

Degree Program Assessment Business Process Document

University of South Carolina

Columbia and Palmetto College Campuses

This business process document (BPD) has been created to serve as a reference guide for stakeholders to explain how the University of South Carolina-Columbia¹ performs degree program assessment. It also serves as the baseline for training persons who are new to the degree program assessment process. The remainder of this business process document is dedicated to explaining how to develop an assessment plan, detailing the responsibilities of persons engaged in assessment, highlighting the resources in place to report assessment findings, sharing the time frames within which to report assessment results, and finally outlining the repercussions for programs that fail to develop, execute or report assessment findings according to the university's established timelines and best practices.

Understanding Assessment

The term 'assessment' is used in numerous ways. We often speak of assessing individual student performance in courses or courses of study; we evaluate individual student learning when we grade tests, essays, exercises, research papers, projects, performances, portfolios, comprehensive exams, theses and dissertations, etc.

But in the context of institutional improvement, 'assessment' refers to the process by which we gather data on student learning and review these data in aggregate to answer the question, "Are our students learning what we expect them to learn?" The focus of assessment in this context is thus the degree program, not the individual student or an individual course. In contrast to the evaluations we provide individual students (normally in the form of course grades) so that they can determine their progress in a course or course of study, assessment provides faculty and administrators in charge of degree programs with valuable information as to how well our programs are working with respect to student learning.

Why Do We Assess?

1) We care about our students

Because we care about our students we want to ensure they are learning what we believe they will need to be successful in the careers and career pathways they enter after completing our programs. We want to improve student learning. By measuring performance against learning outcomes and examining the results, faculty and program administrators are able to discern what strategies or techniques are working well and what needs to be changed or modified. According to Value Colleges ("Does Accreditation Matter", 2018) one of the most important factors in acquiring a successful education and furthermore, a dependable career, is choosing a reputable college. When a college goes through a rigorous process like assessment, it gives students more likelihood of success. When it is embedded effectively within our institutional system, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education (Thomas A. Angelo, AAHE Bulletin, November 1995, p.7).

2) Assessment is a University Policy

¹ Refers to the main campus located in Columbia, South Carolina as well as to the two-year regional USC campuses (Salkehatchie, Sumter, Union and Lancaster) that comprise the Palmetto College.

Participation in assessment activities is a university priority and responsibility. Specifically, university policy ACAF 3.0 <http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/acaf300.pdf> addresses at a high level, the assessment requirements discussed in detail in this document. The information gleaned from assessment activities is used for planning and program improvement.

3) Assessment is required for the University's external accreditation

The university's assessment activities are mandated by external agencies as well as discipline-specific accrediting agencies. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the external accrediting agency for the University of South Carolina. With respect to assessment, SACSCOC Standard 8 reads:

- 1) The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success.
- 2) The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the following areas:
 - a. student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.
(Student outcomes: educational programs)
 - b. student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs. (Student outcomes: general education)
 - c. academic and student services that support student success.
(Student outcomes: academic and student services)

Of the assessment areas mentioned above, this document is primarily focused on assessment of student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs. Hereafter, this will be referred to as degree program assessment.

USC's Approach to Degree Program Assessment

In order to maintain compliance with SACSCOC Teaching and Learning standards, the University of South Carolina requires that every degree program draft student learning outcomes and establish ways to evaluate students' performance on those outcomes. These responsibilities are primarily borne by program faculty because faculty are the experts in their disciplines and know best how to evaluate student mastery of program learning outcomes. The mechanisms each program has in place to respond to students' performance constitutes an "assessment plan."

USC's Degree Program Assessment approach employs a coordinated and carefully designed set of processes and tools used by those responsible for assessment to submit, review, store, and access academic program assessment plans and reports.

Quality assurance procedures are built into the process at the institutional level to ensure data integrity and appropriate responses by program administrators to student performance on learning outcomes. The university's Office of Institutional Research Assessment and Analytics (OIRAA) serves in a quality assurance capacity and reviews all degree program assessment plans in accordance with SACSCOC standards.

Tenets of an Effective Assessment Process

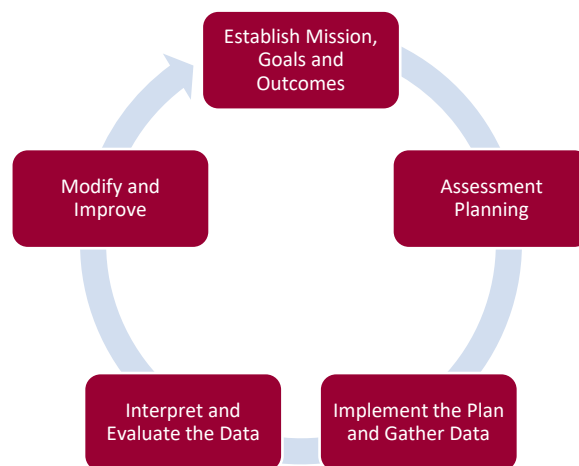
An effective assessment process that is ongoing and aimed at understanding and improving student learning involves making student learning expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance.

While allowing for significant differences in assessment practices among disciplines, in order to be relevant and useful to departments and programs, assessment procedures should meet the following criteria:

- a. Programs should have clearly defined and measurable student learning outcomes that focus on knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- b. Assessment measures should clearly address the degree to which students attain the defined learning outcomes.
- c. Assessment measures should be independent from course grades and teaching evaluations.
- d. Multiple methods of assessing outcomes should be used, including at least one direct measure of student learning.
- e. Data and information should be collected and analyzed longitudinally, as well as in each reporting cycle.
- f. The analysis of data should result in findings relevant to the program.
- g. Improvements in the program should be planned and enacted in response to the findings.

Each of the tenets listed above are to be incorporated in the assessment plans developed for each degree program at the University of South Carolina. The graphic below best illustrates the degree program assessment process outlined above.

Figure 1: Academic Program Assessment Process



Source: Brophy and Fields, "Sustaining Excellence in Academic Assessment: Designing and implementing an Institutional Academic Assessment System". SACSCOC Annual Conference, 2016

The Assessment Plan – Assessment Basics

This document uses the terms assessment plan and assessment report interchangeably. However, when examining the university's assessment process, the term assessment plan refers to the program's mission, goals, curriculum, learning outcomes, measures and criteria and methods for acting on and responding to assessment results. An assessment report adds the actual results of students' performance on the learning outcomes and the program's use of assessment results to improve the program.

Mission

This is a statement of purpose of the degree program, why it exists and its unique or signature features. The program mission statement also tells what students or other constituents will gain from the program (in broad terms, but specific to the discipline and who i.e. target audience or students benefits from the program. Ideally the program's mission should be aligned with the university and college missions.

Goals

Program goal statements describe the overarching values, achievements or learning experiences students are expected to obtain as a result of completing the degree program. Goal statements address knowledge (what students will learn/know), and/or skills (what students can or will do) expected of graduates/students in the program. Goals for the program may also address values students are to adopt (what students/graduates will care about) after completing the program. Expected achievements of graduates of the program such as career accomplishments, lifestyles and community involvement can also be considered as goals for a degree program.

Curriculum

This section of the assessment plan addresses where, through the course of completing the program, students are exposed to the opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills or values outlined in the goal statements. These opportunities can take the form of classroom activities, or experiential learning activities. In this section, refrain from listing all courses required for the degree. Instead focus on just those that support the goals for the program. When referring to courses that support the goals for the program, please list the course number and title. One option for describing the curriculum that supports the goals for the program is the use of a curriculum alignment matrix. A sample of various curriculum alignment matrices are contained in the appendix to this document.

Learning Outcomes

Each undergraduate and graduate program should have defined program learning outcomes. Program learning outcomes are actionable statements that detail what tasks students will perform in order to show evidence of their proficiency and knowledge of a particular program goal. The University of South Carolina subscribes to the SMART Model for writing and reviewing learning outcomes. This model has been popularly useful in writing academic program student learning outcomes (SLOs). This model was initially introduced in 1954 by P.F. Drucker. The components of the SMART Model are discussed briefly below:

Specific - What will be accomplished? What will students be able to do?

Measurable - Is the outcome quantifiable? Can it be measured? How much change is expected?

Attainable - Can the outcome be accomplished in the proposed time frame with the available resources and support?

Results oriented - Does the outcome address the goal? Will the outcome have an impact on the goal?

Time -Bound- Does the outcome propose a timeline when the outcome will be met?

Action words that are well suited for drafting clear learning outcome statements that incorporate SMART model components are available in the appendix to this document.

Degree program learning outcomes are published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin after they have been approved by the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics (OIRAA). Any program that wants to make changes to its learning outcomes listed in the Bulletin should contact OIRAA. OIRAA will review the proposed learning outcomes for SMART model components listed above and then coordinate with the Registrar's office to get approved learning outcome changes updated in the Bulletin.

The undergraduate and graduate studies bulletins are updated in accordance with the Academic Planning Calendar. On December 15 of each year, the bulletins are "frozen" and become archived for the bulletin of record for the coming academic year (ACAF 3.50). Therefore, it is preferred that **any requested changes to student learning outcomes be submitted to OIRAA by the end of November for review and approval.**

Measures and Criteria

Assessment measures are products of student work that have been selected for evaluation of students' proficiency or mastery of a learning outcome. Examples of assessment measures include papers, presentations, critiques, case studies, exam results, essays, practica evaluations, etc. All of these are considered direct assessment measures because they are tangible student work products that can be collected, gathered, summarized and analyzed. Indirect assessment methods provide some indication that students have acquired some level of knowledge but do not incorporate the collection and evaluation of student work products that tell what students have learned. For example, consider the comprehensive exam for a doctoral program as an assessment measure. A direct assessment using the comprehensive exam would be to identify topics to be tested in the comprehensive exam that are evidence of student mastery of a particular learning outcome. An indirect assessment using the comprehensive exam would be to report the number of students who complete the comprehensive exam by a particular point in the program. Certainly, reporting the numbers of students passing the comprehensive exam reflects that some students are progressing through the program. However, because there is variation across programs regarding the content and rigor of a comprehensive exam, a direct assessment of students performance on specific criteria is preferred.

Establishing criteria for an assessment measure is a two part process. Some measures benefit from a scoring guide or rubric that is scaled to reflect poor to exceptional performance. When using a rubric the program should choose a benchmark number of students expected to achieve a desired score on the rubric or performance for the measure (target). For a program to reap added benefit from choosing measures and criteria it is recommended that the program employ a topical context with respect to the

material. Suppose a program selects a written paper as an assessment measure and uses a 3-point scale to score the paper. The scale includes categories for poor, adequate and above average performance. If the paper is evaluated on the whole, the program will learn what percentage or number of students wrote poor, adequate or above average papers. However, what would be more useful for the program would be to identify what specific areas of writing were poor, which were adequate and which were above average. Therefore, a better way of evaluating the measure would be to use more specific criteria in the rubric, e.g. "grammar and mechanics", "organization of ideas" or "writing conventions". Next the program would set some useful criteria for student performance on the paper and arrive at a statement similar to the following. "It is expected that 75% of our students will score adequate or better on the grammar and mechanics component of the individual paper."

Methods

The methods section of the assessment plan is primarily focused on describing how the program manages its data collection and review process. In this section the plan writer should describe how assessment measures are collected, how often assessment results are collected, how assessment results are analyzed, e. g., aggregated or summarized, who sees the analysis and then what mechanisms are in place for program evaluation, and for revision of the curriculum for the program, should student performance results warrant some sort of change.

Just to recap, the aforementioned areas of mission, goals, curriculum, learning outcomes, measures and criteria and methods are what constitute an assessment plan. Once these components are established, the program should then proceed to implement the plan by coordinating with the responsible parties to begin collecting student work products from the various learning opportunities identified in the curriculum section.

Course grades are not assessment measures. For more details on why grades aren't acceptable as assessment measures please see the attachment, "Why Grades Aren't Enough".

The Assessment Report

The assessment report contains all of the components of the assessment plan plus the addition of two more sections, Results and Use of Results.

Results

The results section is for reporting how students performed on the assessment measures as described in the measures and criteria section of the assessment plan. The aim for this section is to show that the assessments planned were collected and analyzed. Do not omit results because the predetermined performance criteria were not met. The only requirements for this section are that there are clear statements of how students performed with respect to the benchmarks in the measures and criteria section and whether or not the criteria were met.

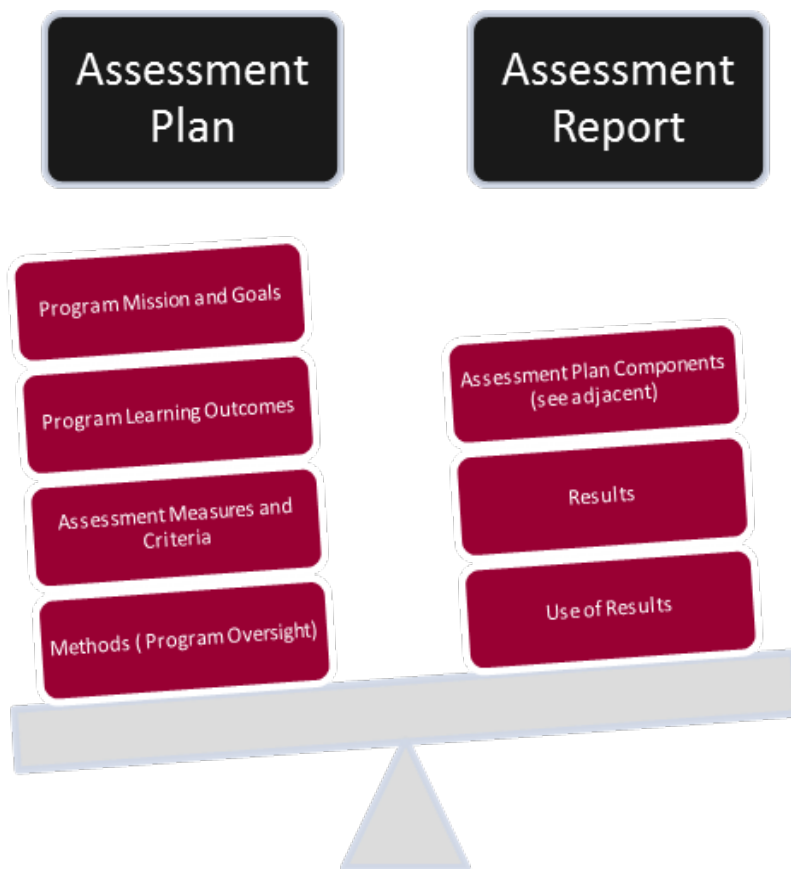
Use of Results

This is the final section of the assessment report which describes the program's response to the assessment results. This response should come as a result of implementing the stages of analysis, sharing and oversight as described in the methods section. Ideally, in order to complete this section in its entirety, program administrators should meet with program faculty to discuss assessment results,

and determine what impact(s) the assessment results have on student learning outcomes and to recommend needed changes to course or curriculum or assessment. Consideration should be given to the implications of results on a future assessment plan. Notes should be taken at these meetings and summarized in the assessment results.

In sum, the assessment report contains eight sections: mission, goals, curriculum, learning outcomes, measures and criteria and methods for program oversight, results and use of results. The university's assessment process requires submission of two assessment reports covering all program learning outcomes in a five year period. The bulk of the assessment report is developed through the course of drafting the assessment plan. In order to have assessment results to report, programs must be diligent about collecting assessment results each semester. However, there is no requirement to submit an assessment report each semester. Instead, programs are asked to collect assessment results and store student performance in APC (the assessment software system?) for discussion in the semester that the report is due. The Illustration below best represents the distinction between the sections included in the assessment plan and the assessment report.

Figure 2: Components of an Assessment Plan/Report



The remainder of this business process document outlines the roles and responsibilities for all parties involved in the degree program assessment process on the next page.

Roles and Responsibilities of Persons Charged with Assessment

Faculty

Primary responsibility for the assessment of academic programs within the degree program is with the faculty of each academic unit. Information pertinent to assessment of the major or area of concentration is provided to students by the department from which the degree will be granted. (Excerpt from the Academic Bulletin)

Faculty continually discuss whether their students are learning and if so, how well. The process of assessment regularizes and formalizes what faculty do as part their normal professional practice.

The results from program assessment should not be used for promotion and/or tenure files or for annual performance evaluations or for the evaluation of any student's progress in a course or progress toward a degree. Assessment activities, however, are integral to the processes of teaching and learning.

Deans

Deans are responsible for ensuring that all academic programs within their respective organizations have assessment plans, carry out assessments that meet prescribed standards, and submit reports that document improvements made based on assessment results.

Each dean should appoint one or more persons to serve as liaisons to the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics (OIRAA). These liaisons are the appointed members of the university's Assessment Advisory Committee.

Assessment Advisory Committee Representative (AAC Rep)

The Assessment Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives appointed by the deans of the various colleges to serve as the key point persons for each college for all program assessment. The charge of the Assessment Advisory Committee is to:

- Provide the foundation for developing an institutional climate that assures and improves the quality of education each academic program promises and offers
- Promote assessment as a comprehensive process that is ongoing, systematic, and sustainable
- Serve as a channel for communication among faculty and the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics
- Make recommendations regarding assessment-related policies and procedures
- Assist and advise faculty within one's college or school in the development and implementation of meaningful assessment initiatives

The Assessment Advisory Committee typically meets twice in an academic year. These meetings are primarily for updating AAC representatives at each college on the status of degree program assessment, future assessment initiatives and next steps. The AAC rep is also the person who facilitates the preparation and submission of the assessment report executive summary. It is the responsibility of the AAC rep to ensure the executive summary is prepared, signed by the dean of the college and submitted in Assessment Plan Composer. The assessment report executive summary is discussed in detail later in this document.

OIRAA Executive Director

The Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Assessment and Analytics (OIRAA) directs all activities of both the Institutional Effectiveness Manager and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness & SACSCOC Liaison. The Executive Director attends all meetings of the AAC and reports degree program assessment successes and challenges to the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.

OIRAA Director of Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation directs the activities of the Assistant Director of Assessment and shares accreditation requirements with university officials and communicates with representatives of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) to ensure that the university is in continuous compliance with accreditation standards.

OIRAA Assistant Director of Assessment

The OIRAA Assistant Director of Assessment (OIRAA ADA) is responsible for collecting and reviewing assessment plans and reports, and for providing timely feedback to faculty and staff to improve the quality of assessment. The OIRAA- ADA. chairs the Assessment Advisory Committee, is the primary point of contact for degree program assessment at the university and is also the primary administrator of Assessment Plan Composer (APC) assessment system.

Plan Writer

The plan writer is the person at the college who drafts and submits the program's assessment plan. This person may be a program administrator, faculty member, instructor, dean or associate dean, or anyone at the college tasked with writing an assessment plan. Because all assessment plans are submitted through the Assessment Plan Composer (APC) system, each plan writer will need a unique username and password. The Institutional Effectiveness Manager sends report/plan feedback and status updates directly to the plan writer via APC, therefore it is imperative that OIRAA has the correct plan writer on file.

SACSCOC External Reviewer

An external SACSCOC reviewer is a representative from an SACSCOC member school who volunteers his or her time to review the materials, websites, and forms and to visit college campuses as schools seek re-affirmation of accreditation. For the purposes of degree program assessment, an SACSCOC external reviewer will be provided with read-only access to Assessment Plan Composer every five years to review the assessment plans submitted during the previous five year period. Typically, access is provided to the SACSCOC external review three months prior to the external review deadline.

The Office of the Provost

The Office of the Provost ultimately oversees all of the activities of the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics. The Office of the Provost sets the strategic policy for OIRAA including degree program assessment. Should assessment challenges arise that cannot be resolved internally by OIRAA staff, the Office of the Provost can address these challenges with college Deans and/or the Provost. The Provost has overall responsibility and oversight for assessment processes for academic programs.

Assessment Reporting using Assessment Plan Composer

In 2007, the university developed a home-grown application, Assessment Plan Composer (APC), to act as a repository for assessment plans and the resulting actions programs have taken in response to assessment results. APC has been extremely useful to the degree program assessment process in that it serves as a single site that can be accessed by all colleges to document their assessment processes. Using a static template to report on assessment processes, all reports are similar regardless of degree program.

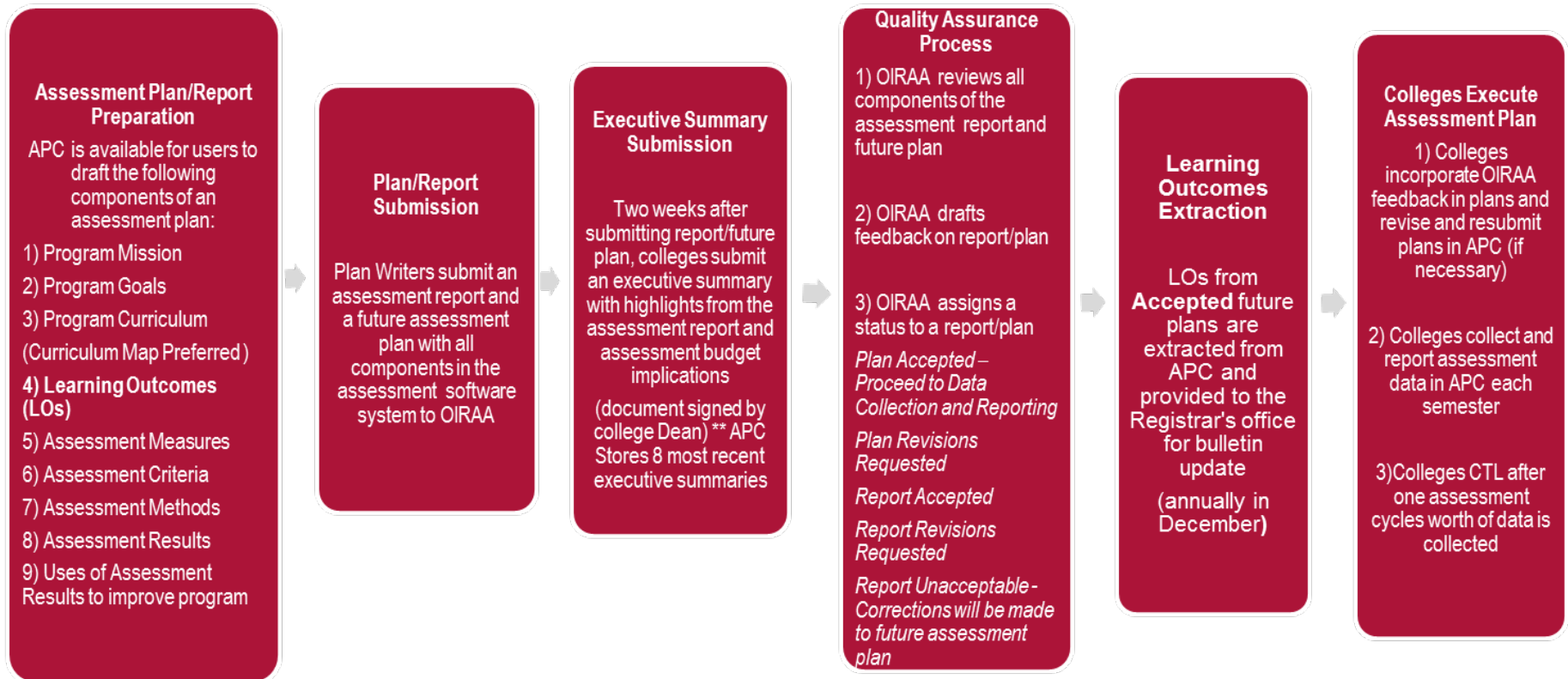
The key benefit of Assessment Plan Composer (APC) is that it offers various levels of access to university administrators and this helps OIRAA administrators manage and track the progress colleges are making with their assessment plans. Access can also be shared with external SACSCOC reviewers who are responsible for auditing the university's assessment records. The major limitation of APC is that it is not integrated with other university-approved systems. Therefore, although a college may be reporting its learning outcomes, curriculum and other related assessment plan components in other university-approved systems, these must also be entered into APC.

Executive Summary

The assessment report executive summary highlights key assessment activities and results from the most recently submitted assessment report, and the financial and human resources required by the college to carry out the degree program assessment activities described in the report. The executive summary should be no more than two pages and should be signed by the dean of the college and submitted in APC or emailed to the IED two weeks after the submission of the assessment report.

The flowchart on the next page illustrates the process that programs are to follow as they report on their program assessment activities.

Figure 3: UofSC Degree Program Assessment Process

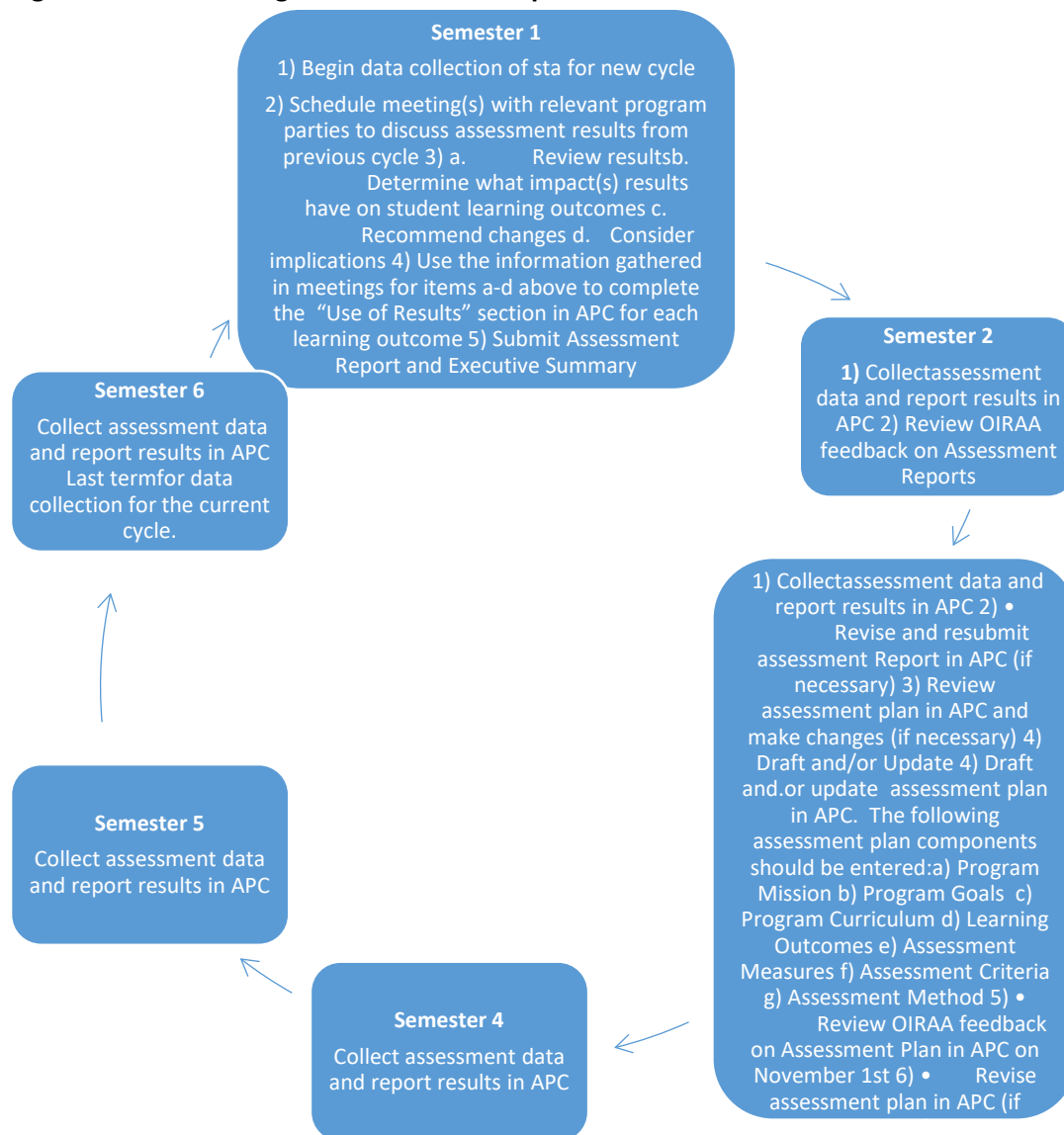


USC Degree Program Assessment Reporting Process

Reporting Time Frames

Prior to the Fall of 2017 colleges adhered to an annual reporting cycle by academic year, making it very difficult for colleges to report on the actions to be taken from a review of assessment results within the one-year time frame. In the summer of 2017, USC embarked on implementing a new two-year schedule within which colleges are allowed six terms to report their assessment findings and their use of assessment results to improve programs. The move to a new two year schedule was done primarily so that colleges could complete all of the steps in the assessment process, including discussing the impact of assessment results on future program activities and/or curricula. The graphic below illustrates the steps that programs should take over the course of the two-year (six academic terms) cycle.

Figure 4: Six-Term Program Assessment Steps



Four assessment schedules, referred to as assessment "Groups" were developed by the Vice Provost whereby colleges could select among the four schedules for degree program assessment reporting. With respect to the expectations for SACSCOC, the four schedules were developed so that each degree program would complete all stages of the assessment process for each of its learning outcomes twice in a five-year period. The first completion of all assessment stages (years 1-2) are referred to as Cycle 1 with years 3-4, comprising Cycle 2. Regardless of the schedule selected, all programs began Cycle 1 in the Fall of 2017, with alternating end dates for assessment reporting beginning in the Fall of 2018. The table on the next page best represents the new assessment reporting time frames and future reporting dates.

Degree Program Assessment Reporting Schedule

Group	Plans Due	Cycle 1 Reports Due	Future Reporting Dates
Group 1	Spring 2018	Fall 2019	Fall Odd Numbered Years
Group 2	Fall 2018	Spring 2020	Spring Even Numbered Years
Group 3	Spring 2019	Fall 2020 ⁽¹⁾	Fall of Even Numbered Years
Group 4	Fall 2019	Spring 2021 ⁽²⁾	Spring of Odd Numbered Years

(1) Programs in Group 3 will submit an assessment report in the **Fall of 2018** based on assessment plans submitted in June 2017.

(2) Programs in Group 4 will submit an assessment report in the **Spring of 2019** based on assessment plans submitted in June 2017.

Repercussions - repercussions for failure of a program to develop, execute or report assessment findings according to the university's established timelines.

Earlier in this document, we discussed the reasons why colleges engage in assessment activities. One of those reasons is that assessment is required for the university's SACSCOC accreditation. As such, read-only access to all assessment plans and executive summaries are made available to external SACSCOC reviewers. Therefore, it is critical that all degree programs assess student learning and report assessment results as outlined in university Policy ACAF 3.0 <http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/acaf300.pdf>. Additionally, when external reviewers want to review our assessment plans and they are not available, the university could be held as "Not Compliant" with the SACSCOC assessment requirement.

From past experience, the major pitfalls programs encounters when implementing our existing assessment process are in the following areas 1) new/revamped programs without assessment plans 2) failure to submit assessment reports and 3) failure to revise previously submitted plans so that all of the major assessment plan components are acceptable. These pitfalls that have resulted in assessment plans not being made available to external SACS reviewers. So that the university remains in compliance with its SACSCOC reporting requirements it is necessary to institute a series of repercussions for programs that are non-compliant. The escalation steps on the next page illustrate the possible repercussions for programs that are not compliant with the university's assessment requirements.

Escalation Process for Non-Compliant Programs

Step	Action	What Happens?	Plan Writer Response Time	Applicable Dates for Reports Due in the Fall	Applicable Dates for Reports due in the Spring
Step 0	None	Nothing- Report is submitted on time	Not applicable	October 1	May 1
Step 1	Notification/ Warning 1	OIRAA-ADA contacts plan writer by email	Two weeks	October 15	May 15
Step 2	Notification/Warning 2	OIRAA-ADA contacts plan writer by email and phone	One week	October 22	May 22
Step 3	Notification 1 of AAC Rep	OIRAA-ADA contacts AAC rep by Email for assistance	Two weeks	November 5	June 5
Step 4	Notification of OIRAA IE Director and Dept. Chair/Asst. Dean	OIRAA-ADA. notifies the IE Director (IED), and the Dept. Chair, Program Director or Asst. Dean by phone and email that responses have not been received nor has the issue been resolved and that escalation will ensue	One week	November 12	June 12
Step 5	Notification 3 of Dept. Chair/Asst. Dean	OIRAA-ADA. generates memo to Dept. Chair, Program Director or Asst. Dean responsible for program by phone and email	One week	November 19	June 19
Step 6	Escalation to Exec. Director OIRAA Director and Dean	OIRAA Executive Director contacts Dean to inform, discuss and attempt to resolve of issue	Two Weeks	December 4	July 3
Step 7	Escalation to Vice Provost for Graduate Studies	OIRAA Exec. Director informs the Office of the Provost of all steps taken to resolve issue	Office of the Provost determines appropriate resolution	December 18	July 17

Non-compliant Action 1: Failure to develop an assessment plan

All existing degree programs should have an assessment plan for which the program is actively collecting assessment results each semester. New programs are classified as those programs that have begun or have been restarted within the current academic year. New programs, and recently restarted programs have one year to develop an assessment plan. This allows programs to gain experience implementing the program and to gain an understanding of the crucial aspects of the delivery of curricula that are key to successful assessment i.e., student inputs, faculty proficiency, appropriateness of assignments and activities. New programs are given a one-year to solidify their program learning outcomes and measures and determine how oversight of the assessment process will occur. In year two, programs are expected to begin collecting assessment results.

Within 4 months of being notified by Office of Academic Programs that a new program has begun, OIRAA will create a link for an assessment plan in Assessment Plan Composer. At this time, OIRAA will reach out to the Assessment Advisory Committee Representative for the college in which the program resides to learn who in the college is responsible for the program's assessment plan, i.e. who will be the plan writer. OIRAA then obtains the contact information, including email address of the plan writer and creates an APC username and password for that person so that the plan can be assigned to the plan writer. OIRAA will then notify the plan writer that a link for the plan has been created and provide the plan writer with his/her login information. One year later OIRAA will log into APC and access the link for the assessment plan to see if any components of an assessment plan have been created. If no plan has been started OIRAA will proceed through the escalation steps outlined above.

Non-compliant Action 2: Failure to submit an assessment report

Reporting assessment results requires collecting evidence of student performance on student learning outcomes, analyzing student performance, reviewing and sharing assessment results and responding to assessment results. Specifically, these activities make up the Measures and Criteria, Methods, Results and Use of Results sections of the assessment report. Assessment Plan Composer is the application in which all assessment reports should be submitted. Each of these sections should be completed for all learning outcomes and then the report should be submitted in APC. As mentioned previously, programs are to select from among four assessment schedules for the submission assessment reports. OIRAA developed these schedules with the aim of having two complete assessment reports submitted within a five-year SACSCOC review period. The university is no longer compliant with SACSCOC accreditation requirements when programs fail to submit assessment reports. Equally important is the practice of submitting assessment reports according to the selected schedule. When programs fail to submit assessment reports on time, it affects OIRAA's ability to provide the required feedback for programs to proceed on to the next assessment cycle. This increases the likelihood that their subsequent assessment reports will also be received after the deadline. In conclusion, the escalation process outlined above begins for programs that are more than two weeks removed from the original submission deadline.

Non-compliant Action 3: Failure to revise an assessment plan

The final major infraction addresses those programs with assessment reports requiring revision. To be clear, while OIRAA reviews and pays careful attention to the quality of assessment reports submitted, reports are not returned for revision unless one or more of the major components are omitted, course

grades are used for assessment or if there are major inconsistencies between planned measures and actual results. OIRAA has committed to providing feedback on assessment reports within 30 days of submission. This feedback can be found in APC via the clipboard icon that details the specific areas of the report that require revision. Areas needing revision are clearly marked “U” for “Unacceptable.” Reports requiring revision should be revised within 30 days of receiving a “revisions requested” notification via APC. Essentially a report needing revisions for which revisions are never made results in the report assuming the same status as a report that was not submitted by the original report deadline. For this reason, failure to revise the report and resubmit it to OIRAA within 30 days also begins the escalation process outlined above.

Training and Consultation

Understanding that this business process document may not address all of the concerns expressed by those engaged in degree program assessment at this university, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will offer training and consultation about effective assessment practices. If a program or college believes it would benefit from having the Institutional Effectiveness Manager visit and discuss this process with plan writers and faculty, OIRAA is happy to do so. In addition, OIRAA will publish the calendar of due dates for plans and reports and provide templates and other assessment resources through the OIRAA website.

Appendix

Curriculum Alignment Matrices

Curriculum Instructions

The curriculum statement addresses the “teach it” aspect of assessment. The curriculum statement tells *where* in the curriculum the students will be exposed to the necessary materials to obtain the knowledge and skills associated with the goal or learning outcome. This can include specific classes as well as any extra-curricular opportunities that would provide students with the opportunity to gain knowledge or skill in the goal area.

Example:

Students will gain the required computer skills in the program by completing CSCE 101 (Introduction to Computer Concepts).

Curriculum Mapping

Curriculum maps are very helpful in demonstrating where in the program’s curriculum learning outcomes are being addressed. In essence, a curriculum map consists of a table with two axes, one pertaining to program learning outcomes, the other to courses in the major.

Note: A program of study (such as the General Education program or a program major) has specific learning outcomes, which are developed by faculty and articulated in the Academic Bulletin. When applicable, use appropriate program learning outcomes in the *course* assessment plan. “Mapping” program outcomes to course outcomes shows how students develop skills and knowledge in courses that are required for their programs of study. At this point in time, curriculum maps are strongly encouraged, but not required.

Example of a basic curriculum map.

Learning Outcomes	Course/ Activity 1	Course/ Activity 2	Course/ Activity 3	Course/ Activity 4	Course/ Activity 5	Course/ Activity 6
<i>Outcome 1</i>						
<i>Outcome 2</i>						
<i>Outcome 3</i>						
<i>Outcome 4</i>						
<i>Outcome 5</i>						

Example of a complex map.

	Learning Outcome a	Learning Outcome b	Learning Outcome c	Learning Outcome d	Learning Outcome e
Course # 101	L			L	
Course # 226	M		L	M	
Course # 310	M				L
Course # 360		L	M		
Course # 430		M		M	
Course # 465	H	H			M
Course # 523				H	H
Course # 589			H		H

Note: L, M, and H describe the extent to which students experience the learning outcome. L = Low emphasis on the learning outcome; M = Moderate emphasis; H = High emphasis. Every course listed should contribute to at least a single learning outcome.

Learning Outcome Instructions

Learning outcomes are much more specific than goal statements. Learning outcomes describe the measurable skills, abilities, knowledge, or values that students should be able to do or demonstrate upon completion of the academic program. Learning outcomes should be **SMART**: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**esults-oriented, and **T**ime-bound.

Guidelines:

- Identify 3-5 learning outcomes that are specific, measurable, and attainable. Select learning outcomes that faculty deem most important for all program graduates to achieve upon degree completion.
- More than 5 learning outcomes can be included if required by program accrediting agencies, or if faculty believe the learning outcomes are very important for all graduates to achieve. With numerous (5+), substantial learning outcomes, faculty may decide to assess sets of outcomes on a rotating cycle (e.g. with a total of 12 learning outcomes, assessing a set of 4 outcomes each year, with a 3 year cycle), while others may prefer to assess all learning outcomes annually.
- More advanced degree programs should have more advanced learning outcomes (and different criteria).

Action Verb List:

The verbs listed below can be used to create student learning outcomes. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) have adapted Bloom's model to fit the needs of today's classroom by employing more outcome-oriented language, workable objectives, and changing nouns to active verbs.

<u>Remember:</u>	<u>Understand:</u>	<u>Apply:</u>	<u>Analyze:</u>	<u>Evaluate:</u>	<u>Create:</u>
Arrange	Classify	Apply	Analyze	Appraise	Arrange
Define	Convert	Change	Appraise	Argue	Assemble
Describe	Defend	Choose	Categorize	Assess	Combine
Identify	Distinguish	Compute	Compare	Conclude	Compose
Label	Explain	Demonstrate	Contrast	Defend	Construct
List	Estimate	Dramatize	Criticize	Evaluate	Create
Match	Interpret	Employ	Diagram	Judge	Design
Outline	Infer	Illustrate	Differentiate	Justify	Develop
Recognize	Paraphrase	Manipulate	Discriminate	Support	Formulate
Recall	Summarize	Modify	Distinguish	Value	Generate
Repeat	Translate	Operate	Examine		Plan
Reproduce		Practice	Experiment		Synthesize
		Produce	Question		Write
		Solve	Model		
		Write	Test		

Examples:

Students will design a research project using appropriate scientific theory and methodology.

Students will explain relationships between and among literary elements including character, plot, setting, theme, conflict and resolution and their influence on the effectiveness of the literary piece.

Students will describe each of the major sociological perspectives and will illustrate how each perspective relates to events in their daily lives.