

Office of University Accreditation and Assessment

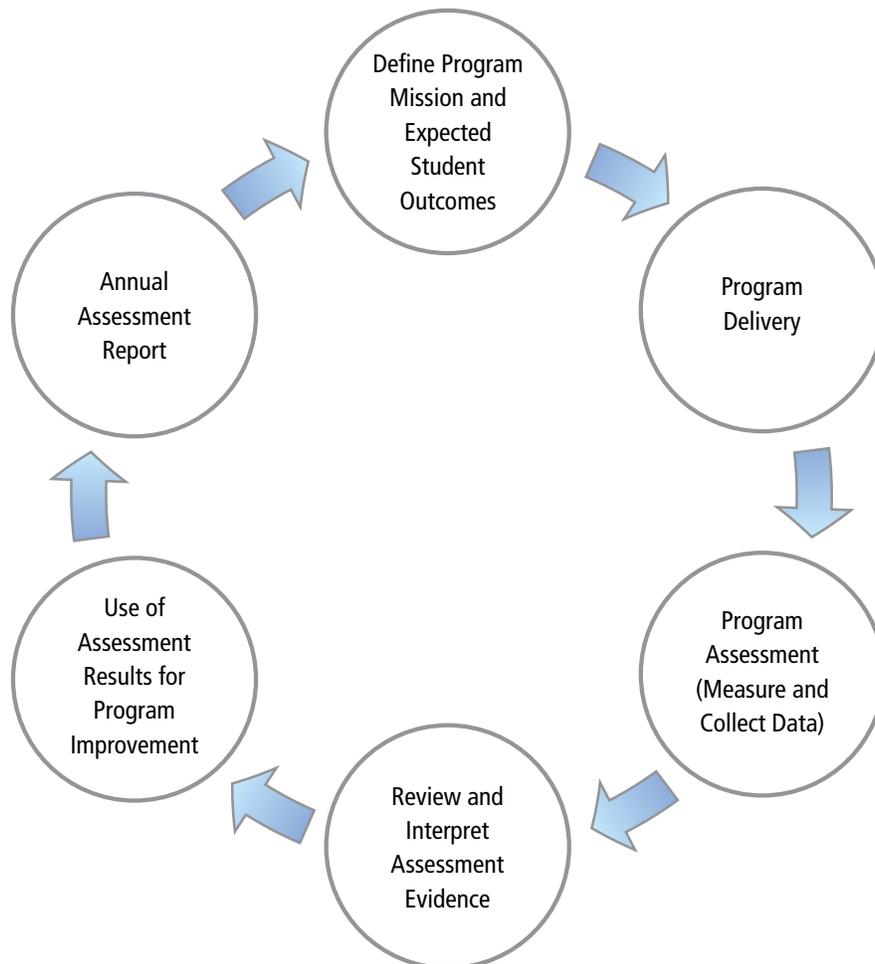
Measuring Excellence: Guidelines for Program Assessment

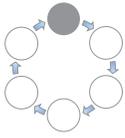
Context for Assessment

Much of the recent emphasis on assessment in higher education is a direct result of calls for greater accountability. As students' costs of attendance increase, the public (e.g., taxpayers, parents, law makers) wants to ensure that educational quality is maintained. However, assessment is very important for ensuring that an institution is achieving its mission and that students are leaving the institution with the knowledge and skills required to be successful in the 21st century. At UB, we are committed to academic excellence and providing a transformative educational experience. Program assessment helps us achieve those goals by fostering a culture of data-driven improvement.

UB's Expectations for Program Assessment

Delineation of a Program-Level Assessment Process



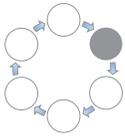


Define Program Mission and Student Learning Outcomes

A program's mission statement clearly articulates the purpose of the academic program:

The mission of *name of program* is to *what unit is expected to achieve* by providing *what unit does to whom unit serves*.

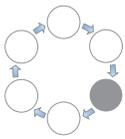
Student Learning Outcomes reflect what students should **know and/or be able** to do upon completing the program. They can be few in number (3-6) but are written in behavioral terms and indicate the level of learning desired. Learning outcomes should be clearly communicated to students.



Program Delivery

The delivery of the program involves instructional experiences that provide opportunities for student learning. In addition, each learning outcome must be addressed in at least one course or learning experience (curriculum mapping). The most important learning outcomes should be addressed in multiple courses and/or experiences.

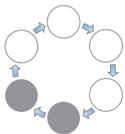
Course objectives are linked to program learning outcomes, and syllabi need to include this mapping. In addition, each course requirement (e.g., tests, papers, presentations, etc.) is linked to one or more course objectives.



Program Assessment

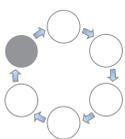
Assessments provide evidence that students have achieved learning outcomes and can be based on regular course work or they can be added on as additional program requirements, such as portfolios and standardized tests. The best assessments are those that **directly** examine student achievement. **Indirect measures**, such as course evaluations, can be used as supplemental evidence of student learning.

It is important to remember that assessment can be done on a sampling basis. **It is not necessary to assess every student in every class every semester.**



Review, Interpret, and Use Results

The purpose of collecting assessment data is to pull it together in a meaningful way in order to make conclusions about the program effectiveness. Periodically, program faculty members should meet to review the results and come to conclusions about program effectiveness based on these results. Once areas of strength and weaknesses are identified, faculty can determine which aspects of the program should be continued and which should be changed. Suggested changes may be simple things rather than complete overhauls of the curriculum. Assessment continues so that the effectiveness of program changes can be determined.



Annual Reports and Plans for Program Revision

Programs should maintain a brief annual assessment report (1-2 pages) that outlines the following: program mission and learning outcomes, the assessment strategy and timeline for each outcome, a brief description of the evidence relating to the achievement of each outcome, suggestions for program revision, and a brief description of how these revisions will be implemented.