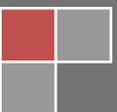


2017

# Oakland University Assessment Handbook

A Resource for Faculty



# Contents

---

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Foreword/Quick Start Guide.....</b>                                 | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>What Programs Should be Assessed?.....</b>                          | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Why We Assess: An Introduction to Assessment Philosophy .....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>The Assessment Process: A Step by Step Guide.....</b>               | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>The Assessment Plan: Step by Step .....</b>                         | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>The Assessment Report: Step by Step .....</b>                       | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Programs with External Accreditation.....</b>                       | <b>14</b> |
| <b>The University Assessment Award .....</b>                           | <b>15</b> |
| <b>More about Assessment Measures .....</b>                            | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Notes on the Assessment Process .....</b>                           | <b>18</b> |
| <b>Getting Service Credit for Assessment Activities .....</b>          | <b>19</b> |
| <b>Report Schedule .....</b>   | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Resources Available to Departments .....</b>                        | <b>21</b> |
| <b>UAC Policy on Extending the Period between Reporting Dates.....</b> | <b>23</b> |
| <b>The University Assessment Committee .....</b>                       | <b>24</b> |

## Foreword/Quick Start Guide

---

Thank you for viewing the University Assessment Committee's (UAC) handbook on assessment. This handbook is designed as a guide for faculty who are new to the assessment process or for experienced faculty that need a few clarifications about the assessment process.

The beginning part of this handbook will guide faculty through OU's assessment process, starting with a brief overview & philosophy of assessment at Oakland University, and then continuing with an in-depth discussion of the assessment process focusing specifically on the UAC's assessment plan and report form.

The UAC is happy to assist in answering questions and helping faculty navigate the assessment process. If you have questions, please e-mail the OIRA-UAC liaison, Reuben Ternes (ternes@oakland.edu).

If you want to get started quickly, here are some things you need to know:

- At Oakland University, only new programs have never been assessed before. Your program should have assessment materials and processes already in place.
- Check with your department chairperson, other faculty members in your program, and department staff to locate your program's assessment plan, assessment processes, rubrics, notes and reports.
- If no one in your department has assessment materials, the OIRA (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment) will have your program's most recent assessment plan and the most recent assessment report.
- CETL (The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) runs many workshops on assessment, learning outcomes, rubrics, etc. Check their website for upcoming workshops.
- The UAC (University Assessment Committee) usually runs an assessment workshop in February to assist programs wanting to improve their assessment plan or process. You can also contact the committee chair for help.
- Although assessment may be new to you, it is not new to the campus community. There are many resources available to help you. Just ask to get started!

## What Programs Need to Be Assessed?

---

Assessment of student learning is required for all programs that award degrees (most certificate programs do not need to be assessed). However, departments are allowed to group those programs in any fashion that makes logical sense. For example, many programs offer both a B.A. and a B.S. degree within the same content area. The UAC does not necessarily need separate reports and plans for each of these degree tracks. In this example, both degrees must be assessed, but not necessarily in isolation of each other. The department is free to construct its assessment so that both degrees are assessed at the same time. It may even be appropriate to assess some master's level programs alongside of PhD programs. The UAC does strongly encourage departments to assess graduate and undergraduate programs separately.

Some departments may be able to assess students across related disciplines. For example, Studio Art has several program tracks within its department, such as drawing, painting, and photography. These are all different programs, but they are related enough that one assessment process is sufficient, should the department want to treat them as such. Similar situations occur within modern languages, mathematics & statistics, criminal justice, music, etc.

If your assessment process currently covers more than one degree program, and you want to disaggregate the process, the department is always allowed to do so. Departments can either fill out additional reports, or simply write the report so that it is clear which assessment processes, measures, and results match up to what programs.

Departments that want to consolidate separate but related degree programs into the same assessment process are encouraged to contact the UAC to further discuss their unique situation and how best to accomplish this task.

Most certificate programs do not need to be assessed separately from their connect program. Certificate Programs that fall into both of these categories must submit an assessment plan (and eventually, a report), following standard UAC procedures:

- a) The majority of the coursework involved in the certificate program fall outside of another program that is already being assessed. (51% or more, based on credit hours)
- b) Enrollment in the certificate program is consistent (total fall enrollment in the program is greater than zero for at least three consecutive years) and prevalent (most years graduate more than 5 students).

## Why We Assess: An Introduction to Assessment Philosophy

---

Formally, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, OU's accrediting body, charges the university with providing evidence for student learning as part of its accreditation process. But above that, core components of Oakland University's mission are integrally related student learning. The assessment of student learning, therefore, is not only a requirement from our accrediting body, but also a challenge to ourselves as a university to provide the very best education that we can offer.

There are many things that one can assess that might be of interest to programs. At the core of its accrediting standards, the Higher Learning Commission has defined student learning outcomes as one of the most important things that a program (and a university) can focus on to improve student learning.

Student learning outcomes are pretty much just what they sound like: outcomes that programs intend students to learn. These are the facts, skills, methods, and ways of thinking that faculty expect students to learn before they complete the program.

Neither the UAC nor the Higher Learning Commission is interested in dictating what students should be learning in a given program. The expectation of both the UAC and the HLC are simply that faculty in every program have identified clear goals and outcomes for student learning, that they have developed measures to determine if the outcomes are being met, and most importantly, that they have a process for using what they learn through assessment to make changes to the curriculum or instruction to improve student learning.

With this in mind, the following sections describe, step by step, the process of creating a new assessment plan and writing an assessment report. Plans are required for all new programs and reports are generally required every two years. Programs with external accreditation may be eligible to have their reporting periods coincide with their accreditation.

## The Assessment Process: A Step By Step Guide

The assessment process can be broken down into two large sections: [the plan](#) and [the report](#). The assessment plan is the template that your program follows when assessing student learning outcomes. The report simply provides the formal results that stem from your plan. Every new program approved by the University Senate must have an assessment plan. Each program is normally required to submit their formal assessment report every two years (though exceptions exist, which will be discussed below).

It will be very helpful to download a copy of both of these documents as you follow the guide. The UAC does expect electronic copies to be completed. If the links above are broken or do not appear to work, please contact OIRA to resolve the problem.

Below is a table that gives a brief overview of the steps involved in the assessment process for both the plan (left) and the report (right).

**Table 1 - Comparison of Plan Process with Report Process**

|        | Assessment Plan  |        | Assessment Report   |
|--------|--|--------|---|
| Step 1 | Basic Information  | Step 1 | Basic Information   |
| Step 2 | Type of Assessment Plan  | Step 2 | Actual Faculty Involvement in Your Assessment Process (Planned in Step 4 of Your Assessment Plan.)        |
| Step 3 | Alignment of Mission, Goals, Learning Outcomes and Measures (Reported in Steps 5 and 6 of Your Assessment Report.) | Step 3 | Confirm Assessment Plan   |
| Step 4 | Planned Participation in the Assessment Process (Reported in Step 2 of Your Assessment Report.)                    | Step 4 | Program Overview (In Case There Have Been Changes Since the Last Approved Assessment Plan Was Submitted.) |
| Step 5 | Planned Analysis and Use of Your Assessment Results (Reported in Steps 7 and 8 of Your Assessment Report.)         | Step 5 | Program Goals and Learning Outcomes (Planned in Step 3 of Your Assessment Plan.)                          |
| Step 6 | Submit Your Assessment Plan  | Step 6 | Assessment Measures (Planned in Step 3 of Your Assessment Plan.)  |
|        |  | Step 7 | Analysis of Learning Outcomes (Planned in Step 5 of Your Assessment Plan.)                                |
|        |  | Step 8 | Analysis of Your Assessment Process (Could Be Planned in Step 5 of Your Assessment Plan.)                 |
|        |  | Step 9 | Final Steps   |

## The Assessment Plan: Step by Step

---

*Step 1: Basic Program Information* – Please fill out the basic information as requested. Be sure to include contact information for the appropriate person for the UAC to contact if they have questions.

*Step 2: Type of Assessment Plan* – Please select either option A or option B. Programs that have an external accreditor specific to their discipline might be eligible for option A. Programs without external accreditation must select option B. For more information about option A, contact Reuben Ternes ([ternes@oakland.edu](mailto:ternes@oakland.edu)).

*Step 3: Aligning the OU Mission, Program Goals, Student Learning Outcomes, and Assessment Measures:* This step is driven by the assessment requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association (NCA). The NCA is Oakland University's external accrediting body. Oakland is periodically reviewed by the NCA to assure we remain in compliance with their quality guidelines for higher education. The assessment processes of the programs essentially serve two purposes: they help the programs manage the quality of educational delivery in their programs as well as providing basic documentation through the plans and reports that the university uses to show it is in compliance with the NCA's assessment requirements. Let's examine this step in more detail. Below is a reproduction of the table in the plan that lays out the linkage between OU's mission, program goals, student learning outcomes (SLOs), and assessment measures.

| (1) OU Mission | (2) Program Goals | (3) Student Learning Outcomes | (4) Assessment Measures |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
|                |                   |                               |                         |
|                |                   |                               |                         |

The university's mission statement is located at <https://www.oakland.edu/about/mission/>

It is necessarily broad. The three most relevant areas are Student Development, Instruction, and Public Service. The Research and Scholarship area may be relevant in programs which have student scholarship as part of their program goals or learning outcomes. Please note that the alignment of program goals to the university mission is an NCA requirement. There is no requirement to align program goals to school or college goals.

Program goals represent the outcomes that your program provides students, the university, and the general public by virtue of its existence. The goals may include items which are not student learning outcomes, including student and faculty service commitments, knowledge creation, alumni support, etc. It is important to realize that the assessment plan is NOT a plan to review the quality of a program or a forum for the justification of its existence. It is simply the assessment of the student learning outcomes of the program. Therefore, the only program goals that should be listed here are ones that relate

directly to student learning outcomes and assessment measures. Your department will most likely have additional program goals that are outside the scope of student learning outcomes. These should not be included in the assessment plan. The relevant goals here are the program learning goals that are related to student learning outcomes.

Student learning outcomes are really the core aspect of the entire assessment process. Whereas program goals are (sometimes) broad expectations of how your program will impact students, student learning outcomes are specific and measure concepts, skills, content, or competencies that your students will learn. Your program needs to determine and declare what students will know and/or be able to do as a result of completing your program. These student learning outcomes should be a result of the instructional activities that the students engage in within courses that make up the program. Student learning outcomes should lend themselves to being influenced by changes in methods and content of instruction. Examples of such outcomes are content based outcomes, competency based outcomes, or experiential outcomes. Content based outcomes refer to imparting domain specific knowledge to your students. This includes such things as the styles of composition in 18th century Europe, leading political ideas in early 19th century America, or types of organizational structures in global business environments. Competency based learning outcomes refer to skills such as reading comprehension, writing, or model construction. Experiential outcomes refer to experiences (study abroad, internships, field studies, etc.) which the program exposes students to or immerses the students in.

Assessment measures are metrics which indicate how well or how poorly students are achieving the program's student learning outcomes. Measures will vary depending on the choice of learning outcomes, the program type (whether it is in the physical sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, performance art, etc.) and the maturity of the assessment process in the program. This brings up some important concepts to remember when you are creating measures. First, for each measure, your program should set an acceptable level of achievement before the measures are taken. For a content based learning outcome, this might be the demonstration by students of an 80% achievement score (a direct measure). For experiential outcomes, such as study abroad, the measure might just be the fact that the student participated in the experience (an indirect measure) or it could include the student's reflective writing about the experience after it occurred (if evaluated by faculty with a specific rubric, this could be another direct measure). The other thing about measures is that both direct and indirect measures can span the range between very quantitative measures to very qualitative measures. The UAC is not so much concerned with the type of measure as it is with the match of the measure to the learning outcome and the ability of the measure to track (measure) the effectiveness of teaching methods in the courses which make up the program.

Additional information about assessment measures is located in the 'More about Assessment Measures' section.

*Step 4: Participation in the Assessment Process* – Please indicate to what extent faculty are participating in the assessment process. The key in this step is telling the UAC how faculty are involved in the assessment process. The UAC is not interested in individuals, but rather the involvement of various faculty groups (tenure, tenure track, full-time, part-time, etc.). Many programs have an assessment committee specifically designed for this purpose. If that is true for your program, please let us know that.

Assessment is an essential part of the management of educational programs. In order to be successful, the faculty, staff and students who participate in the program have to understand the purpose of the program and to be able to judge what works and what does not work. Then improvements can be made to address any areas with deficiencies. Assessment of learning requires the engagement of those faculty who participate in your program's learning environment. Participation includes designing curricula, program goals, learning outcomes, measures, delivering course content, administering the measurement instruments, analyzing the measurement results, assessing the need for changes and writing up the assessment report. Ideally, all faculty who teach in the program will participate in the assessment process. Roles might be rotated over the years, but all should take an active role in the assessment of student learning and the improvement of the program. In this section, you can use either individual's names or the position name, such as assessment coordinator.

*Step 5: Plan for Using Assessment Results* – Perhaps the most important step in the entire assessment process is using assessment results to improve your program. The UAC needs to understand that the program has a plan in place not only to collect assessment data, but to use it as a feedback mechanism to ultimately improve student learning.

Step 5 is directly related to step 3. Here, you need to explain the reasoning behind the design of your program's goals, learning outcomes, and measures. If you have previously defined an acceptable performance level for students, and your students do not meet that level, what will you do? If your assessment results show particular areas of weaknesses, then what would that indicate for your program? How might you react in that case?

You may not know exactly what course of action you will take, but list plausible courses of action anyway. Possibilities include changing instructional methods (you would not have to say precisely what methods would be substituted), change in course content or emphasis, change in the measure, change in the learning outcome or even change in the program goal.

In a mature assessment processes, this section will detail how program change will be driven by assessment results. Programs pushing themselves by using the assessment process do so to drive continuous improvement by raising acceptable achievement levels and changing learning outcomes to reflect more challenging learning environments.

If you have trouble with this section, it may indicate that you have not thoroughly understood the process detailed in Step 3 above. If you have problems with Step 3 that may indicate that you could not

explain how you would respond to poor achievement measures in Step 5. CETL has various programs which cover issues in setting learning outcomes and measures and in the creation of learning rubrics which score the measure. The UAC also offers an annual assessment workshop to assist programs that are working to improve the assessment process. You can also contact the OIRA and/or the UAC chair for help in resolving issues in these areas.

*Step 6:* Please e-mail an electronic copy of your form to [ternes@oakland.edu](mailto:ternes@oakland.edu).

## The Assessment Report: Step by Step

---

*Step 1: Basic program Information* – Please fill out the basic demographic information as requested. Be sure to include contact information for the appropriate person for the UAC to contact if they have questions.

*Step 2: Faculty Involvement in the Assessment Process* – This information is similar to the information reported in step 4 of your assessment plan. The UAC is interested in understanding how faculty were involved in the assessment process. Note that the UAC is not looking for individual faculty names. Rather, the UAC wants to understand which faculty groups and what proportion of the faculty participated in the process. The UAC is also very interested in the recognition that faculty receive in your department for their work on assessment.

*Step 3: Confirmation of Assessment Plan* – Every approved assessment plan is posted to the Oakland University assessment website, available for public viewing. Maintaining this website accurately is sometimes difficult. Please confirm that the assessment plan that you are currently using is the plan that the UAC has listed online. If they do not match, simply attach a copy of your current plan when submitting your assessment report and the UAC will review the updated plan along with your report.

*Step 4: Program Overview* – Please list all of the degrees that are awarded by this program, including certificate programs. If you award both a B.S. and a B.A, list both degrees. This is also your opportunity to tell the UAC anything about your program that you feel might be necessary for someone on the outside that might be trying to understand your assessment process. This is your opportunity to provide context for your program. Please remember that the UAC is not reviewing the quality of your program; they are reviewing the quality of your assessment process only.

*Step 5: Program Goals* – These program goals should come directly from your assessment plan. Please list student learning outcomes (SLOs) separately and make sure that every SLO has a corresponding department goal. Some program goals may have multiple learning outcomes; please list each outcome separately.

If your current program goals are different than the ones listed in the plan, then please check your plan, and, if it has changed, attach a copy of the revised plan along with your report. The UAC will then review both the new plan and the report at the same time.

*Step 6: Assessment Measures* – Step 6 consists of completing a table that asks for a more detailed description of your assessment measures. Please note that each SLO should be listed separately, even if they are measured by the same instrument.

Again, the learning outcomes and measures listed here should be the same as those listed in your plan. If the measures and/or rubrics (scoring) details are not in the plan, please provide the details in your report.

This will allow the UAC review team to understand your assessment process and whether it appears to be effective. In some cases, programs with many learning outcomes choose to measure some portion of them on each review cycle. The questions about the timing of the measures included here allow the program to indicate which outcomes have been measured in this assessment cycle. The UAC may follow up with the program if there are outcomes that appear not to have been assessed over more than one reporting cycle.

*Step 7: Analysis of Student Learning Outcome to Inform Program Improvement* - This step coincides with Step 5 of your assessment plan. This is the place to report on results rather than processes. (Processes are reported on in Step 8.) Here, the UAC is asking what student learning outcomes students do well in, and which ones they seem to struggle in. For Step 7, please list the learning outcomes with acceptable achievement based on the acceptable levels of achievement on measures listed in your plan and back that up by reporting the measures which support your conclusion. Then you repeat for learning outcomes where the acceptable levels are not being met, if any. Again, you use the actual measures and acceptable levels to support your conclusion. If your plan stated that you would be collecting measures to follow trend or set a benchmark, then you should report the results or tentative results of your findings. The potential changes should come from Step 5 of your assessment plan except you will likely give more precise responses here. Responses should be related to the instructional process and how you either plan to change it or have already changed it. The instructional process would of course have to relate to the specific learning outcome with the unacceptable level of achievement and to the measures of that process which are being reported as low. Many plans are going to examine trend data or examine benchmark data. Either way, you should report your data, talk about your evidence, and discuss your conclusions in this section. If you are making changes to your program as a result of assessment data, please tell us what those changes are in the final question of this section.

*Step 8: Analysis of the Assessment Process* - This step also relates back to Step 5 of your assessment plan. Assessment is a learning process. By working through the assessment process, you and your program should learn how to better achieve the intended learning goals for your program. In this step, you report any action in changing the assessment process for your program rather than the instructional process. Items reported here include changes to the measures themselves, changes in the student learning outcomes or even changes in program goals.

*Step 9:* Please e-mail an electronic copy of your form to [ternes@oakland.edu](mailto:ternes@oakland.edu).

## Programs with External Accreditation

---

As mentioned under Step 2 of the Assessment Plan, programs that have specific external accreditation may be eligible to apply for a streamlined version of the UAC's normal process.

In lieu of a plan, programs with external accreditation can submit what is known as an [External Mapping Form](#). Programs with approved external mappings do not have to submit assessment reports to the UAC. Instead, they merely submit their letter of accreditation as proof that assessment is being conducted in a way that would satisfy the university's larger accreditor (HLC).

The [External Mapping Form](#) is a literal map that links the HLC's assessment requirements to the requirements of your external accreditor. Not every program with external accreditation will be eligible to use this process. The key is in understanding that your external accreditor must use language that would satisfy the requirements of the HLC. What your program does or does not do is irrelevant to establishing whether or not your accreditor's requirements align with the requirements of the HLC. If these requirements do not align, then your program must use the standard UAC process of programs, regardless of what your own internal process looks like.

Once your program completes the External Mapping Plan, the UAC will review the map to determine if the requirements do indeed align with HLC. Once approved, the program is allowed to submit their latest accreditation approval letter in place of any reports.

If approved, it is the department's responsibility to submit new maps should their accrediting body change its requirements or documentation.

## University Assessment Award

---

Every March, the UAC bestows upon a single program or department the University Assessment Award. Such a department is recognized for its excellent assessment activities, as determined by the collective opinion of the full UAC. Eligible departments must have submitted a report in the previous calendar year (January through December of the previous calendar year). A small monetary sum accompanies the award, and programs are able to use this sum in any way they deem fit. In addition, assessment award winners also have their assessment reporting cycles extended. Previous winners are eligible to win the award again after 6 years have passed.

Previous University Assessment Award winners include: Accounting (2013), Journalism (2012), Modern Languages (2011), Physical Therapy (2010), Music (2009), the School of Computer Science and Engineering (2008), Studio Art (2007), and Psychology (2006).

## More about Assessment Measures

---

There are two ways of measuring Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): *direct measures* and *indirect measures*. The UAC asks that every plan and every report contain at least two measures of Student Learning Outcomes, with at least one direct measure. Most assessment reports contain at least one direct measure and at least one indirect measure.

However, since direct measures are more important, more reliable, and easier to systematically attain than indirect measures, programs are encouraged to experiment with multiple forms of direct measure, even if that means foregoing any indirect measure of SLOs

Direct measures evaluate *actual* student performance, achievement or knowledge. Some examples of direct measures include: (1) evaluation of capstone course projects, papers or presentations; (2) portfolios of student work; (3) skill simulations, performances or demonstrations; (4) evaluation of sample course work; (5) assessments embedded in exams or course assignments; (5) locally constructed or standardized tests (pre- and post-program or post-program only); and (6) internship/employment supervisor evaluations.

Different programs will likely find different direct measures to be more suitable to their goals and learning objectives. Oakland University's assessment process requires that a program identify at least one direct measure of student outcomes in their assessment plan. When considering methods and instruments for collecting direct student outcomes data, try to answer the same kind of questions that you would ask as a researcher: When do we take the measures? From what source(s) do we obtain information? How often do we collect data?

Programs will also likely want to know other information about how well they are meeting their curricular and learning objectives. What do current students think about courses, scheduling, student services, and so on? What do employers think about our department's graduates? This information can be obtained through indirect measures of student learning outcomes. An indirect measure assesses learning outcomes by evaluating indirect indicators of learning or performance rather than actual learning/performance. The most common indirect measures are self-reports (usually surveys, journals, focus groups, interviews, etc.). Sometimes, indirect measures are used to ask others (e.g. employers, other stakeholders) to report on their perceptions of a degree program or the skills of our students. Good sampling techniques are critical with indirect measures; a small or non-representative sample can easily produce invalid results. Because they are typically more subjective, indirect measures must be used in conjunction with direct measures to augment information about important outcomes of a program. Alone, most indirect measures are not considered valid measures of learning outcomes, but they can provide useful information about attitudes and opinions of students, alumni, employers and other interested stakeholders.

In concept, the measures will change if the methods of instruction change. That is to say that if your program ran two sections of a course with the same learning objective, it could test the relative effectiveness of methods of instruction by using one method in one section and another method in the other section. A higher measure in one section would indicate that the method used in that section was more effective. (We are ignoring some statistical effects here for simplicity.) This brings up some important concepts to remember when you are creating measures. First, for each measure, your program should set an acceptable level of achievement before the measures are taken. For a content based learning outcome, this might be the demonstration by students of an 80% achievement score (a direct measure). For experiential outcomes, such as study abroad, the measure might just be the fact

that the student participated in the experience (an indirect measure) or it could include the student's reflective writing about the experience after it occurred (if evaluated by faculty with a specific rubric, this could be another direct measure). The other thing about measures is that both direct and indirect measures can span the range between very quantitative measures to very qualitative measures. The UAC is not so much concerned with the type of measure as it is with the match of the measure to the learning outcome and the ability of the measure to track (measure) the effectiveness of teaching methods in the courses which make up the program.

## Notes on the Assessment Process

---

The assessment process is meant to be inclusive of the participants in the program(s) being assessed. There are several implications of this. The first is that assessment should include the majority of the program faculty. All faculty should understand their program's learning outcomes and measures and all should be involved in evaluating the assessment results and developing solutions to any problems which are found.

Another implication is that the assessment materials should be shared among your faculty. Materials include, but are not limited to, assessment plans, process and procedure documents, descriptions of measures and rubrics for assessing the measures, minutes of assessment committee meetings and copies of past assessment reports.

The UAC recommends that departments archive the assessment materials in a shared location which will be periodically and automatically backed up. Shared drives or eSpace can be used for this purpose. Include departmental staff and the chairperson, as appropriate, in the archiving processes. Oakland University has been involved in the assessment process for a number of years. Only new programs should be performing assessment from scratch but that will not be true if your program loses all of its assessment history by not maintaining an accessible archive of assessment materials.

It can be useful to develop an assessment calendar. The calendar will include all the assessment measures and when they will be measured and in what classes. Laying out a calendar and referring to it can help your program collect data and manage the evaluation and reporting process.

## Getting Service Credit for Assessment Activities

---

Make sure you get service credit for your assessment activities. Here are some tips to consider:

Have your department create an assessment committee with a stated chair and members. The department chair can write an annual memo summarizing the committee's activities. The memo can be put in the service dossier for promotion and tenure purposes.

If your program is going through a major overhaul of the assessment process, or in other situations where the service burden of the committee is high, set expectations with the program chair so that a letter can be put in your dossier characterizing the service activities and their results for the program. Be smart and get a commitment from your program to support and acknowledge your efforts before you over commit to a service assignment.

Document your own assessment activities and include the documentation in your service dossier. If you can have the assessment committee chair and/or departmental chair certify assessment activities that will provide even stronger documentation of your efforts.

## Report Schedule

---

Each fall an updated report schedule is produced by OIRA. This schedule shows the next required report date for each academic program. The schedule can be found [online](#) or by contacting OIRA.

Assessment reports are typically due on either February 15<sup>th</sup> or October 15<sup>th</sup>. Due dates are set on two-year cycles, so that each program submits a report once every two years. In some cases, the UAC may extend this reporting cycle for programs that have demonstrated a consistently high standard of assessment. This does not mean that less assessment activities are expected. Rather, it is designed to reduce the reporting burden on the department. Departments that have an extended report date are still expected to report assessment activities from the period of their last report.

The reporting cycle is automatically extended for award winners for their next report (from two years to four years).

The next report date is also listed on every official UAC response letter. This letter is an important piece of information for your department's assessment activities. OIRA is able to supply copies of historical response letters for departments by request.

## Resources Available to Departments

---

### University Assessment Committee Funding for Department Assessment Activities

The University Assessment Committee (UAC) has a limited budget available to provide support for departmental level assessment activities. At the beginning of each academic year, the committee solicits requests for funding, which are then evaluated by the committee on a case-by-case basis. The UAC funds are intended to be a catalyst for promoting assessment activities, rather than an ongoing source of support. The committee gives priority to funding proposals that promise innovative or experimental approaches to assessment or improved practice in assessment, especially those that might serve as models for other programs. Support may also be provided for attendance at assessment related conferences or workshops as resources permit.

### Criteria for Funding Departmental Assessment Activities

Funding is made available by the president and provost for the purpose of *improving the assessment of student outcomes* and will be awarded by the committee according to the following criteria:

1. Priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate an innovative strategy to assess program-specific learning outcomes in an academic major. Examples include (but are not limited to):
  - a. Development of an assessment center
  - b. Development of an electronic portfolio
  - c. Development of web-based assessment instruments
2. The project should involve the implementation of a new assessment endeavor. This may include:
  - a. Development and/or testing of new assessment instruments for fit and effectiveness (including the use of standardized tests)
  - b. Development and testing of new rating scales/rubrics
  - c. Development and/or testing of new survey instruments
  - d. Implementation of innovative faculty development and/or training related to a specific component of the department's assessment plan
3. There must be a clear fit between the proposed assessment strategy and the program learning objectives or some important assessment question that has been identified by the department

While there is no stated limit on the amounts that may be funded, the size of the committee's budget creates practical limits. Proposals may be funded fully, partially, or not at all. All funding is on a one-time basis per activity. Departments are strongly encouraged to investigate on-going sources of funding by requesting base budget funding from their deans as they develop and implement their assessment plans.

Departments are required to follow university policy regarding use of university funds.

(See 207 - Business Expenditure Policies under Section #200 - BUSINESS AND FINANCE of the OU Administrative Policies and Procedures).

### **Application for Funding**

Requests for funding should include the following information:

1. Department/program name, contact person with phone number and email address
2. A list of faculty and staff involved in the assessment project
3. The goals of the assessment activity
4. A description of the proposed activity
5. The timeframe for implementation of the activity
6. A description of how the project will be evaluated
7. A brief narrative budget indicating how each budgeted item will be used
8. A detailed budget, including information on matching funds (if available). If the activity has already taken place, the department must provide supporting documents such as receipts, etc.

Funding requests should be forwarded to the Chair of the University Assessment Committee and the current OIRA director ([schartma@oakland.edu](mailto:schartma@oakland.edu)).

## **UAC Policy on Extending the Period between Reporting Dates**

---

The University Assessment Committee recognizes that the time and resources required to report biennially on assessment activities may limit the time and resources available to implement program improvements based on assessment results, particularly when there is a substantial amount of experimentation, culture change and/or training involved. Therefore, in order to reduce the reporting burden for those programs that have consistently demonstrated a strong culture of assessment over a period of time, the committee adopts the following policy:

The UAC may approve the extension of the time between reports to the committee when a program has achieved a rating of Mature (3) on 9 of the 11 primary rating criteria on at least two consecutive assessment reports. The UAC may choose to extend the time to the next report from two years to either three or four years. It is expected that the program will continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to the assessment of student learning to remain on the extended reporting cycle.

Note: if a program receives the minimum number of 3s on reports submitted in the two years after the adoption of this policy (through December, 2010), the committee will re-examine the most recent prior report according to the rubric to see if the program meets the criteria for the reporting extension. Prior winners of the Assessment Excellence Award will also be reviewed according to the criteria.

UAC January 15, 2009

## The University Assessment Committee

---

The University Assessment Committee (UAC) is the primary body that oversees program assessment throughout the university. The UAC is a standing committee appointed by the OU Senate and is charged with 5 tasks:

- 1) To coordinate and advise on the planning and implementation of assessment by academic units;
- 2) To prepare an overall University Assessment Plan which meets the requirements of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and to consult with the staff of that Association, as appropriate, to insure that the Plan and its implementation continue to meet Association standards;
- 3) To advise and cooperate with the General Education Committee in planning and carrying out assessment of the University's general education programs;
- 4) To advise the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction, and the Graduate Council on the findings of the assessment program and their implications for specific program reviews and for maintaining and improving the quality of undergraduate and graduate instruction in general; and
- 5) To report to the University Senate and the Assemblies of the organized faculties on the findings of the assessment program and their implications for maintaining and improving the quality of undergraduate and graduate curricula and instruction at the University.

The membership of the UAC is composed of three faculty members from the College and one from each School and the Library, appointed to staggered three-year terms by the Senate upon nomination of the Steering Committee, which shall designate one of these as chair; one student designated by the University Student Congress; the Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (or designee) and one Oakland University alumnus(a) designated by the Alumni Board on nomination of the Vice President for Community Engagement and University Relations. Two additional at-large faculty members are appointed by the Senate upon nomination by the Steering Committee to single three-year terms.