

During the coming months departments at Georgia State will be preparing their annual reports. This year's annual reports, due to the deans on July 1, will include a section entitled Assessment Reports on Student Learning. These reports reflect results from the assessment plans that were submitted last year and are to provide the information on student learning for all undergraduate and graduate programs. The examples below are designed to provide guidance on completing those reports.

The format for the Assessment Reports on Student Learning (<http://education.gsu.edu/ctl/outcomes/AssessmentReport.htm>) has four sections:

- 1. Assessment Procedures (Outcomes)** assessed, assessment procedures that were used, data that was collected and the procedure for analyzing the data). This information has already been described in most program Assessment Plans that were turned in last year and continue to be revised and updated. Departmental Learning Assessment Plans are posted at http://education.gsu.edu/ctl/outcomes/gsu_plan.htm. The written description would be a brief overview of how data on student learning were collected.
- 2. Achievement of Departmental Student Learning Objectives** by students in graduate and undergraduate programs. This is the major area which requires documentation. For undergraduate programs, the report requires evidence of the extent to which students have achieved both general GSU learning outcomes (i.e., written communication, oral communication, collaboration, critical thinking, etc.) as well as program specific learning goals. For graduate programs, the report will focus on student achievement of the goals specific to that program.
- 3. Changes to Procedures or Curriculum Based on Assessment** As a result of the assessment of student learning, a department might decide to modify curricula, student selection or advisement procedures, and/or its assessment plan for next year. **Based on the results of this year's assessment of learning, all plans should have target or cutoff scores for each learning outcome for next year.**
- 4. Changes in Department's Assessment Goals** A department might decide, based on the Assessment Report, that the student learning outcomes for a degree program

should be modified or that additional outcomes be included.

Examples of describing Achievement of Student Learning Objectives

Because of the diverse nature of our programs at Georgia State University, it is reasonable to expect variations in how departments describe the learning outcomes of their students. For example, many programs conduct extensive assessments of student learning for accreditation by professional organizations, and although the format of these reports may vary, the information typically matches the general areas described above.

Example 1. A department with 120 undergraduate students who graduate each year has sampled the performance of 50 students in their capstone course/ experience. Programs with required internship experiences would also fit this example. Using the same scoring rubric used to assign grades on a final project or performance assessment, the faculty teaching the several sections of the capstone course score students on a five point scale on the following areas which match **several, but not all** of department's student learning outcomes:

- Ability to **apply knowledge from the discipline** to a problem that's being investigated;
- Ability to use **methods from the discipline** to investigate problems;
- Ability to **effectively communicate in writing** (establishes and maintains focus, cites sources properly, arranges elements in best order, mechanics and grammar, etc);
- Demonstrate evidence of **Problem-solving skills** (critical thinking) applied to ...

In the Assessment Report on Student Learning the department aggregates the result from the capstone rubric and might report the following:

- **On undergraduate outcome 1, Demonstrates apply knowledge from the discipline to a problem in... (specify the discipline), the mean score was 4.2 on a scale of 5 (5 being highest). Sixty-four percent of seniors were graded as very good or excellent (4 or 5).**
- **On undergraduate outcome 3, Demonstrates methods from the discipline to investigate problems in..., the mean score was 3.7 with 44% of the students graded as very good or excellent (4 or 5).**
- And so forth for the other items

Changes to be made: The department will have identified other courses within the program of study in which they will assess the remaining learning outcomes (and ideally have multiple assessments of the examples above). The results provided in the example above were expressed as a mean for the outcome and as the percent of students reaching the targeted goal of scoring 4 or 5. The department will likely include some expected changes for outcome 3. Perhaps revising how they teach methods from the discipline for investigating problems or revising how they assess the outcome, or revising the learning outcome itself.

Example 2. A department with 45 graduates each year has no capstone course or required sequence of courses. For their assessment plan, they have identified three courses from which each graduate would have taken at least one or more. Within those courses, faculty have agreed to include within an examination a sub-set of two questions to assess students' mastery of the departments learning outcomes of: "Demonstrates the ability to take a stand on an issue in ... and present evidence to document their position". The student responses are scored as acceptable or not-acceptable. The department has not yet set a cutoff for an acceptable performance.

The Assessment Report on Student Learning for the department would aggregate the result from the examination questions and might report the following:

- ***For undergraduate learning outcome number 6, students demonstrate the ability to take a stand on an issue in ... and present evidence to document their position, student responses to exam questions in three courses resulted in 72% of 64 student examinations (some students were in more than one of the courses) were scored acceptable on both items assessing this skill. Scores ranged from a high of 84% receiving an acceptable score in a course to a low of 68% percent of students composing acceptable responses. Of the students not receiving an acceptable rating on both questions, 82% had an acceptable rating on one of the two questions.***

Changes to be made: The department will increase the number of examination questions from two to three and establish a cutoff of having students get at least two of three items scored as acceptable responses.

Example 3. For their doctoral program a department has specified learning outcomes that address these areas:

- Demonstrates understanding of the research base in major field of concentration;
- Demonstrates the ability to engage in scholarship and create new knowledge;
- Demonstrates effective teaching in higher education classes;
- Demonstrates leadership in

The Assessment Report on Student Learning would include the aggregated evidence for the doctoral student assessments that are aligned with the outcomes as follows:

- ***On comprehensive examination questions which assessed understanding of the research data base, all three of the students who completed their comprehensive examination this year were judge to have met this outcome;***
- ***With regard to the ability to engage in scholarship and create new knowledge, the two students who successfully defended their dissertations met this goal;***
- ***An evaluation of the Student Evaluation of Instruction results for the seven students who held graduate teaching assistantships this year indicated that five of the seven has course evaluations that were within one standard deviation of the scores of faculty members who taught the same courses;***
- ***The two students who are graduating this year both demonstrated leadership in ... as documented by their completion of the residency requirements ([hyperlink to document](#)). Specifically, both made presentations at professional conferences, one holds an office in a local professional chapter and the other assisted in the preparation for a grant proposal with a faculty member.***

Changes to be made: At this time the department will continue with its current student learning outcomes. We will institute a mid-semester formative assessment of teaching in courses taught by GTAs and require teaching assistants to provide evidence of student learning after each course that they teach.

For technical assistance on developing a departmental report, contact Harry Dangel after May 11 at hdangei@gsu.edu.

Additional Information and Suggestions

The information in the Student Learning Outcomes Report is to provide a picture of learning within programs and is not an assessment of individual courses, faculty or students. The information in the reports should protect the identity of individuals.

The reports need not contain the raw data on student performance. Rather, summaries of the data and a description of how those data inform the department about student learning.

Departments which have completed parallel reports on the assessment of student learning for disciplinary accreditation groups may wish to hyperlink to relevant portions of those reports rather than do a separately formatted report. For example:

I. Assessment Procedures: Specific assessment procedures describing Outcomes assessed, Elements of assessment. Data collected, and Data Analysis are described in the Accreditation Report to (name of accrediting group) posted at <http://www.gsu.edu/~xxxx>.

II. Achievement of Departmental Objectives for Undergraduate Students, as described in the Accreditation Report to... posted at <http://www.gsu.edu/~zzzzz>.

This format would continue for the sections on changes in procedures and curriculum based on assessment and changes in departmental assessment goals. Of course, if the report for the disciplinary association did not require the information for any sections that is needed for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation, the department would complete that part of the report in the standard manner.

Some Frequently Asked Questions About the Assessment of Student Learning

Do we need to assess all of our students on all of our outcomes? That depends. If your program or number of outcomes is relatively small, it is necessary to assess each student or outcome. With larger programs or number of outcomes it is possible to select and assess a sample of students or outcomes and draw conclusions about the program based on those data. All outcomes must be assessed within a two-year cycle.

What are some types of data that should be collected? The ideal data are direct assessment of students' learning that might be drawn from capstone courses, course embedded assessments (e.g., examinations, projects, papers), externally administered examinations (e.g., accreditation examinations), internship performances (e.g., student teaching or clinical practice in nursing), and evidence from student work in portfolios. Indirect assessments are also helpful and would include student surveys, exit interviews, surveys from employers, and reports from external reviewers. An excellent guide is the Assessment Manual for the University of Wisconsin.

Do we need to use pre- and post-tests? No. While the results from pre-and post tests are valuable, they answer a different question—"How much did students learn?" The question to be answered with the assessment of student learning outcomes is simply, "Do students demonstrate that they know or do the program learning outcomes"? We are essentially measuring students' performance against the outcome (i.e., standard),

How can we manage and organize the data we collect? Because the results are expressed as simple tallies and percentages, data can be entered into a spreadsheet by each learning outcome in the program.

What kind of statistics would be acceptable in the annual report? Because the question we are answering is the extent to which our students have demonstrated that they know and can do the outcomes we have specified, most results will be in the form of tabulating the number and percentages of students (e.g., 45 students equaling 84% met outcome # 4).

What happens if students don't do very well on some of the learning outcomes? It is not our intent to show that all students have met all learning outcomes. Rather, we are demonstrating that we have a "culture of assessment" and that based on the systematic assessment of our students' performance, we are working to improve the quality of student learning.

GSU Departmental Teaching Effectiveness Award

The university currently recognizes individuals for their Instructional Innovations and Instructional Effectiveness and defines these awards in terms of high levels of student learning as a function of effective departmental teaching program. GSU departments are currently engaged in the process of documenting that their students have mastered general education and major-specific learning outcomes and should also be recognized for doing exemplary work. This proposal is to recognize and reward Georgia State University departments which most effectively document instructional effectiveness through evidence of student learning. Receiving this award will also favorably position departments for the Georgia Board of Regents award for departments which demonstrate excellence in teaching.

The Provost will award two departments \$250 per tenure-track faculty supplement to their non-personal budget for the fiscal year following their selection as winners of best report on the assessment of student learning. Departments will be in one of two categories: professional programs with accreditation associations; programs without accreditation bodies. In addition to the financial award, each department will be listed on a plaque that will be publicly displayed at Georgia State.

Procedure:

A committee of the Center for Teaching and Learning Advisory Committee shall review annual reports on the assessment of student learning outcomes that have been submitted to their deans and ultimately to the Provost's Office. The committee will select one department with an accreditation association (e.g., professional accreditation groups such as AACSB and NCATE) and one without an accreditation organization who have produced the best report with regard to:

- Specifying learning outcomes,
- Assessing student mastery of the general education (for undergraduate programs) and major outcomes,
- Analyzing and interpreting the results, and
- Proposing modifications based on the assessment results.

Departmental Assessment Reports will be scored based on:

	Initial Stages of implementation	Limited/partial implementation	Adequate implementation	Fully Implemented
Specifying learning outcomes 20%	Limited outcomes—many not clearly observable	Some content/skill area not adequately covered or described	Outcomes cover most areas with generally clear descriptions	Outcomes cover all areas with clear descriptions
Assessing student mastery of the general education (for undergraduate programs) and major outcomes 50%	Limited assessment of some outcomes in courses	Assessment of most major outcomes (e.g., capstone courses), limited participation	Good coverage with course embedded assessments for exiting students. Adequate sampling and faculty participation.	Use of both course-embedded and external measures, triangulation of results. Broad and deep participation of faculty and students
Analyzing and interpreting the results 20%	Limited	Some analysis of results yields meaningful interpretations	Interpretation of results provides clear strengths and weaknesses	Multiple strengths and weaknesses are identified from data
Proposing modifications based on the assessment results 10%	Few modifications are/can be made due to limited assessment or analysis	Some modifications are planned based on results and analysis	Proposed modifications made for areas of concern	Clear course of actions is proposed by faculty based on results