given program, that is impossible given time and resource constraints. Specific learning outcomes for individual courses can be handled at that level, and trusted to the faculty members teaching the courses. (Certain course-level assessments may be applicable to program-level outcomes, however, such as those in writing-intensive courses or capstone experiences).

Thus, academic programs at NAU are encouraged to focus on a few fundamental aspects of knowledge, skills, or values on which all faculty members agree. The OAA recommends a range of **3-9 program-level outcomes, though 4-6 seems to be ideal**. No, we can't assess everything, but it is possible to collect some good information on the fundamental aspects of learning that we expect from students by the time they graduate. *Some of the more effective outcomes are those that integrate disciplinary knowledge with a behavioral skill*, such as:

“Students will be able to present [insert discipline] knowledge, description, analyses, and synthesis in written form.”

Learning outcomes should be written in a way that facilitates the assessment of those outcomes. This means using various **action verbs** to show specifically what students should be able to know, do, or value. The list below (from <http://faculty.washington.edu/krumme/guides/bloom1.html>) includes some common action verbs associated with categories in the cognitive domain, commonly referred to as **Bloom's Taxonomy**. This list is not exhaustive, but exemplifies some of the more commonly used verbs for writing learning outcomes.

Outcome-illustrating Verbs for Categories in the Cognitive Domain (not exhaustive):

1. **Knowledge:** the remembering or recalling of previously learned information.
 - a. Defines, describes, enumerates, identifies, labels, lists, matches, names, reads, records.
2. **Comprehension:** Grasping or understanding the meaning of informational materials.
 - a. Classifies, cites, classifies, describes, discusses, estimates, explains, generalizes, paraphrases, restates, summarizes
3. **Application:** The use of previously learned information in new and concrete situations to solve problems.
 - a. acts, articulates, collects, computes, constructs, develops, discovers, implements, informs, instructs, predicts, prepares, solves, teaches, uses

4. **Analysis:** Breaking down information into its component parts, examining such information to develop divergent conclusions, making inferences, or finding evidence to support generalizations.
 - a. Breaks down, correlates, differentiates, distinguishes, illustrates, infers, outlines, prioritizes, recognizes, separates, subdivides
5. **Synthesis:** Creatively or divergently applying prior knowledge and skills to produce a new or original whole (basically the opposite of analysis).
 - a. Adapts, anticipates, categorizes, collaborates, combines, compiles, contrasts, designs, devises, expresses, facilitates, integrates, models, plans, rearranges, reorganizes, revises
6. **Evaluation:** Judging the value of material based on personal values/opinions, resulting in an end product, with a given purpose, without real right or wrong answers.
 - a. Appraises, compares, contrasts, concludes, criticizes, critiques, defends, evaluate, judges, justifies, supports

Examples from NAU degree programs: (Prefaced with, “Students will be able to...”)

- Articulate the role of communication in a diverse and democratic society.
- Develop detailed lesson plans for teaching secondary or junior college levels.
- Demonstrate an introductory knowledge of works of art, history, music, philosophy, literature and religion as expressions of the Humanities.
- Present physical and human geography content knowledge, description, analyses, and syntheses through the use of oral presentations.
- Develop the skills necessary to collect, analyze, interpret, and present data.
- Carry out important laboratory procedures in chemistry.
- Think critically and globally, being able to analyze problems and develop solutions with little direction from outside sources.
- Evaluate the quality of reported Justice research.
- Apply the scientific method to conduct and interpret research inquiries using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- Apply the discussion to policy and real-world applications.
- Demonstrate the knowledge of mental structures and processes that underlie individual human experience and behavior.
- Organize and orally deliver content based on audience and purpose.
- Communicate effectively with employees and guests in hospitality industry settings.

More Information: Linda Suskie's *Assessing Student Learning*, Chapter 5, pp. 73-90. (Need a book? The Office of Academic Assessment provides complimentary copies to academic units upon request!)

Assessment Methods and Approaches

Are your learning outcomes focused on content knowledge, behavioral skills, or human values and dispositions? Often, the confusion over which assessment approach to apply is simplified by the outcome itself and what it is that you wish to measure. This section provides an overview of approaches that could be incorporated to meet certain assessment needs given the emphasis of specific learning outcomes. As with traditional research, the **validity** of an instrument or approach refers to its ability to provide reasonably accurate and truthful information regarding a particular outcome (Suskie, 2004). Also, well-validated instruments may not be appropriate for specific assessment situations, so it is important to align the learning outcome with an appropriate assessment approach. As an obvious example, a standardized exam will likely not yield much information about whether students can effectively present orally with PowerPoint slides. The following list provides an overview of the more common assessment approaches and techniques used for degree-program learning outcomes.

Direct Assessments

Direct evidence of student learning provides *demonstrations* of what students know or can do with their knowledge. **The most effective degree-program assessment plans include at least one, and often two or three, direct assessment measures**, because they provide direct evidence of student accomplishments. Typical direct methods include the following:

- Projects, papers, theses, products, exhibitions, performances, case studies, clinical evaluations, portfolios, interviews, oral exams, essay exams, “capstone” experiences, field research, summaries of electronic discussion threads, scores and pass rates on licensure/certification exams, student reflections on attitudes, values, or beliefs, internship reviews by advisors or supervisors.

Indirect Assessments

Indirect evidence of student learning provides student or employer input on what they *believed* was learned or accomplished. In addition to indicating *what* was learned, indirect evidence can often provide answers to *why*. Such indirect input tends to be less persuasive than direct evidence, given its basis on perception rather than actual products or performances. Still, it can be highly informative if indirect evidence is **triangulated** to corroborate with findings from direct evidence. For instance, a survey for which students express opinions about their writing or oral presentation skills can be compared with actual direct evidence of student writing or presentations. Such triangulation provides more than one source of evidence regarding a specific learning outcome. The most effective degree-program assessment plans tend to incorporate some combination of both direct and indirect evidence. Some of the common types of indirect assessment evidence include the following:

- Student/alumni satisfaction surveys, focused on their perceived learning
- Exit interviews with Chairs/Directors, focused on perceived learning
- Alumni perceptions of their career responsibilities and satisfaction
- Student reflections, including essays, journals, short “minute” papers (can also double as direct evidence, depending on the intended use.)
- Student ratings of their knowledge and skills, and reflections on what they have learned
- Course evaluations that include questions directed at specific learning outcomes
- Student participation rates in faculty research, publications, conference presentations
- Honors, awards, scholarships earned by students and alumni
- Assignment grades, if not accompanied by a rubric or scoring guide

Objective Assessments (i.e. exams, quizzes)

An *objective assessment* typically needs no professional judgment to score correctly, though interpretation of results will still require professional judgment (Suskie 2004). These are commonly used because they are efficient, provide immediate results, and are usually easy to score and compare with other test scores or past results. Objective test items typically focus on items with only one correct answer and with little room for debate. Such tests are often of the multiple-choice or true-false variety that test factual knowledge.

- **Advantages and uses:** These are valid assessment techniques still commonly used, though their applications are limited. Standardized tests are arguably quite necessary and useful for various professional programs, and allow relatively easy comparisons and benchmarking with other institutions or programs. Once created, they are also quite easy to score. With respect to outcomes assessment, such tests or quizzes are best relegated to course- or lesson-level assessments to determine mastery of rote knowledge.
- **Disadvantages and cautions:** Objective exams or quizzes tend to test knowledge bit by bit, item by item, which is less appropriate for assessing higher-order thinking skills such as application, analysis, and synthesis. With some exceptions, they are less useful for full program-level assessment of student skills and overall knowledge and abilities. As Huba and Freed (2000, 12) point out, citing Howard Gardner, “the ability to take objectively scored tests successfully is a useless skill as soon as one graduates from college. The rest of one’s life, he says, is a series of projects”.

Subjective Assessments

Aside from objective tests and quizzes (above), most assessment methods are *subjective*, in that they provide numerous possible answers of varying quality and require professional judgment to score (Suskie 2004). The bulk of *direct* and *indirect* evidence listed above is, by its nature, subjective. A common tool used to score and analyze subjective assessments is the scoring guide, or *rubric*.

- **Advantages and uses:** These are becoming increasingly popular and informative for use in the assessment of learning outcomes that cannot be adequately assessed with traditional tests. Their advantages include the following:
 - You can assess numerous behavioral skills, including writing, organization, synthesis, and problem solving, that traditional exams typically do not. Subjective assessments often use direct evidence and promote creativity and originality.
 - You can be flexible with interpretation, analysis, and scoring of subjective assessments. Students can receive partial credit, or certain aspects of a project can be weighted.
- **Disadvantages and cautions:** While subjective assessments are often the most informative to judge higher-order thinking skills and other outcomes, certain cautions should be considered:
 - They can be time-consuming to create and score, so it is important to devote adequate time and energy to creating and analyzing them.
 - Some form of additional analysis will be required, such as a content analysis or criteria analysis using a rubric.

Performance (Authentic) Assessments

Heavily overlapping with subjective and direct assessments (above), performance assessments include projects, papers, performances, portfolios, and other student products designed to evaluate higher-order thinking (see Learning Outcomes above) and require students to directly show their abilities that professors desire (Huba and Freed, 2000). Sometimes termed “authentic” assessments, these tend to be qualitative, allowing us to evaluate the quality of students’ work. Students *demonstrate* their skills rather than relate their learning through objective exams. Scoring is typically based on subjective judging with the aid of criteria we develop, often through a scoring guide, or *rubric*. Performance assessments are subjective and include all of the benefits of subjective assessments (above). Additionally, they tend to merge learning and assessment. Students are simultaneously learning as they work on performance assessments. Further, such assessments can focus on specific real-world skills that will be expected of students after they graduate.

More Information: Linda Suskie’s *Assessing Student Learning*, Chapter 6, pp. 94-114. (Need a book? The Office of Academic Assessment provides complimentary copies to academic units upon request!)

Assessment Findings: Sharing Results

What actual information or results did you obtain from your assessments? Such results constitute your *findings*, not unlike those of a typical research project. This is the first critical step of the assessment process, to actually produce some useful information about what your students have learned. This will serve as the basis for the interpretation of results at faculty or student meetings, and for important decisions about adjusting curricula and for showcasing student successes. Such assessment evidence can, and should, provide useful justifications for such decisions. Findings can be reported in a variety of ways, and summarized for annual reporting purposes.

Tips for Reporting and Sharing Findings

One of the more rewarding experiences – according to consistent, anecdotal comments – is the time faculty members spend discussing and interpreting assessment results with their peers. The annual report can stimulate productive conversations among faculty and staff with respect to student learning. Here are some tips to consider when reporting assessment findings:

- **Keep your audience in mind.** Why did you undertake the assessment in the first place, and for whom? You may have multiple audiences for your assessment report (or parts of it), including combinations of faculty, staff, students, alumni, or other constituents or stakeholders. Be sure to write your findings in a way that will tell an appropriate and informative story for your particular audience(s).
 - **NOTE:** The faculty, staff, and students of your own academic programs are considered the primary audience(s) for annual assessment reports. These are the people most likely to use the findings in productive ways. The Office of Academic Assessment should not be your primary audience 😊.
- **Be concise; Move from broad to specific findings.** It helps to begin a report with some broad overviews of what was learned through the assessments, perhaps leading to more detailed results. The Office of Academic Assessment recommends the use of the **Annual Report Template** (see appendix and web site) provided by the University Assessment Committee, as a tool for keeping reports concise and informative.
- **Keep your findings meaningful for the target audience.** For faculty, this typically means providing an overview of findings that can potentially lead to some form of action. Are there any unanticipated or otherwise interesting findings that can be discussed? The most useful information will likely apply to these broad questions: In what ways is our academic unit excelling, and in what ways might we improve, with respect to enhancing student learning (and teaching)?
- **Provide informed commentary with occasional statistics:** Be sure that you can tell a story with any numbers that you report, not unlike providing a (brief) discussion of results in an academic journal or book. Perhaps present relevant statistics and numbers in a table or graph, and highlight what is apparently most important about those numbers.
- **Avoid the use of course grades.** Grades can be useful as broad indicators of student success within a program or course, but they rarely tell us much about what was actually learned. A student receiving a “B” for a course, for instance, might have excelled at critical thinking or course content but performed below average on writing or oral communication skills. Other factors weigh into final grades as well, such as attendance, participation, and percentage of readings or assignments completed. Thus, **the use of grades as primary indicators of specific learning outcomes is discouraged.** Assessment information should be able to answer the questions, “What are my students learning well?” and “What could my students be learning more effectively?” Typically, this information can be extracted from existing exams, projects, and other student work prior to the assignment of a final grade.

Examples from Annual Reports at NAU

- “At the group level, there was significant improvement in writing ability in terms of content, organization, and writing mechanics. The biggest gains during the semester were from writing mechanics (58% - 91%). . . By the end of the semester approximately 90% of students demonstrated competency or better in the three areas of content, organizational skills, and writing mechanics.”
- “The written communication skills were evaluated based on the following criteria: organization, style, supporting materials for claims, grammar/spelling, and in-text citations and referencing. In general, students are performing well in terms of organization and style. There was less consistency with grammar/spelling, supporting materials for claims, in-text citations and references.”
- “The results from a select exam problem showed that the strong students were expert in all three aspects. The weaker students also displayed the ability to communicate relevant relationships and definitions, but were lacking in understanding and ability to develop an effective strategy for solving the problem.”

- “Graduate students performed slightly better than undergrads at the start of the semester; by the end of the semester, both grads and undergrads had improved and were performing at the same level.”
- “60% of the papers evaluated were rated as strong to superior and 40% were rated as competent. Strong to superior papers effectively utilized a literature review to identify causal variables, derived testable hypotheses, and developed research designs appropriate to the topic. Competent papers indicated solid knowledge of the logic of research design and causal analysis, but some indicated some weakness in developing a research design that would generate empirical data to test appropriately derived hypotheses”.
- “Areas in which students rated their learning outcomes most highly were in developing their ability to better understand social issues or problems and being able to understand the social structure impacts on their life experiences (98.2% rated “a great deal” or “considerably”). Students were also nearly unanimous in stating that the program developed their ability to critically assess and evaluate ideas (94.5%).”

More Information: Linda Suskie’s *Assessing Student Learning*, Chapter 15: pp. 281-297. (Need a book? The Office of Academic Assessment provides complimentary copies to academic units upon request!)

Making Use of Assessment Findings

This is arguably the most vital part of the entire assessment process. All of the previous effort on planning, collecting, and analyzing assessment data is for naught if the findings are not used for various purposes. Both NAU and North Central Association (NCA) recommend two primary uses for assessment findings: **(1)** to showcase, highlight, and otherwise celebrate student-learning successes and accomplishments at the degree-program level, and **(2)** to discuss and determine courses of action for adjusting or otherwise improving the curriculum. While our various external constituents increasingly want to see evidence of learning successes, faculty members are also interested in obtaining decent justifications for making adjustments to their curricula. Both of these uses have potential to promote and improve a given academic program, making the assessment process meaningful to the faculty.

Showcasing Student-Learning Successes

Here are some ways for academic units to think about celebrating successes:

- Publicize results to combinations of faculty, students, alumni, prospective students, administrators, donors (these examples below have all been applied at NAU):
 - Department Web sites: Post summary of relevant results
 - Alumni or departmental newsletters
 - Recruiting brochures
 - Brochures to faculty and students
 - Student orientation materials
 - Summaries of results sent to major prospective employers of your students
 - Group E-mail messages to students and faculty, expressing congratulations
- Celebrate with events for students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, etc.
 - Awards ceremonies
 - Luncheons or barbeques
 - Party for students and faculty
 - Public forums to present student work
 - Ask faculty to mention results in their courses

Examples from Annual Reports at NAU

- “At the end of each spring semester, we host an Annual Awards Banquet for our students, to which all alumni and clinical supervisors are invited. All student achievements through the

year are publicly celebrated, awards are given to students, and any students who have successfully passed the [standardized] exam are celebrated.”

- “Parts of the report have also been rewritten and disseminated in our departmental newsletters, also available on our Web site. For example, results from our senior exit survey are in the August, 2006 issue, an article about our mission statement is in the Nov/Dec 2005 issue, and we reported exit interview data from 2004-2005.”

Making Adjustments to Curricula

Curricular adjustments can come in all varieties, sizes, and forms. Two dominant types of curricular changes include (1) significant program-level or course changes approved through the UCC or UGC, such as course additions, deletions, or program changes; (2) internal changes to specific courses or other requirements, such as adding projects related to certain skills, tweaking prerequisites, coordinating faculty efforts on student projects, etc. Although such changes have occurred in the past, obtaining specific assessment data can add evidence to justify such changes that focus more directly on improving student learning.

Examples from Annual Reports at NAU

- “This assessment confirms our recommendations contained in the 2006 assessment report. We have added a new course, Internal Auditing and Controls to the required Accounting core under the new Professional Accounting Program, effective fall, 2007.”
- “When the results were gathered, a meeting of the 4 classroom instructors and 6 clinical supervisors was held. Results were discussed, and the following changes were implemented: 1) Increased problem-solving situations were included in the classroom and the clinic, 2) Increased decision-making situations were included in the clinic, 3) Decision making was discussed with the students after student course experiences”.
- “Some of us have changed our syllabi. In one case, for example, a professor teaching one of the junior-level writing courses has included points for peer review of writing, one extra paper, and graded topic clearance for papers. The capstone course was changed from a series of unconnected journal assignments to a portfolio-type course, in which all work was aimed at the final paper.”
- “As planned, one area has revised its W class to provide more rigorous and pointed instruction in writing, especially in the essential writing skills of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.”

Interpretation of Assessment Findings

What questions do you intend to answer with your assessments? Are you interested in obtaining information about how your students are improving throughout a course or program (value added)? Or, would you rather determine whether or not your students are meeting certain standards or proficiencies expected of them by the time they graduate? Are you interested in comparing this year's assessment results to those of years past, or to those of students at other institutions? The bottom line is that your findings will be more meaningful if they are compared to something else. If 78% of students in a capstone course demonstrated mastery of problem-solving, for instance, what does that number mean? The six common perspectives below will provide you with some direction in how to interpret and report your assessment findings.

Six common perspectives for interpreting Findings (Suskie, 107):

- **Standards-based:** Are your students meeting your standards?
- **Benchmarking:** How do your students compare to peers?
- **Best Practice:** How do your students compare to the best of their peers?
- **Value-added:** Are your students improving?
- **Longitudinal:** Is your program improving?
- **Capability:** Are your students doing as well as they can?

Examples from Annual Reports at NAU

- **Benchmarking:** “The main purpose for gathering this information was to establish benchmarks to which future data can be compared: 1) A quantitative analysis of graduating seniors’ perceptions towards the core courses using an exit-survey questionnaire, 2) A qualitative analysis of graduating seniors’ perceptions on the strengths and weaknesses of the program.”
- **Longitudinal:** “The analysis of student work from portfolio assignments and the resolution of a complex case study given as a final exam showed similar results to those observed in the previous report.”
- **Value added:** “At time one, 29% of the students had papers whose content was rated as inadequate or weak, 44% had papers rated as competent, and 27% had papers rated as strong or superior. At time two, only 10% papers were rated as weak, 20% were competent, and nearly 70% were strong or superior. A Chi-Square test was computed after collapsing the competent, strong, and superior categories. This test revealed a significant change over time.”

More Information: See Linda Suskie’s *Assessing Student Learning*, pp. 106-117. (Need a book? The Office of Academic Assessment provides complimentary copies to academic units upon request!)

Reviewing Your Assessment Process

Is your current process satisfactorily answering your questions about student learning?

The assessment of student learning is best considered a form of *action research*, which provides ongoing and useful information that can be applied to a given program’s needs. Unlike more traditional research, where a specific project is concluded and reported, assessment is an iterative, ongoing process that is never set in stone. This is good news for faculty who wish to revisit their assessment plans on a regular basis to make changes to learning outcomes, assessment measures, and methods of analysis as they deem appropriate. The annual *assessment report template* (see Appendix, or OAA Web site) therefore includes a question that encourages the faculty to review their assessment process to consider any changes.

Examples from Annual Reports at NAU:

- “The assessment plan was reviewed by the faculty in several regular meetings during the academic year as well as a day-long off-campus retreat in January, 2007. The faculty felt the assessments were adequate and that they provided an overall impression of how students were performing in the program collectively, rather than in any particular course.”
- “This process, all of it (revised mission statement, revised learning outcomes & assessment plan, pilot data collection from our majors at key points in their career, exit surveys, implementation of a pre-post design, newsletters, web pages, faculty involvement) have all been extremely positive and well-received this year. We are likely to work on changing the format of the questionnaire for our 302W writing assessment for next year to provide us with more detailed information that will help our instruction in that writing-intensive course.”
- “We uncovered some major problems in the reporting of our assessment findings. Namely, we aggregated data for three different classes that assessed one specific learning outcome. Our faculty felt it was important to assess certain learning outcomes in multiple dimensions. However, aggregating the data across three different classes did not allow us to determine if the learning outcome was being achieved in all dimensions. We disaggregated the data and will report it for each course.”
- “This committee felt that the Senior Exit Survey instrument and data collection process need to be re-evaluated. Future changes should provide more relevant data than those collected up to now. The committee will be suggesting new approaches in administering this survey, beginning with the spring 07’s data collection.”
- “The use of existing evaluation forms for Performance Focus Auditions and Portfolio Reviews, Sophomore Progress Interviews and Senior Capstone Experience Reports were

discussed. There was still some confusion over the use of these forms to gather data. Faculty agreed to work on improvement of data collection processes”.

III. SEALS OF ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT AND EXCELLENCE

PURPOSE: (1) To recognize academic units and programs that have demonstrated significant progress with assessing student learning, (2) To promote “best practices” in assessment by sharing practical experiences across disciplines, (3) To encourage academic programs to apply assessment findings for showcasing program-level achievements and for adjusting curricula when appropriate.

Two Levels of Recognition:

- **The Seal of Assessment Achievement:** *Recognizes significant progress with implementing degree-program assessment plans. Academic programs earning this recognition have demonstrated in their annual report that learning outcomes have been assessed through two or more methods, and findings have been discussed among the faculty.*
- **The Seal of Assessment Excellence:** *Recognizes advanced progress and accomplishment with respect to assessing student learning at the degree-program level. Academic programs earning this recognition have demonstrated a thorough implementation of assessment plan(s), the reporting of meaningful assessment data, the discussion of findings amongst faculty and perhaps students, and the use of findings to showcase student achievements and to make curricular adjustments.*

Nomination Process for the Seals:

The nomination process for both Seals is conducted jointly by the University Assessment Committee (UAC) and Office of Academic Assessment (OAA). Subcommittees of the UAC review all annual assessment reports submitted during the academic year through the use of a detailed scoring sheet, or rubric (see rubric with criteria for the Seals, attached). Feedback from the UAC reviews is sent via the OAA to the respective academic units to help guide future assessment efforts. During the summer, a joint subcommittee of OAA staff and UAC members reviews all UAC feedback and scored rubrics from the past year to determine nominations for both Seals. Following consensus on awardees, the OAA presents the Seals to the respective units during fall semester.

Frequency of Recognitions:

All academic units and/or programs are eligible to receive either Seal each year, contingent upon the submission of the program’s annual assessment report to the OAA. In this way, every academic program holds the potential to be recognized for commendable assessment efforts. Academic units and programs can earn successive years of Seals, though they may wish to display only the most recent.

Recognized Academic Programs will Receive:

- Full-color electronic “seal” for use on academic Web sites and/or printed materials as desired (e.g. JPG or TIFF format). The Seal can be linked directly to an OAA Web page that explains the significance of the recognition.
- Two hard copies of full-color certificates that can be framed and hung visibly within the building.
- Letters of Recognition for individual faculty members who have actively participated in the program assessment process.

Announcements of Seal Recipients to NAU:

- Announcement to College and Dean, for dissemination to College as deemed appropriate.
- Announcement to Provost and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, for dissemination as deemed appropriate.
- *Learning Lines* (OAA Newsletter)
- *Inside NAU*
- *Lumberjack* Newspaper
- Office of Academic Assessment (OAA) Web Site

Potential Uses of the Seal:

- Displayed on Departmental or Program Web sites

- Framed certificate(s) in the academic unit's building
- Included in seven-year program reviews or professional accreditation reports
- Promotional literature for recruitment efforts
- Departmental or School newsletters and brochures

Requests of Recognized Programs:

- Recipients of either the Seal of *Achievement* or the Seal of *Excellence* are asked to either (1) display the Seal on a departmental Web site, with a link to the OAA explanation page, and/or (2) Prominently display one or two of the hard-copy certificates on the wall. Recipients may also find alternative uses for the recognition.
- The Office of Academic Assessment may ask for permission to use all or parts of outstanding annual reports and/or assessment plans as examples to share as models for the university, or to share at various consulting visits with academic units across campus.
- It is strongly recommended that recipients of both Seals of *Achievement* and *Excellence* present a poster display of the program's assessment process and/or findings at the annual **NAU Assessment Fair**, typically held in April. Show pride in your efforts by sharing with NAU, and invite your students as well! This year's date and location will be announced by early spring, 2008.

IV. PROGRESS IN DEGREE-PROGRAM ASSESSMENT 2006-2007

Summary (from Chen & Paradis, 2007. OAA Assessment Audit 2006-2007)

Overview of Data Analyzed (see Table 1 below)

This audit report (Table 1 below) is focused on the NAU degree programs with CIP codes only, representing those programs recognized by the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR). The report is based on the most recent database from the Office of Academic Assessment, applied to Academic Year 2006-2007. It should be noted that the college organization remains the same as AY 2005-2006. The total number of degree programs considered here is 147, including 90 undergraduate and 57 graduate programs, which collectively belong to 51 academic units or areas as counted by the Office of Academic Assessment. The number of distance education programs is 39, including both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Discussion of Audit Findings (see Table 1 below)

1. **Assessment Plans:** Approximately 85% of degree programs now include assessment plans submitted to the Office of Academic Assessment. The percentage is higher for undergraduate programs compared with graduate programs, which indicates that more attention could still be focused on encouraging graduate-level assessment. A record number of 85 new or revised plans have been created since 2005, including 27 during AY06-07. This recent activity was the product of a campus-wide assessment mini-grant project that spanned two years. Degree programs that still retain outdated plans or no plans will be targeted for future start-up mini-grants. The percentage of degree programs with plans is expected to increase next year, given that several schools and departments are in the process of completing their plans as of this writing, and new degree programs are being implemented. Further, the College of Education is preparing for its inaugural NCATE accreditation effort, which will result in numerous and substantial assessment plans being added to the entire NAU collection.
2. **Annual Assessment Reports:** A total of 112 out of 147 (76%) degree programs have submitted at least one assessment report to the Office of Academic Assessment since 2004. In AY 06-07, a total of 58 degree programs submitted annual reports, representing 39% of the total. This represents excellent progress toward the implementation of assessment plans, though we are expecting these numbers to increase substantially in future years as new or revised assessment plans are implemented. 40 of these reports revealed assessment findings/results, and 12 of them documented specific uses of findings, including curricular adjustments or celebrations of program successes. These low numbers represent a good start, but clearly indicate where the emphasis for degree-program assessment will lie in future years. The University Assessment Committee began reviewing annual reports only in 2006, and 06-07 was the first full year when all annual reports were reviewed by the UAC with constructive feedback provided to academic units. It is expected that such feedback to units from this faculty-led committee will encourage future submissions, as well as increased quality of reports. Further, the Office of Academic Assessment is implementing an inaugural Assessment Recognition process for 07-08, dubbed the **Seal of Assessment Achievement** and the **Seal of Assessment Excellence**. NAU is only now beginning its emphasis on assessment reports, so future improvements to these audit statistics will be expected.

Table 1. NAU DEGREES WITH ASSESSMENT PLANS AND REPORTS, 06-07

Measures	Total (%)	U-Grad (%)	Grad (%)	Distance ^[1]
Degrees requiring plan/report*	147	90	57	39
<u>Degrees with Plans</u> (since 1999)	125 (85)	84 (93)	41 (72)	28
Plans reviewed by UAC since 2002	97 (66)	73 (81)	24 (42)	21
New/Revised plans submitted 06/07	27	21	6	6
<u>Degrees with Reports</u> (since 2004)	112 (76)	78 (87)	34 (60)	27
Reports reviewed by UAC since 2006 ^[2]	78 (53)	55 (61)	23 (40)	20
Reports submitted and reviewed by UAC, AY06/07 ^[3]	58 (39)	47 (52)	11 (19)	13
<i>Degree reports with assessment findings since AY03/04 ^[4]</i>	56 (38)	41 (46)	15 (26)	16
<i>Degree reports with assessment findings, AY06/07</i>	40 (27)	33 (37)	7 (12)	7
<i>Degree reports with demonstrated uses of assessment findings, AY06/07 ^[5]</i>	12	12	0	6

[1] Includes both Undergraduate and Graduate degrees available through Distance Learning.

[2] Reports are recorded here as separate degree programs. Departmental assessment reports typically include more than one degree program.

[3] 35 reports were submitted during Academic Year 2006-2007, covering a total of 58 degree programs. All reports were reviewed by the UAC, with constructive feedback sent to respective academic units for consideration.

[4] Degree programs with assessment results (findings) for one or more learning outcomes.

[5] Degree programs with demonstrated uses of assessment findings, for promoting student-learning achievements, for adjusting curricula, or both (Appendix 3).

* The number of degrees at NAU constitutes those recognized by ABOR with CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) codes. The Office of Academic Assessment maintains records on additional course or program-level assessment efforts not included within this Audit.

Table 2. The frequency of 10 aggregated learning outcomes in undergraduate and graduate degree programs from annual assessment reports 2005-2007. (from Chen, Z. 2007).

Student learning outcomes	Frequency of Occurrence				% ^{b)} of all programs (n=63)
	Undergraduate programs (n ₁ =43)	% ^{a)}	Graduate programs (n ₂ =20)	% ^{a)}	
Core and fundamental knowledge	29	67.4	18	90.0	74.6
Writing	25	58.1	6	30.0	49.2
Analytical skills	17	39.3	9	45.0	41.3
Oral Communication	22	51.2	2	10.0	38.1
Professional Behaviors	11	25.5	6	30.0	27.0
Research Methods	6	14.0	10	50.0	25.4
Ethics	3	7.0	7	35.0	15.9
Quantitative skills	7	16.3	3	15.0	15.9
Employment Leadership and Management	1	2.3	8	40.0	14.3
	5	11.6	3	15.0	12.7

- a) Relative percentage of frequency, the number of degree programs (undergraduate and graduate separately) with each outcome divided by the total number of undergraduate or graduate degree programs evaluated (e.g. 29/43, 18/20).
- b) Relative percentage of frequency, the number of both undergraduate and graduate degree programs with each outcome divided by the total number of degree programs evaluated (e.g. (29+18)/63 for the “core and fundamental knowledge” learning outcome).

V. References Cited

Chen, Z. and Paradis, T. 2007. *Assessment Audit 06-07: Progress in Degree-program Assessment at NAU*. Report for the Office of Academic Assessment. Northern Arizona University (see www.nau.edu/assessment).

Chen, Z. 2007. *Aggregate Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in NAU Degree Programs, 2006-2007*. Report for the Office of Academic Assessment. Northern Arizona University (see www.nau.edu/assessment).

Ewell, P. 2007. Accreditation in the Hot Seat. *Assessment Update* 19(1), Jan-Feb. 2007, pp. 11-13.

Huba, M. and Freed, J. 2000. *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the focus from teaching to learning*. Boston, et. al: Allyn and Bacon.

Suskie, L. 2004. *Assessing Student Learning: A common sense guide*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.

APPENDIX

Assessment Plan Template

**Northern
Arizona
University
Assessment Committee**

Degree Program Assessment of Student Learning Plan

<http://www4.nau.edu/assessment/main/degree/reports/plans.htm>

Instructions: To submit an assessment plan for a specified degree program, please respond to each of the questions below. *Use as much space as you need to describe the degree program assessment plan.* Once this form is completed, please email it as an attachment to d-oaa@jan.ucc.nau.edu. For guidelines and/or assistance in developing a plan for assessing student learning, please consult resources on the OAA website at <http://www.nau.edu/assessment> or contact OAA at 523-8679.

1. Date:
2. Name:
3. Title:
4. NAU Box:
5. Email:
6. Phone:
7. Academic Unit:
8. Degree Program Covered by this Assessment Plan*:
9. Does this program offer a distance learning degree? Yes No
10. If Yes, what is the delivery mode? On-site (e.g. Yuma Campus) Fully Online IITV

(*Note: Please complete a separate Assessment Plan form for each degree program.)

A. Conceptual Assessment Plan Components

Assessment enables an understanding of what students are learning as a result of the program. Assessment findings can be used for a variety of purposes including making decisions regarding curriculum and instruction as well as providing feedback to students. Mission and goals communicate to students the expected learning outcomes for a degree program.

1. *Describe the purpose of your academic unit's assessment plan.*
2. *List the student learning outcomes for the degree program addressed by this plan.*
(Note: Please complete a separate Assessment Plan form for each degree program.)
3. *List your unit mission and goals.*
4. *Explain the student learning outcomes relation to the unit mission and goals (i.e. Do the student learning outcomes reflect the unit goals and objectives, further the mission, are rooted in the academic discipline, etc.?)*
5. *Describe how and by whom assessment findings will be used.*

B. Implementation Assessment Plan Components

It is important to create a detailed implementation plan that aligns each student learning outcome with each of the following items:

- (a) how/where program outcomes are learned,
- (b) what evidence/indicator(s) will be collected, including both direct and indirect evidence,
- (c) how the evidence/indicator(s) will be collected and by whom,
- (d) how the evidence/indicator(s) will be analyzed and by whom, and
- (e) how assessment findings will be communicated back to the academic unit's faculty and students and used to improve the degree program.

Please note, it is important that the implementation plan collects useful information and that the collection and analysis methods are manageable given the resources available in your academic unit.

1. *Instructions:* For each program-level outcome (not course objectives), please provide information for each category listed below. Both direct and indirect evidence/indicators should be utilized in your assessment plan. You are encouraged to utilize existing evidence/indicators when feasible to keep the process manageable. You should also collect evidence/indicators throughout the program and not just at the end.

Program Learning Outcome	How/Where is outcome learned?	Evidence/ Indicator(s) of Learning	Collection method(s) for each source of evidence	Analysis method(s) for each source of evidence	Feedback Procedures (Faculty, staff & students)

2. Describe the responsibilities, timeline and the process for completing the annual assessment report (see separate guidelines for reporting requirements).

C. Global Design & Use

It is critical that degree program assessment plans be developed and approved by all faculty in the academic unit. In addition, *include student input and external sources* (e.g., national standards, advisory boards, employers, alumni, etc.) in the development of the assessment plan(s).

1. *Describe the process through which your academic unit created this assessment plan.*

Include:

- a. *Timeline regarding when or how often this plan will be reviewed and revised. (This could be aligned with your unit's November or April assessment report schedule.)*
- b. *How students were included in the process and/or how student input was gathered and incorporated into the assessment plan.*
- c. *What external sources were consulted in the development of this assessment plan.*
- d. *Assessment of the manageability of the plan in relation to departmental resources and personnel*

Criteria for Reviewing Assessment Plans by the University Assessment Committee

Northern
Arizona
University
Assessment Committee

Criteria for Reviewing
Degree Program Assessment of Student Learning
Enter Degree Program Name Here

DATE of UAC Review: _____

F E E D B A C K	<i>The plan should be praised for:</i>
	<i>Suggestions for improvement:</i>

Reviewer Ratings & Comments					
		Efficacy of Plan Description & Content			Suggestions for improvement
Criteria		minimal/ low	adequate/ medium	exceptional/ high	not addressed
C O N C E P T U A L I Z I N G A S S E S S M E N T	1. Purpose and use for program improvement				
	a. Assessment enables an understanding of what students are learning as a result of the program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b. Assessment findings are used for making decisions about curriculum & instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	c. Describes processes for additional uses of assessment (e.g., feedback to students)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Student Learning Expectations				
	a. Mission & goals of academic unit informed the student learning outcomes expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b. Expectations for student outcomes are stated in terms of what students are expected to learn, including: knowledge, abilities, and/or dispositions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	c. Expectations are specific enough to provide information useful for assessment and curricular improvement purposes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reviewer Ratings & Comments

Efficacy of Plan Description & Content

Suggestions for improvement

Criteria

minimal/
low adequate/
medium exceptional/
high not
addressed

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3. Evidence/Indicators

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. | Evidence is collected for each expectation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. | Evidence includes both direct (student work) and indirect (surveys, interviews) indicators of learning | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. | Selection of evidence takes advantage of existing indicators | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. | Selected indicators provide faithful representation of student learning | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. | Evidence documents and describes assessment related to distance-delivered courses | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4. Collection, Analysis, & Use of Evidence/Indicators

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. | Collection process is manageable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. | Collection process includes data regarding distance-delivered courses (if applicable) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. | Collection process is thorough, systematic and organized | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. | Collection occurs within and at the end of the degree program | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. | Each source of evidence is analyzed | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

	f. Analyses provide information useful for specific curricular improvements and specific feedback to students and faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Reviewer Ratings & Comments

Efficacy of Plan Description & Content	Suggestions for improvement
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	Criteria	minimal/ low	adequate/ medium	exceptional/ high	not addressed
I A	g. Describes who will present assessment findings & how they will be used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C O N T I N U E D	5. Schedule/timetable				
	a. Specifies when data will be collected and who is responsible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b. Specifies when data will be analyzed and who is responsible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	c. Specifies when analyses will be presented to and reviewed by faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	d. Establishes a process that provides timely feedback to the unit and to students and faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reviewer Ratings & Comments

Efficacy of Plan Description & Content

Suggestions for improvement

Criteria

minimal/
low adequate/
medium exceptional/
high not
addressed

G L O B A L D E S I G N & U S E	6. Development Process					
	a. <i>Plan was developed and approved by faculty of the academic unit</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	b. Student input was used in developing the plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	c. External sources were consulted in developing the plan (national standards, advisory boards, employers, alumni, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	7. Overall					
	a. All degrees covered by plan are specified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	b. Plan is internally consistent (evidence and analyses are aligned with learning outcomes and assessment purposes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	c. Plan is manageable relative to unit resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	d. Provides a plan for periodic review and improvement of the assessment plan itself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	e. Focus of assessment is on understanding and improving student learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Annual Report Template

Northern
Arizona
University

Annual Report on Degree Program Assessment of Student Learning

University Assessment Committee
Office of Academic Assessment

Purpose: The purpose of the *Annual Report on Degree Program Assessment of Student Learning* is to provide information about progress in assessment efforts for each degree program within your academic unit. Only one report is requested of each academic unit, as this report will accommodate multiple degree plans. (You can still submit separate reports if you prefer.) The report will be made available publicly at the Office of Academic Assessment website and will be available to appropriate accrediting agencies. It is recommended that your unit use your assessment report and results to celebrate achievements of student learning as well as to identify potential areas for future curriculum improvement. The University Assessment Committee will review your report to provide constructive feedback, as well as to identify particular academic units for potential assessment awards and/or mini-grants to support continuing assessment efforts.

Please email this completed form as an attachment to d-aaa@jan.ucc.nau.edu.

CONTACT INFO:

Academic Unit:

Date:

Name:

Title:

Email:

Phone:

NAU Box:

Degree Program(s) reported here:

ASSESSMENT REPORT:

Instructions: Please answer the following **five** questions to the best of your ability for each degree program offered within your unit. *You may use the table provided on the next page, or you may create your own report format.*

1. Summarize your **assessment activities** during the past year for each degree program. (*e.g. faculty discussions, new survey design, data collection, revised assessment plans or learning outcomes, etc.*)
2. Describe specific **assessment findings** related to the **learning outcomes** assessed for each degree program, including any pertinent context surrounding the findings. Please include the **learning outcomes themselves**. (*e.g. 77% of seniors performed at the "proficient" level of competency in problem solving, which is where we aimed to be this year using a new scoring rubric...*)
 - a. Please attach any tables, graphics, or charts to the end of this report.
3. Describe how assessment **feedback** has been provided to students, faculty, and staff. (*e.g. report for faculty, executive summary for the dean, web page for students, alumni newsletter, discussion with students in class or club event, etc.*)

4. In what ways have you **used assessment findings** to celebrate student achievements and/or to improve the curriculum this past year? (*e.g. prizes to students, hosting student parties, changes to curriculum, student projects, learning goals, assessment strategies, etc.*)
5. Describe any changes to your assessment plans, or any challenges or educational experiences with the **assessment process** this past year that you would like to share.
 - a. Please submit any **revised/updated assessment plans** to the Office of Academic Assessment along with this report.

ALTERNATIVE TABLE FORMAT:

Degree-Program Assessment Activities Please list assessment activities and progress this past year for each program.	Assessment Findings: How well are your students achieving the learning outcomes assessed?	Feedback: How have faculty, staff, students, and/or other stakeholders been informed about your findings?	Use of Findings: How have you used these assessment findings to celebrate successes and/or to improve curriculum?

(For additional rows, place cursor within last box and hit “Tab”.)

Criteria for Reviewing Annual Reports by the University Assessment Committee

Northern
Arizona
University

Criteria for Evaluating
Annual Program Assessment Reports

Enter Degree Program Name Here

University Assessment Committee
Office of Academic Assessment

DATE of UAC Review: _____

<p><i>The report should be praised for:</i></p>
<p><i>Suggestions for improvement:</i></p>

1. Criteria considered for potential Seal of Achievement nominations* To earn this Seal, the annual assessment report typically demonstrates clear <i>evidence of progress</i> in all of the following areas:	Demonstrates clear evidence of progress	More progress or info is needed in this area	Not Addressed	Comments
a. Learning outcomes are clearly stated and feasible for assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

b. Learning outcomes addressed match those specified in the most recent plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. Assessment methods or indicators are appropriate for the learning outcomes assessed (i.e. validity of methods).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
d. Assessment activities conducted align with those specified in the most recent plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
e. Findings are clearly stated for those outcomes assessed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
f. Appropriate and systematic feedback of findings are shared with faculty/staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
g. Assessments employed overall include a reasonable combination of <i>direct</i> and <i>indirect</i> methods, or multiple <i>direct</i> methods, beyond reports of course grades.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
h. The current assessment process has been reviewed with respect to successes, challenges, and managability, and changes to the assessment plan have been considered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Criteria considered for potential <i>Seal of Excellence</i> nominations* To earn this Seal, the annual assessment report typically (1) Meets all criteria for the Seal of Achievement (2) Demonstrates thorough accomplishment in at least <i>all but two</i> of the following areas:	Demonstrates clear evidence of progress	More progress or info is needed in this area	Not Addressed	Comments
a. Assessment activities have been thoroughly implemented as outlined in the assessment plan, with respect to learning outcomes assessed, time-line, and assessment methods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Feedback and potential uses of assessment findings have been discussed through faculty dialogue at meetings, retreats, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. Analyses of assessment findings involve qualitative and/or quantitative analyses beyond individual faculty generalizations on course-level learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

d. Assessment findings were triangulated between direct and/or indirect assessment methods to gain a broader perspective on specific student learning outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
e. Students have been informed of program-level assessment findings and/or provided with relevant components of the annual assessment report.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
f. Assessment findings have been used to celebrate or promote student-learning successes and/or degree-program achievements in student learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
g. Assessment findings have been used to make curricular adjustments where appropriate, either at the course or degree-program level of curricula.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
h. Assessment findings are compared using at least one contextual perspective to provide meaning: standards/proficiencies; benchmarking; best practice; value-added; longitudinal; capability. (See Guide for examples.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
i. Previous feedback from the <i>University Assessment Committee</i> or other external reviewers has been considered and acted upon as deemed appropriate by the academic unit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
* This feedback from the University Assessment Committee will serve as input to the Office of Academic Assessment (OAA) for providing <i>Seal of Assessment</i> recognitions to academic units. The OAA is responsible for awarding the Seals and is based strongly on the UAC reviews of annual assessment reports.				

Sample Exemplary Annual Reports, 2006-2007 (forthcoming)