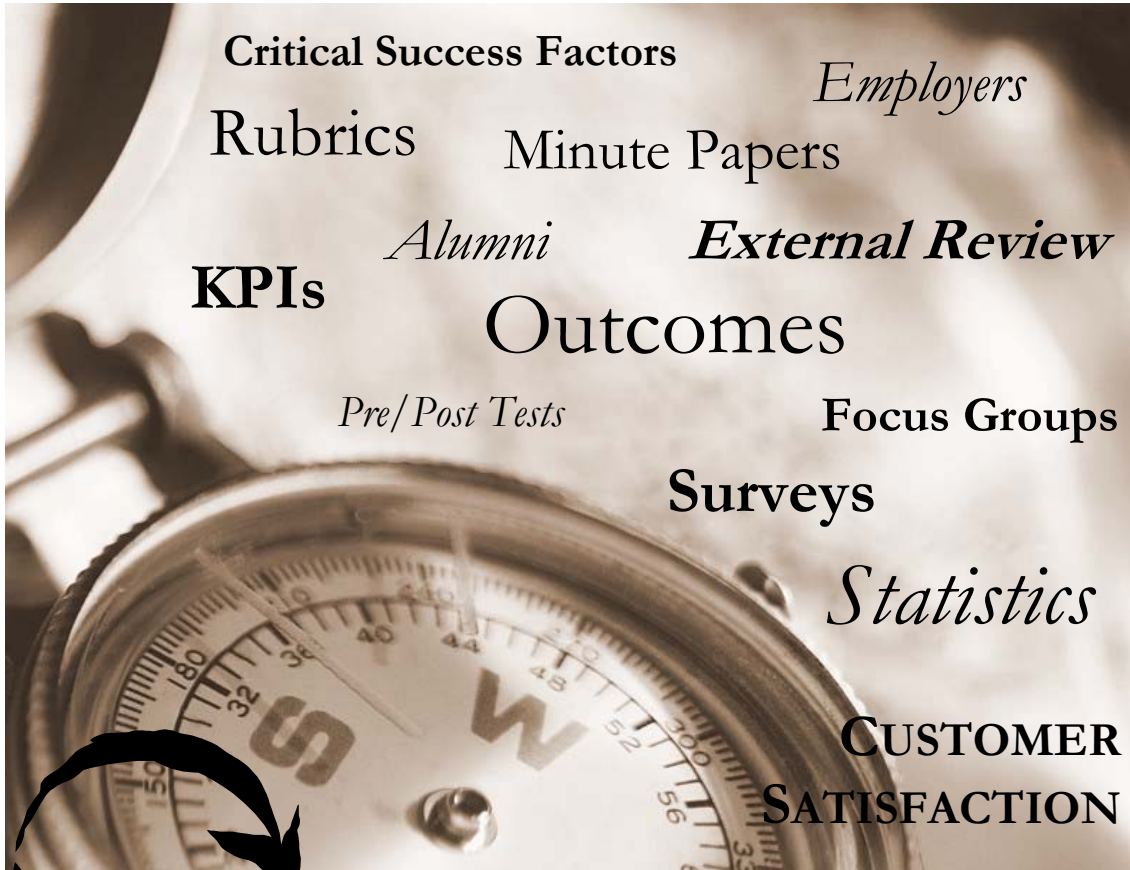Critical Success Factors

Employers

Rubrics

Minute Papers

Alumni

External Review

KPIs

Outcomes

Pre/Post Tests

Focus Groups

Surveys

Statistics

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

# Assessment

## A Guide to Developing and Implementing Effective Outcomes Assessment

*Academic Support and Administrative Units at AUC*

# Why We Assess…

There is a growing demand in higher education for systematic and thoughtful assessment of student learning and overall institutional effectiveness. Increasingly, institutions of higher education are being called upon to demonstrate that fiscal and human resources are being invested in ways that result in quality outcomes and that these outcomes are enabling the institution to achieve its mission.

Externally, the university is required by our accrediting agency, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, as well as discipline-specific accrediting bodies like AACSB, ABET, ACEJMC, CSAB, and others, to develop and implement plans for assessing student learning as well as the effectiveness of its administrative operations. In addition, AUC recognizes the need for accountability to all of its stakeholders: students, faculty, staff, trustees, parents, governmental agencies, alumni, employers, as well as the local community and the region. Assessment data provides evidence to all of these groups that AUC is actively monitoring its progress towards its goals.

What exactly is assessment? Assessment is a process of defining a program or unit's mission, developing desired outcomes, continuously monitoring progress towards those outcomes, communicating results, and using those results to make improvements. Assessment is an outstanding tool for faculty and administrators: at its best, it communicates expectations, provides feedback, engages students and staff in achieving desired results, and provides useful information to help improve learning and guide decision making and resource allocation.

The university is strengthening its efforts to institutionalize an assessment environment that encourages open reflection, supports innovation and experimentation in assessment methods, and promotes a culture of evidence in decision-making. All departments or units across campus are expected to develop and implement effective assessment plans and to report assessment results on an annual basis to their area heads. IPART will coordinate assessment activities across campus; provide resources including advice, training, and workshops; disseminate assessment information and best practices; and offer timely feedback on unit plans and reports.

Our hope is that this guide will serve as a useful tool to help you develop assessment plans that will be simple, workable, and provide meaningful information to guide your decision-making and improve student learning. We hope that you'll share your plans, results, assessment tools, best practices, and success stories with your colleagues to build a knowledge base that will support assessment efforts across campus. And, finally, we hope that you'll contact us and let us know how we can help you in developing a strong and vibrant assessment culture within your program.

# Table of Contents
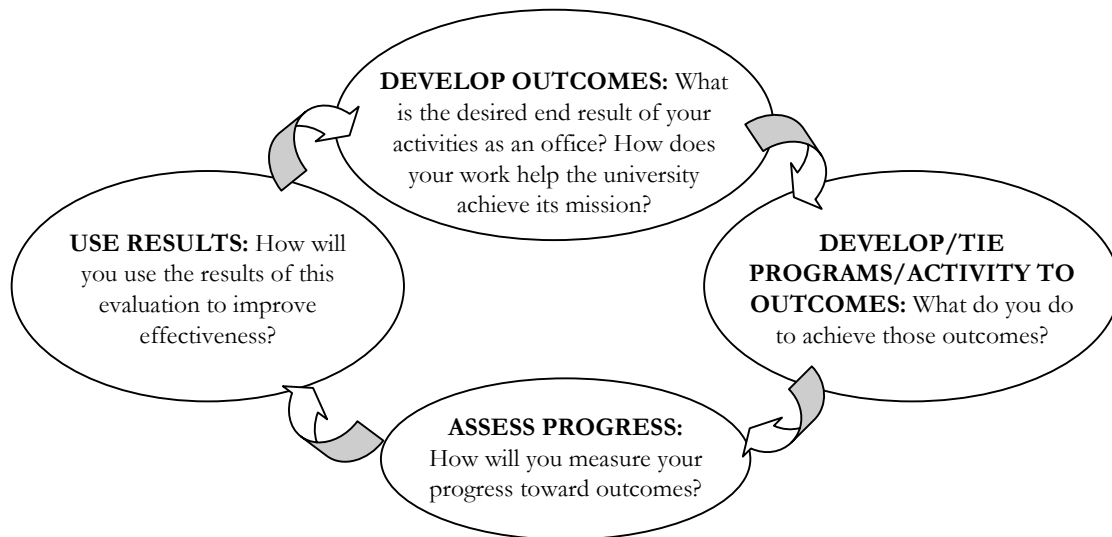
# What is Assessment?



Fig. 1: The Assessment Cycle

Assessment is a process of gathering and analyzing information to gauge if your unit is performing well and then using that information to improve your unit's performance.

Assessment is a not a self-study, with a start date and end date; instead, it is a **continuous process of gathering, evaluating, and communicating information and using it to improve institutional effectiveness.** Fig. 1 explains the assessment process in more detail and also illustrates its cyclical nature, with the information provided by one assessment cycle used to improve planning and budgeting and a unit's effectiveness in the next cycle.

As with academic units, assessment of administrative activities needs to be ongoing, continuous and systematic. The mission of each administrative unit should relate directly to the university's mission; outcomes should be explicitly stated, measurable, and relate to the administrative unit's mission; achievement of these outcomes should be assessed against targets or benchmarks; the results of the assessment should be communicated; and the results used to make changes to improve performance and effectiveness, allocate resources, and inform other decisions related to the unit's area of responsibility.

## Why Conduct Assessment?

The purpose of assessment is to engage the campus community in developing a systematic, ongoing, and transparent process to define goals and measure our progress towards those goals, improving student learning and the overall effectiveness of the university.

Each academic support and administrative unit must be able to demonstrate that it is defining expected outcomes for its "customers," measuring achievement of those outcomes, and using those results to improve the way it works.

Assessment can benefit **administrators and staff by:**

- Helping clarify the mission of a department or unit, its role in helping the university achieve its mission, and identify the key activities that need to occur to achieve the department's mission and goals.

- Providing coherence and direction to the department or unit's work.

- Providing staff with clear expectations that help them understand how their supervisors will evaluate their work.

- Providing administrator and staff with better information about how their services are viewed by their "customers" and what areas need improvement.

- Helping administrators make informed decisions about budgeting, personnel decisions, staff hires, the need to improve or expand services, and more.

- Ensuring that resources are being allocated in the most effective way possible – where they'll have the greatest impact on helping the university achieve its mission. (Suskie 2004)

> **All administrative and academic support units are required to develop and submit an assessment plan and an annual report on assessment activities to their Area Head, with a copy to IPART.**

### Institutional Support for Assessment

Assessment activities at the university are coordinated through Institutional Planning, Assessment, Planning, and Testing (IPART). IPART offers guidance, training, and support to help departments, units, schools and support offices conduct effective assessments. In addition, IPART has an extensive library of materials and guides to help administrators develop effective assessment plans and tools as well as a website that provides online access to the university's knowledge bases of assessment tools, techniques, reports, surveys, news, events and more. The website can be accessed at ipart.aucegypt.edu.

### How Does Assessment Fit Into the Planning Process?

The results of outcomes assessment from departments and units provide empirical data for departments and areas to develop their own annual and long-range plans. At the institutional level, this information, as well as information from assessment of institutional outcomes, is analyzed and coordinated within the scope of the university's mission and its projected resources and priorities to develop its recommendations for resource allocation and long-range planning.

Assessment results provide empirical support for decisions regarding allocation of resources and annual and long range planning at all levels of the university: program, department, school, and institution. Fig. 3 illustrates how assessment informs planning, resource allocation, and implementation of plans.

Fig. 3: The Link between Assessment, Planning, and Resource Allocation

**Assessment**

**Implementation**

**Planning**

**Resource Allocation/
Budget Preparation**
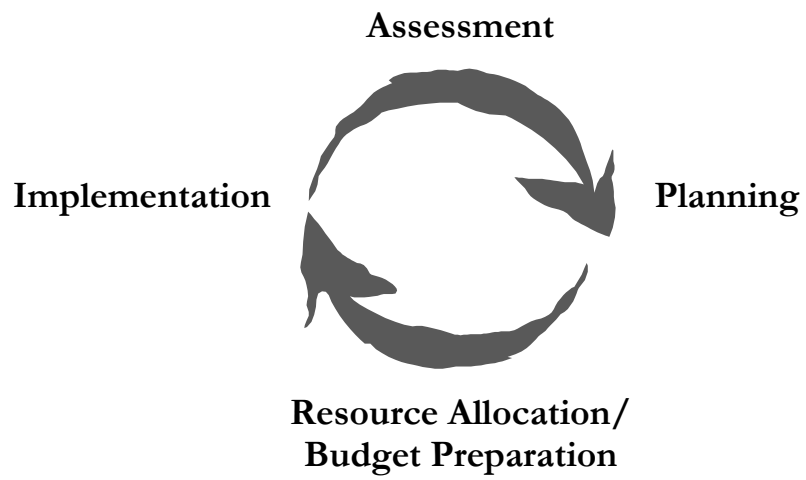
# How to Conduct Effective Outcomes Assessment

As with student learning assessment, assessment of supporting units begins with the development of a mission statement, based on the university's mission statement, and follows with the development of measurable outcomes, which reflect the units' critical success factors -- those characteristics or activities that are essential for the organization to achieve its mission. Supporting units assess progress towards those outcomes, communicate results, and use those results to improve their processes and inform decision-making and resource allocation. The following sections provide detail on how to develop an effective outcomes assessment plan, including how to write a mission statement, how to develop outcomes, and how to assess progress towards those outcomes.

## Step 1:  Define the mission of your department or unit.

Your mission serves as the foundation for assessment planning. The mission statement should describe the purpose of the department or unit as well as reflect the mission of the university.

Mission statements should be not more than three or four lines and should clearly and effectively communicate WHAT you do, WHY you do it, and HOW you do it.

> *Example 1: Main Library (AUC)*
> To develop, maintain and enhance the resources, services, and environment necessary to provide the highest level of support for the instructional and research needs of the AUC community.

> *Example 2: Engineering Services (AUC)*
> The mission of Engineering Services at the American University in Cairo is to provide high quality training and service to the industrial community in Egypt and other countries.

> *Example 3: The Writing Center (AUC)*
> The Writing Center is committed to developing students' communication abilities by providing services to enhance critical thinking, presentation, and writing skills for both graduates and undergraduates in all disciplines. As a function of this mission, we support the efforts of teaching and non-teaching faculty in all disciplines.

## Step 2: Identify the most important outcomes of the department or unit.

An outcome is a specific statement that describes the benefit that a department hopes to achieve or the impact on a "customer" or the institution that is a result of the work that your unit performs. Outcomes should be challenging but attainable. **A department should identify at least one outcome for each of its functional responsibilities.**

**Hints for writing outcomes:**

1. Begin the outcome statement with the beneficiary of the service you provide: "Students are aware of…," "Administrators have the…,"

2. **Focus on the ends, not the means** -- what the desired "end state" should be.

3. An outcome should be stable over a number of years, not time dependent. If it is time-dependent, you are probably writing an objective rather than an outcome.

4. Outcomes also need to be measurable and related directly to the work of your department.

5. List only key outcomes – between three and five is ideal.

**Examples of Departmental Outcomes**

- "Prospective applicants will meet a welcoming and informative environment when they enquire about graduate studies."

- "Evaluation and testing of the English language proficiency of incoming graduates will be timely and accurate."

- "Library patrons have access to the appropriate information resources needed for learning and research."

- "Users will receive prompt assistance in effecting resolving technical problems related to university networking services."

- "Faculty, staff, and students will be able to identify EO/AA laws, policies, and procedures and know how and from where to seek assistance."

- "University departments and units will have the technical support needed to effectively assess their programs and services."

- "Campus units will receive the technical support they need to conduct effective assessment."

- "Eligible employees have the information they need to make appropriate decisions regarding employee benefits packages."

- "The university's senior administrators have the information they need for decision-making related to budgets and financial planning."

- "Students will be able to write an effective resume."

- "Faculty members effectively use technology to promote student learning."

- "Clients of the Counseling Center will be able to use two or more ways to manage emotions."

- "All inquiries from the news media will be answered in a timely and appropriate manner."

**What is the difference between outcomes, objectives and strategies?**
All of AUC departments and units are engaged in planning as well as assessment. Assessment plans detail expected outcomes, progress towards those outcomes, and how results will be used to improve effectiveness. While the results of assessment are intended to inform planning, they are not substitutes for plans and are not the place to detail administrative strategies, objectives, and planned administrative actions.

**Outcomes** are something that the department or unit wants to achieve; they are desired end results for the organization or program, rather than actions. Outcomes are related to the institution or department's mission and vision, and focus on the benefit to the recipient of the service.

Example of an **Outcome Statement:** All academic support and administrative units at AUC conduct ongoing and effective assessment of their activities and services and use the results of assessment to inform planning, decision-making and resource allocation.

**Objectives** are the tasks to be completed in order to achieve a goal. Objectives are specific and measurable and must be accomplished within a specified time period. There should be two to three objectives per goal.

Example of an **Objective:** By the end of 2009-2010, all academic support and administrative units will have outcomes assessment plans in place.

**Strategies** are the means you plan to use to achieve your objectives. There should be a minimum number of strategies to achieve each objective.

Example of a **Strategy:** Develop and distribute assessment materials in hard-copy and online forms. These will include an assessment guide, plan, and report templates, examples, evaluative rubrics to provide feedback on plans and reports, online links to additional resources, etc.

Finally, share outcomes with staff and with the university community. Staff perform more effectively when they are given clear goals to help them focus on what's most important and understand how individual responsibilities or tasks fit with the goals and outcomes of the department.

**Step 3: Define how you will assess progress towards these outcomes**

Assessments don't have to be complicated and, when used well, can be a powerful tool for improvement, providing better information for planning, budgeting, new programs, staffing, and student support. Assessment data help us understand where our unit is in our progress towards our expected outcomes, where we might be having difficulty, and how we might change the way we work to improve our effectiveness. **Assessment is *not* a performance evaluation of individual staff members.**

**Start by taking an inventory of the kinds of tools your department or program is already using.** What information are you already collecting? What kinds of assessments are you already using or are already familiar with? What kinds of assessments are recommended by your profession? For each expected outcome, describe methods you are using or plan to use to measure how well your department or unit is actually performing in relation to the outcome. Assessment measures can be direct or indirect, qualitative or quantitative, objective or subjective, and multiple measures should be used for each outcome. An assessment method or measure can also be used to assess progress towards more than one outcome.

**Develop targets or benchmarks for each measure, for example, "**80% of users responded that they are satisfied with the service."

Additionally, many offices on campus collect and analyze institutional data. These offices include IPART, Career Advising and Placement Services (CAPS), Alumni, Student Affairs, Graduate Studies, and others. This data can be analyzed to provide your program with information about your clients or customers.

Examples of assessment measures for supporting units include:

- Student satisfaction surveys
- Number of complaints
- Count of program participants
- Growth in participation
- Average wait time
- Comparisons to professional organizations' best practices
- Statistical reports
- Average service time
- Staff training hours
- Number of applications

- Processing time for requests
- Number of users
- Focus groups
- Opinion surveys
- External review
- Number of staff trained
- Dollars raised
- Attendance at events
- Student participation in clubs and activities

## Step 4: Complete the assessment plan

Once the mission, expected outcomes and assessment methods and benchmarks have been developed, the assessment plan must be completed. See Appendix 2 for a template for an assessment plan. Assessment coordinators should use this template to develop their plans and reports or create a text document that provides the same information in a similar format, e.g. assessment measures and benchmarks should be listed for each outcome, along with results and action plans for each outcome. When completed, the plan should be shared with the Area Head and a copy sent to IPART.

Remember, not all outcomes need to be assessed – only those that are the most important. Three to five is generally a manageable number. In addition, not all outcomes must be assessed each year. Departments and units can schedule assessment of outcomes over several years, if needed.

Additional information on assessment, training, workshops, and other assistance is available from IPART. IPART's website also hosts a wide range of information and online resources as well as copies of this guide and the assessment plan template in downloadable format.

## Step 5: Carry out the assessment

Once the plan is developed and submitted, the assessment process needs to be implemented. **Remember, for outcomes assessment, the goal is to assess department outcomes, not to evaluate individual students or faculty members.** The assessment coordinator will manage the program's assessment process and will create a detailed timeline for the assessment cycle. The timeline might include dates for when work will be collected, when results will be tabulated and analyzed across the program, and when the department's staff will meet to discuss the results of the process and recommend changes.

## Step 6: Collect, analyze, communicate, and report on your findings

After assessment information is collected, the results need to be analyzed and communicated in useful ways to department colleagues, who can consider changes to service methods, resource availability and scheduling, and other factors.

At the end of the year, the department should complete an assessment report, similar in format to the plan, stating expected outcomes, assessment tools used, results of the assessment, and how the results were used to make changes to improve effectiveness. A template for the report is included in the appendix.

The department's assessment coordinator should share the department overall report with the Area Head and send a copy to IPART, which will provide timely feedback and comments. Departments and units are encouraged to share their results with all stakeholders.

Assessment results should be used in preparation of departmental budgets and changes to the long-range plans. The results should also be used to review and adjust the department's assessment plans, to ensure that the highest quality information is available to assist the department in meeting its expected outcomes.


## Step 7: Take action based on those findings

Assessment results are meant to be used: to improve effectiveness and inform decision-making and resource allocation. Once assessment results have been collected and analyzed, the department needs to return to the department's expected outcomes – how do the results of the assessment meet those expectations? Were the standards that were set appropriate? Should performance expectations be changed? What aspects of the assessment process worked well and what changes might make it more effective? What were the most effective assessment tools? Can they be shared and used in other courses or programs? In what areas does the department excel, and in what areas does it need to improve?

Keep track of planned changes, those changes that have already been carried out in response to assessment results, and the impact those changes had on performance and effectiveness.

Then, **start the process all over again**, for continuous quality improvement.

Assessment results are important evidence on which to base requests for additional funding, curriculum changes, new faculty and staff lines, and more. Most importantly, the use of assessment results to make these kinds of changes to improve effectiveness and inform decision-making and planning is the reason why we assess. Even negative assessment results can have powerful, positive impact when they are used to improve performance, effectiveness, and ultimately, the university's ability to achieve its mission.

# Appendix 1: AUC's Mission and Outcomes

## Mission Statement (2006-2007 Catalog)

*The mission of the American University in Cairo (AUC) is to provide high quality educational opportunities to students from all segments of Egyptian society as well as from other countries, and to contribute to Egypt's cultural and intellectual life. The university offers programs at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels as well as an extensive continuing education program. The language of instruction is English.*

*The university advances the ideals of American liberal arts and professional education and of life-long learning. As freedom of academic expression is fundamental to this effort, AUC encourages the free exchange of ideas and promotes open and on-going interaction with scholarly institutions throughout Egypt and other parts of the world.*

*The pursuit of excellence is central to AUC's mission, and the university maintains high standards of academic achievement, professional behavior and ethical conduct. Toward this end it also provides a broad range of disciplines and learning opportunities and strives to contribute to the sum of human knowledge.*

*AUC considers it essential to foster students' appreciation of their own culture and heritage and of their responsibilities to society. The university's aim of promoting international understanding is supported by means of scholarship, learned discourse, a multicultural campus environment, and a diversified publishing program.*

*To advance its mission, the university seeks to maintain a highly qualified faculty. Emphasis is placed on excellence in teaching as well as on research, creative work and faculty members' intellectual contributions to their disciplines. Outstanding administrative, professional and support staff, leading edge instructional technology and use of other resources are also central to the pursuit of the university's aims.*

*The American University in Cairo is an independent, non-profit, apolitical, non-sectarian and equal-opportunity institution.*

## University Learning Outcomes

Using AUC's mission statement as a guide, the university's Long-Range Planning subcommittee on assessment developed a set of educational outcomes for students, to be used in the development and assessment of student learning. These outcomes were later endorsed by the university's governance structure.

Because this process pre-dated the current assessment standards, many of the outcomes were not expressed in the current language of assessment. For that reason, these outcomes have been edited and organized into five logical groupings in the appropriate format as the university's key institutional learning outcomes for all students. These outcomes, which derive from institutional documents approved through the university's formal governance structure, are still in **draft format**, but they provide a strong foundation for the development of departmental assessment plans.

### *Professional Skills*
AUC graduates will synthesize discipline-based knowledge with a broad-based liberal arts education. They will be proficient in the tools of their discipline as well as the tools of research and learning; make decisions that reflect the highest standards of ethical conduct and professional behavior; and understand the importance of life-long learning.

### Advanced Communication Skills

AUC graduates will be fluent in English and will be able to write and speak effectively in a variety of settings. AUC graduates will be able to communicate in Arabic, establish rapport in groups, be adaptable to new circumstances, work both independently and in collaboration with others, and function effectively as leaders.

### Critical Thinking

AUC graduates will be independent learners, adept at using current technologies to access information and applying strong quantitative, analytical, and critical thinking skills to analyze and synthesize complex information to solve problems.

### Cultural Competence

AUC graduates will have an understanding and appreciation of Egyptian and Arab culture and heritage, as well as an understanding of international interdependence, cultural diversity, and consideration for values and traditions that may differ from their own. In addition, AUC graduates will have an aesthetic awareness of the various modes of human artistic expression and will be able to collaborate effectively in a multicultural context.

### Effective Citizenship

AUC graduates value service to their local community and to broader causes at national and international levels.

# Appendix 2: Format for Unit Assessment Plan

**Matrix Format:** This template is available on the IPART Assessment website at http://ipart.aucegypt.edu.

**Department/Unit:**                                                                          **Date:**
**Assessment**
**Coordinator:**                                                                             **Ext.          Email:**
**Mission Statement:**

| **Expected Outcomes:** *Something the department or unit wants to achieve; desired end results for the organization or program, rather than actions. 3-5 ideal, maximum 10.* | **Assessment Methods:** *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?* | **Targets/Benchmarks:** *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?* | **When Will Assessment Be Conducted and Reviewed?** *How and when will you collect and analyze results?* | **Use of Results:** *How will you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?* |
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# Appendix 2: Format for Unit Assessment Plan

**Alternate Format:** This template is available on the IPART Assessment website at http://ipart.aucegypt.edu.

**Department/Unit:**                                                    **Date:**
**Assessment**                                      **Ext.:**       **Email:**
**Coordinator:**
**Mission**
**Statement:**

---

**Outcome 1:**

---

**Assessment Methods:** *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?*

**Targets/Benchmarks:** *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?*

**When Will Assessment Be Conducted and Reviewed?**
*How and when will you collect and analyze results?*

**Use of Results:** *How will you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?*

---

**Outcome 2:**

---

**Assessment Methods:** *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?*

**Targets/Benchmarks:** *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?*

**When Will Assessment Be Conducted and Reviewed?**
*How and when will you collect and analyze results?*

**Use of Results:** *How will you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?*

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**Outcome 3:**

---

**Assessment Methods:** *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?*

**Targets/Benchmarks:** *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?*

**When Will Assessment Be Conducted and Reviewed?**
*How and when will you collect and analyze results?*

**Use of Results:** *How will you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?*

# Appendix 2: Sample Completed Unit Assessment Plan

*Adapted in part from Georgia State University's Office of Undergraduate Studies Assessment Plan. For the complete plan, go to www.gsu.edu/~wwwotc/PullenLibraryOutcomes%20Assessment.doc.*

| **Department/Unit:** | **Office of Undergraduate Admissions** | | **Date:** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Assessment Coordinator:** | **Jane Doe** | | **Ext.** | **Email:** |
| **Mission Statement:** | The Office of Undergraduate Admissions strives to work as a team to attract, select, and enroll the best students by providing the highest quality college selection process. We recruit and enroll talented and diverse students by providing accurate and appropriate information, timely decisions, and quality service to prospective students, families and counselors. | | | |

| **Expected Outcomes:** *Something the department or unit wants to achieve; desired end results for the organization or program, rather than actions. 3-5 ideal, maximum 10.* | **Assessment Methods:** *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?* | **Targets/Benchmarks:** *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?* | **When Will Assessment Be Conducted and Reviewed?** *How and when will you collect and analyze results?* | **Use of Results:** *How will you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia State University has quality incoming freshman and transfer students. | Average Freshman Index (calculated by multiplying HSGPA of the 16 college prep units by factor of 500 and adding best SAT1 verbal and math scores) \n\n Average SAT1 test scores of incoming freshman \n\n Average Core High School GPA of incoming freshman \n\n Average Transfer GPA for transfer students | Average Fall FI greater than or equal to 2700. \n\n Average Fall SAT1 greater than or equal to 1080. \n\n Average Fall HSGPA is greater than or equal to 3.30. \n\n Average Fall TGPA is greater than or equal to 2.90. | FI, SAT1 and core HSGPA are calculated at time of admission decision. TGPA is calculated by Office of Institutional Research. OIR will calculate averages once registration in complete each Fall. | Depending on results, Enrollment Management Committee may increase minimum criteria for admission. \n\n If improvement needed, will analyze local and university factors contributing to problem and plan strategies to minimize their impact on quality of incoming students. |
| Georgia State University has a diverse student body. | % of students in the Fall incoming class who identify themselves as Black, Asian, and Hispanic. | Maintain or exceed % of incoming class identifying themselves as Black or Asian and increasing % who identify themselves as Hispanic. | Applicants voluntarily self-identify racial group on application. Once registration for Fall complete, OIR will report aggregate data. | Results will indicate effectiveness of efforts to recruit racially and ethnically diverse students. If improvement needed, will analyze factors leading to problem and plan strategies to minimize impact on diversity. |
| Georgia State University has the optimal number of newly | Meeting enrollment target | Meet the enrollment target for Fall plus or minus 100. | OIR will compile results at the end of late registration in Fall. | If outcome not achieved, will analyze local, national , and |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| enrolled students to achieve our enrollment goals for the total number of students enrolled and credit hour production. | | | | university factors that contributed to problems and modify projections and targets for future and plan strategies. |

# Appendix 3: Format for Annual Unit Assessment Report

**Matrix Format:** This template is available on the IPART Assessment website at http://ipart.aucegypt.edu.

**Dept./Unit:**                                               **Year:**

**Assessment Coordinator:**                         **Ext.**                             **Email:**

**Mission Statement:**

| Expected Outcomes: *Something the department or unit wants to achieve; desired end results for the organization or program, rather than actions. 3-5 ideal, maximum 10.* | Assessment Methods: *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?* | Targets/Benchmarks: *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?* | Results/Findings | Use of Results: *How did you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?* |
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# Appendix 3: Format for Annual Assessment Report

**Alternate Format:** This template is available on the IPART Assessment website at http://ipart.aucegypt.edu.

**Department/Unit:**                                                    **Date:**
**Assessment**                                    **Ext.:**         **Email:**
**Coordinator:**
**Mission**
**Statement:**

| Outcome 1: |
| --- |
| |

**Assessment Methods:** *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?*

**Targets/Benchmarks:** *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?*

**Results/Findings:**

**Use of Results:** *How did you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?*

| Outcome 2: |
| --- |
| |

**Assessment Methods:** *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?*

**Targets/Benchmarks:** *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?*

**Results/Findings:**

**Use of Results:** *How did you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?*

**Outcome 3:**

**Assessment Methods:** *What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?*

**Targets/Benchmarks:** *For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?*

**Results/Findings:**

**Use of Results:** *How did you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?*

**Additional comments:**

# Appendix 4: Rubric For Feedback on Supporting Units' Assessment Plans and Reports

Department: _____          Assessment Coordinator: _____

Degree Program: _____          Date: _____

| Assessment Plan Elements | Best Practice | Meets Standard | Developing | Undeveloped |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Expected Outcomes** | Three to five clear, measurable key outcomes are stated, desired end results for the organization or program, rather than actions. Outcomes are related to the institution or department's mission and vision, and focus on the benefit to the recipient of the service. ☐ | At least two and not more than 10 outcomes are stated, desired end results for the organization or program, rather than actions. Outcomes are related to the institution or department's mission and vision, and focus on the benefit to the recipient of the service. ☐ | Key outcomes are stated but are unclear; over-specific; refer to objectives rather than end results; and/or do not focus on the recipient of the service. ☐ | Key outcomes are not stated. ☐ |
| **Assessment Methods** | Multiple assessment methods are used for each outcome, including both direct and indirect measures. Assessment methods clearly match the outcome being assessed and provide clear, truthful information about whether or not an outcome is being achieved. ☐ | At least one assessment measure is identified for each outcome. Each assessment method matches the outcome being assessed and provides clear, truthful information. Overall, the program features a mix of both direct and indirect measures. ☐ | Assessment measures are identified for some outcomes. In some cases, assessment methods do not match the outcome being measured or do not yield clear and truthful information, and/or there is an imbalance in the mix of direct and indirect measures. ☐ | Insufficient information is provided. ☐ |
| **Targets/Benchmarks** | Targets have been established that describe minimum performance standards. These targets include a quantifiable benchmark, such as "an increase of 5%." ☐ | Targets have been established that describe minimum performance standards. ☐ | Not all measures have targets or benchmarks, or targets or benchmarks are not well-developed. ☐ | No targets or benchmarks are included in the plan. ☐ |
| **Use of Results** | Assessment results are used to modify outcomes, planning, resource allocation, work methods, assessment strategies, etc. Targets or benchmarks have been established that describe minimum performance standards. Positive assessment results are shared with other audiences as appropriate. ☐ | Assessment results are used to modify outcomes, planning, resource allocation, work methods, assessment strategies, etc. ☐ | Assessment information is collected, but the results are not shared, discussed and/or used in a systematic way to improve effectiveness. ☐ | There is no evidence that assessment results are shared and discussed or used to improve effectiveness. ☐ |

# Appendix 5: Glossary of Assessment Terms

**Assessment:** A continuous process of gathering, evaluating, and communicating information to improve learning and institutional effectiveness.

**Assessment of Student Learning:** The third element of a four-part cycle: developing articulated student learning outcomes, offering students opportunities to achieve those outcomes, assessing achievement of those outcomes, and using the results of those assessments to improve teaching and learning and inform planning and resource allocation decisions.[1]

**Benchmark:** A standard of comparison against which performance can be measured or assessed.

**Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs):** Assessment tools that faculty members can use to gather timely feedback about a single lecture or discussion. Examples include the Minute Paper, the One Sentence Summary, and Direct Paraphrasing.

**Criteria:** An accepted standard, measure, or expectation used in evaluation or making decision-making.

**Critical Success Factors (CSFs):** Key areas of activity where positive results are necessary for the organization to achieve its goals.

**Direct Measures:** Measures which are directly tied to performance. In assessing student learning using direct measures, students' work or performance provides information directly linked to students' attainment of knowledge or skills. Direct measures are more reliable indicators of student learning than indirect measures. Examples include classroom and homework assignments, examinations and quizzes, capstone courses, student portfolios, and artistic performances.

**E-Portfolio:** A portfolio that is maintained online, containing student work in digital format.

**Goal:** Something the organization wants to achieve; desired outcomes for the organization or program, rather than actions. Goals are related to the institution or department's mission and vision.

**Indirect Measures:** Measures which are not directly tied to performance and often require inferences to be made about performance. Indirect measures often rely on perception and are less meaningful for assessment than direct measures. They are, however, helpful to corroborate the results of direct measures. Examples include exit surveys, student opinion surveys, alumni surveys, grades not based on scoring guidelines, retention and graduation statistics, career development over time, and student activities.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The extent to which an institution has a clearly defined mission and institutional outcomes, measures progress towards achieving those outcomes, and engages in continuous efforts to improve programs and services.

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[1] Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Understanding Middle States Expectation. Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2005.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Quantifiable goals that measure performance. These goals should be well-defined, critical to an organization's success, and reflect the organization's mission and goals. KPIs are usually measured against benchmarks.

**Learning Outcomes:** The knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that students gain from a learning experience.

**Mission:** The purpose of an organization or program; its reason for existing. Mission statements provide the strategic vision or direction of the organization or program and should be simple, easily understood, and communicated widely.

**Objective:** The tasks to be completed in order to achieve a goal. Objectives are specific and measurable and must be accomplished within a specified time period.

**Outcomes:** Synonymous with goals. Outcomes are tied to the mission and are something that the organization, department, program, or unit wants to achieve. Outcomes should be specific, measurable, use action verbs, and focus on the ends rather than the means.

**Portfolio:** An accumulation of evidence about individual achievement or progress towards goals. Student portfolios used for assessment purposes may include but are not limited to projects, journals, research papers, creative writing, presentations, and video or recordings of speeches and performances.

**Program Review:** Periodic self-studies in which departments are asked to present their mission statements; resources, including the number of faculty, faculty qualifications and productivity, teaching load, curriculum, and technology; learning outcomes and assessment measures; the ways in which departments have shared assessment results and used those results to inform departmental decision-making; and plans for improving learning.

**Qualitative Data:** Data that cannot be measured or expressed in numerical terms and relates to or is based on the quality or character of something. Qualitative data describe or characterize something using words rather than numbers. Examples of qualitative data include surveys, focus groups, and feedback from external reviewers.

**Quantitative Data:** Data that is capable of being measured or expressed in numerical terms. Examples of quantitative data include test scores, grades, certification exam results, and graduation and retention rates.

**Rubric:** A criteria-based scoring guideline that can be used to evaluate performance. Rubrics indicate the qualities the judge/reviewer will look for in differentiating levels of performance and assessing achievement.

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