



Assessment Handbook

Midwestern State University
Office of Institutional Effectiveness

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Assessment Q&A

What is the purpose of assessment at Northwestern State University?

Assessment at Northwestern State University is the foundation for institutional effectiveness. Assessment also contributes to the process of continuous improvement for academic programs, as well as educational support and administrative offices. Continuous evaluation is done across the university through established objectives and measures, collecting data, and implementing action plans for programs and departments on campus.

What are some of the basics and benefits of assessment?

- Ongoing process that takes place throughout the year
- Enhanced learning
- Improved academic and administrative programs
- Greater communication among faculty and staff
- Creation of a culture of learning
- Ability to recognize trends and patterns that impact success and student learning
- Chance to receive feedback from faculty, staff, and students
- Accountability for goal setting and following through
- Reflection

How does assessment relate to commitment and compliance?

Assessment at Northwestern State University is able to be utilized for compliance and commitment in multiple ways, including, but not limited to, the following:

Compliance	Commitment
Answering external questions	Answering internal questions
Achieving specific numbers or amount requirements	Achieving specific quality and unity
Reporting	Interpreting information that is collected
Collecting information	Using information that is collected
Maintaining accreditation	Learning

What components are included in the assessment?

- Mission Statement
- Assessment Narrative
- Outcomes
 - Academic: Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)
 - Administrative: Functional Outcomes
- Measures
- Targets
- Findings
- Action Plans
- Attachments

What is the purpose of the University Assessment Committee (UAC)?

The purpose of this committee is to coordinate the process of continual self-evaluation and monitor the improvement across all sectors of the university by providing assistance in the design and selection of assessment instruments, the implementation of assessments, as well as the analysis, reporting, and use of assessment results. The committee reports to the Provost and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

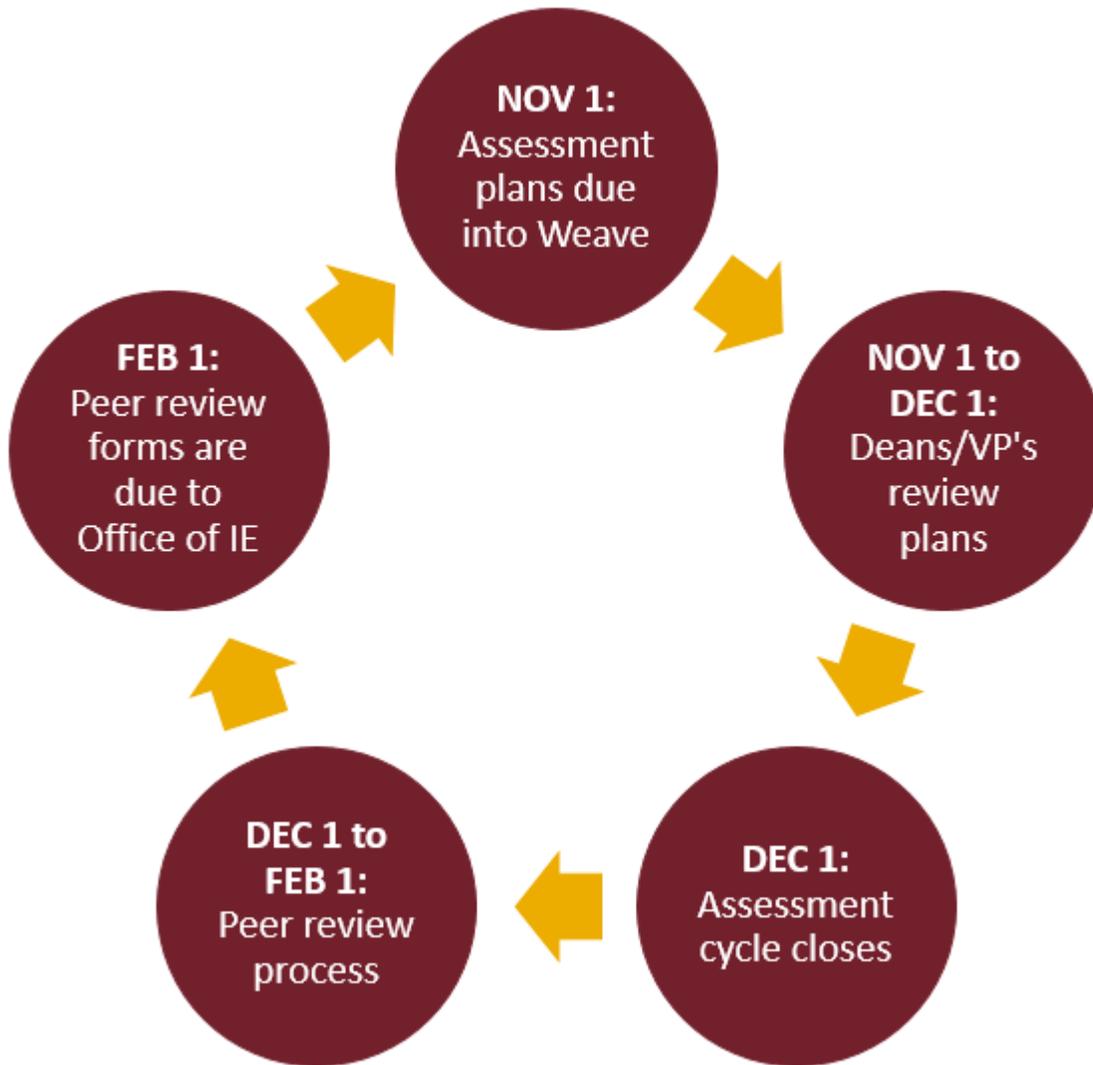
What is the purpose of the peer review process?

Members of the University Assessment Committee are assigned various academic and administrative plans to read over and provide feedback to. Specific aspects are looked at in regards to compliance, but it also allows the reviewer to see the program's/department's commitment to continuous improvement. If a member is a faculty member, they will only peer review academic plans. This is the same for staff members, who only peer review administrative plans.

Will every plan be peer reviewed?

No. Because the number of assessment plans exceeds the number of peer reviewers, not every plan will be peer reviewed each year. Each peer reviewer will be assigned a maximum of four assessment plans to review. However, each assessment plan will received feedback from a staff member from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Assessment Calendar



The diagram above shows the process of the assessment cycle through the year. November 1 is when assessment plans are due into Weave, November 1 to December 1 is when Deans and Vice Presidents review plans, December 1 is when the assessment cycle closes, December 1 to February 1 is the peer review process, and February 1 is when the peer review forms are due to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Assessment Plan Components

Mission Statement

The mission statement is the official statement of your department or program.

Assessment Narrative

The assessment narrative is where you highlight the important factors that contributed to the assessment cycle within the past year. It is written as a one to two page summary that discusses not only how assessment plays a role in the department, but also how it is meaningful and being used to improve upon student learning or services being provided. It includes the following main ideas:

- **Process:** What did the assessment process look like throughout the year?
- **Results:** What were some of the main themes and discoveries from the year?
- **Challenges:** What were some challenges the department faced during the year?
- **Positives:** What were some positives from the year?
- **Collaboration:** How did the department work together towards continuous improvement throughout the year?
- **Reflections:** What is there to reflect on from the year?

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)

SLO's are used by academic programs, as well as those who work directly with students/who provide services to students. SLO's are measurable and meaningful, as well as specific and realistic. In each assessment plan, there needs to be a minimum of three SLO's. Some questions to keep in mind when developing SLO's include, but are not limited to:

- What do you want students to learn?
- What do you want students to gain from the program?

Functional Outcomes

Functional outcomes are used by those who do not work directly with students. Academic programs can include functional outcomes in their assessment plan, but they must be in addition to, and not in place of, the three required SLO's.

Functional outcomes are measurable and meaningful, as well as specific and realistic, and there needs to be a minimum of three. Some questions to keep in mind when developing functional outcomes include, but are not limited to:

- What kind of services do you strive to offer?
- What is the purpose of the services you provide?

Measures

There are two types of measures, including direct and indirect. Direct measures are where students demonstrate the learned knowledge/skills, and indirect are where students reflect on the learning. Each SLO needs a minimum of two measures, including one direct measure and

one indirect measure.

Direct Measure	Students demonstrate the learned knowledge/skills
Indirect Measure	Students reflect on the learning

It is highly recommended that each functional outcome has a minimum of two measures as well. There are four things to keep in mind when developing measures, including the four W's:

- **Who:** Who was the population being measured?
- **What:** What tool was used to measure?
- **When:** When was this measure being done?
- **Where:** Where was this measure being done?

Targets

Targets describe the desirable level of performance for students, or the desirable level of performance for specific tasks and programs. Specific percentages or numbers is best, that way it is clear whether or not a target was met.

Findings

Findings describe what the data shows, and whether or not a target was met. The findings include specific numbers and percentages when possible, and there are multiple results that can be listed. These include the following:

- Met
- Not Met
- Exceeded
- Not Reported this Period
- Partially Met

-For assessment at Midwestern State University, we ask that this option is not selected. Instead, select one of the other four options.

If a target was not reported on/no data was able to be collected, please provide a brief explanation as to why.

Action Plans

Action plans are based on findings, and are required for targets that are not met. Action plans should describe the steps that will be taken, as well as when these steps will be implemented, to improve upon student learning in the program. Also, if the assessment plan has action plans from the previous year, they should be updated to reflect if they are completed or still in progress.

If a target has consistently not been met for multiple years in a row, it is recommended to reexamine if this target is realistic or not, as well as the themes and patterns the data might show of why it has not been met. If a target has consistently been met or exceeded for multiple

years in a row, changing or raising the target is recommended, or even reexamining if a new outcome should replace it if the overall goal of that outcome has been met.

Attachments

Attachments are not required, but they do a great job at supplementing the assessment process and the data that is being reported. The IE office feedback will always be attached from the previous year, as well as the peer review feedback, if that plan was peer reviewed.

Attachments can include, but are not limited to:

- Examples of data that was collected
- Rubrics
- Student work
- Meeting minutes
- Findings

Bloom's Taxonomy, Learning in Action

KNOWLEDGE	COMPREHENSION	APPLICATION	ANALYSIS	SYNTHESIS	EVALUATION
count define describe draw identify label list match name outline point quote read recall recite recognize record repeat reproduce select state write	associate compute convert defend discuss distinguish estimate explain extend extrapolate generalize give example infer paraphrase predict rewrite summarize	add apply calculate change classify complete compute demonstrate discover divide examine graph interpolate interpret manipulate modify operate prepare produce show solve subtract translate use	analyze arrange breakdown combine design detect develop diagram differentiate discriminate illustrate infer outline point out relate select separate subdivide utilize	categorize combine compile compose create derive design devise explain generate group integrate modify order organize plan prescribe propose rearrange reconstruct relate reorganize revise rewrite summarize specify transform	assess compare conclude contrast criticize critique determine grade interpret judge justify measure rank support test

The chart above was borrowed and updated from the Office of Assessment at Kansas State University:
<https://www.k-state.edu/assessment/toolkit/outcomes/action.html>

This chart gives examples of words that can be utilized when writing SLO's and functional outcomes. Proceed to pages 10-11 to see examples of how these words are an important part of writing outcomes.

Developing Outcomes

Steps to Writing SLO's

1) Answer the following questions:

- What do you want students to learn?
- What do you want students to gain from the program?

2) Focus on what you want the student to be able to demonstrate or know upon completion of the program.

3) Consider how this information can be expressed through knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values.

4) Answer the following question:

- How will you know when the students have learned what you want them to know?

5) Draft your outcome by utilizing action verbs. (See chart on next page for some examples of action verbs.)

Steps to Writing Functional Outcomes

1) Answer the following questions:

- What kind of services do you strive to offer?
- What is the purpose of the services you provide?

2) Decide on what you want the focus of your assessment to be. The following are some examples:

- Reducing production time
- Reducing errors
- Increasing efficiency
- Increasing accuracy
- Increasing paperless efforts
- Decreasing use of paper
- Compliance with standards
- Compliance with regulation
- Satisfaction of clients

3) Draft your outcome by utilizing action verbs. (See chart on next page for some examples of action verbs.)

Examples of SLO's

- 1) Students will be able to demonstrate good resume writing skills upon completion of a meeting with someone at the Career Management Center.
- 2) Students will be able to describe and analyze the strengths and limitations of various research designs.
- 3) Students in the B.A. in Spanish program will be able to describe the cultural trends, values, ideas, and different perspectives as manifested through art, literature, and music in Spanish-speaking Latin America.
- 4) Students in the B.S. in Mathematics program will be able to demonstrate the ability to construct rigorous logical arguments by employing a variety of proof techniques.

Examples of Functional Outcomes

- 1) The Print Shop will increase the amount of money generated in shredding services.
- 2) MSU Texas employees who participated in HR's new employee orientation will rank the training as excellent.
- 3) The number of students enrolling in the B.S. in Mechanical Engineering program will increase in the year 2020-2021.
- 4) The Office of Public Information and Marketing will distribute a specific number of copies of Sunwatcher magazine for each issue that is printed.

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