STETSON UNIVERSITY

INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Institutional Research & Effectiveness

May 2018
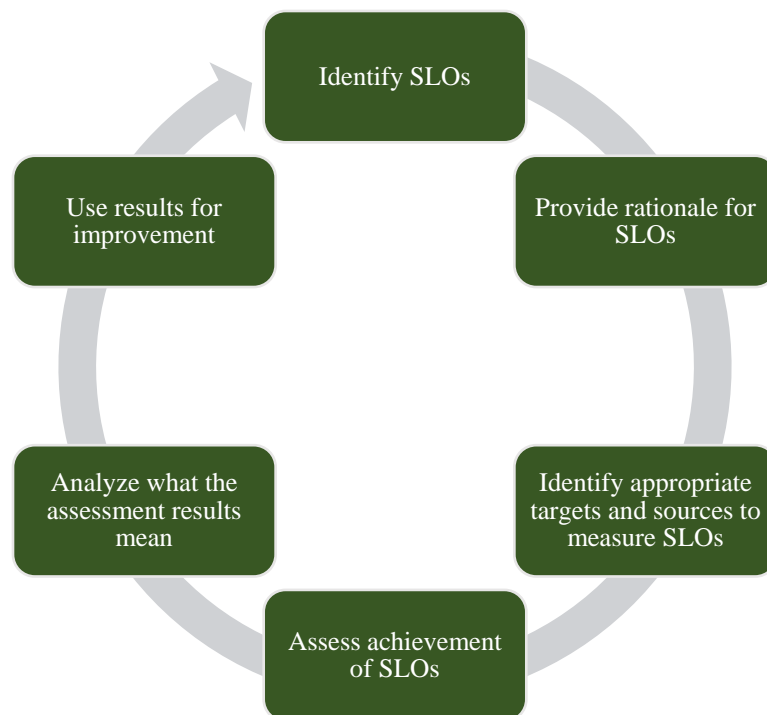*updated: May 2021*

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Overview of Assessment

Assessment offers a systematic mechanism for programs to engage in reflective self-study, examine progress toward articulated goals, and demonstrate continuous improvement. The purpose of assessment is to ensure student learning and alignment of program goals with the university's Strategic Map priorities through an annual process of setting goals, analyzing results, and making data-driven changes to improve student learning.

The concepts of assessment are central to Stetson's commitment to continuous improvement and to the accreditation process. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation criteria encourage institutions to integrate assessment plans which align with the institutional mission, employ a variety of assessment methods, and provide evidence of data-driven improvement at the unit level as a result of the assessments. The components outlined in this guide form the basis of Stetson University's institutional effectiveness processes for educational programs.

The assessment process comprises two parts: the assessment plan and the assessment report. The plan requires programs to indicate intended student learning outcomes (SLOs), targets, and assessment methods for the next year. The report, which is submitted after SLOs have been assessed, requires programs to indicate the extent to which declared SLOs were met and to discuss changes made as a result of the findings.

The Assessment Cycle

- Identify SLOs
- Provide rationale for SLOs
- Identify appropriate targets and sources to measure SLOs
- Assess achievement of SLOs
- Analyze what the assessment results mean
- Use results for improvement

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Overview of Stetson's Assessment Structure

Stetson University engages academic programs and administrative entities in the assessment process. Assessment of instructional programs focuses on assessment of student learning outcomes at the educational program level. Assessment of non-instructional units focuses on the assessment of administrative and support services provided by the University. Both instructional and non-instructional assessment processes are overseen by the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness.

What are Instructional Units and Non-Instructional Units?

Instructional units are those whose primary responsibility is student instruction. Non-instructional units include all areas whose primary responsibility is outside of student instruction.

Instructional Units	Non-Instructional Units (examples)
Each academic program within CAS	Academic Affairs (operational)
Each academic program within SOBA	Athletics
Each academic program within SOM	Campus Life & Student Success
Each academic program within COL	Development & Alumni Engagement
	Enrollment Management
	Finance
	University Marketing

Program Level Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The SACSCOC standard pertaining to assessment of student learning outcomes requires that:

> 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 for student learning outcomes <u>for each of its educational programs</u>.

Per the *SACSCOC Resource Manual*, an academic program is defined as "a credential as defined by the institution. A degree with a defined major is clearly a program." It may be helpful to refer to the Stetson [Academic Programs](#) website – any program which offers a major that leads to a degree should complete a program-level assessment. Note that assessing multiple programs at the department level using the same criteria for all does not constitute program-level assessment.

> **Additional Guidance from the SACSCOC Resource Manual**
> The expectation is that the institution will engage in on-going planning and assessment to ensure that for each academic program, the institution develops and assesses expected student learning outcomes. Expected student learning outcomes specify the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes students are expected to attain in courses or in a program.

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The Annual Assessment Process

The annual assessment process has two parts: the assessment plan and the assessment report.

The Assessment Plan

The plan consists of four elements:

1. **SLOs** describe what the program will accomplish within the next year. SLOs are specific statements that describe desired performance in relation to student learning.

2. **Rationales** are a brief description of why the specific SLOs have been selected, why they are important to the program, and how they support the University's strategic priorities.

3. **Targets for success** are the specific measures that SLOs seek to attain. Targets should include the specific metric to be attained and the timeframe for accomplishment of the SLO. Targets for success cannot be answered with a "Yes/No" response; targets must be measurable.

4. **Assessment methods** describe how and when the program will collect assessment data to determine successful attainment of the SLO.

The Assessment Report

The report builds upon the information submitted in the plan and asks programs to indicate the extent to which stated SLOs were accomplished during the year.

In addition to the verifying elements 1, 3, and 4 above, the report requires programs to address five more items:

5. **Results** is a detailed summary of the assessment results for each SLO. This section should include specific highlights of results, such as percentages or numbers or other findings resulting from analysis of the data. Compare results to prior years if applicable.

6. **Target achievement** is a statement indicating whether the program attained the expected target for the SLO.

7. **Analysis of results** is a brief discussion of what the results mean to the program. This section should include whether the SLO was achieved and what the program learned from the results of the assessment (potential improvements, strengths, weaknesses, etc.).

8. **Use of results for improvement** is a brief discussion of how exploration of results are used to make changes in program curriculum, pedagogies, assessment measures, etc.

9. **Type of changes made** asks programs to select the type of changes made based on the assessment findings.

Annual Submission and Review Process

Department Chairs or Chair-appointed Department Assessment Coordinators lead assessment at the educational program level. As such, they are responsible for determining assessment methods, overseeing collection of artifacts, conducting assessment norming sessions with faculty, overseeing scoring of artifacts by faculty, and collecting and analyzing assessment data. Program Directors of Interdisciplinary programs act as Assessment Coordinator for their respective programs.

Oversight for ensuring program-level assessment of student learning outcomes at the college/school level is provided by individuals charged by the Deans to serve as college/school assessment reviewers. Currently these roles are conducted by an Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, an Associate Dean in the College of Law, and faculty members within the School of Business Administration and the School of Music. These individuals are responsible for ensuring all educational programs within their colleges/schools are appropriately and consistently assessing student learning outcomes.
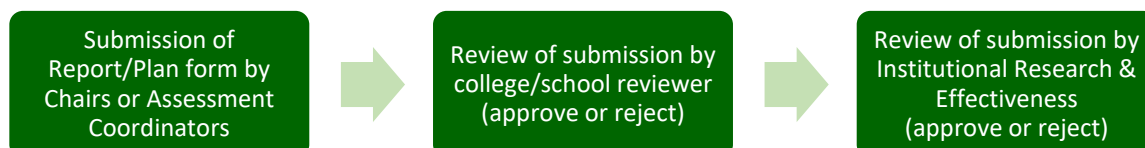
In Spring of 2021, the data collection process was refined to strengthen the workflow of the review and approval process by transitioning the separate Word report and plan forms used in prior years into an online collection process that allows submission of results of the prior year's assessments and plans for the coming year in a single document.

Submissions are now collected using Dynamic Forms; the link to the online form is available here and on the IRE Assessment website. As this system relies on Stetson's Single Sign-On functionality, the best way to access the online form system is to log in to MyStetson and then click on the form link provided.

Once assessment reports are submitted by Chairs or Assessment Coordinators, they are routed to the college/school assessment reviewer for approval. The college/school reviewer approves or rejects the submission. Rejected submissions are returned to the submitter for revision and resubmission. Approved submissions are routed to Institutional Research & Effectiveness for final review, approval, and archiving.

Institutional Research & Effectiveness reviews each assessment submission, using a rubric to determine the assessment maturity level of the program. Results of this analysis are analyzed and compiled in the Annual Assessment Report, as are specific examples of improvements made from assessment findings. This report illustrates assessment participation, quality, and provides a longitudinal perspective on the state of assessment at Stetson. The report is provided to Deans and senior leadership, as well as posted on the IRE Assessment website.

Submission Process Summary

Submission of Report/Plan form by Chairs or Assessment Coordinators	→	Review of submission by college/school reviewer (approve or reject)	→	Review of submission by Institutional Research & Effectiveness (approve or reject)

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Guidance for Developing Assessment Plans

While there are no strict rules about how many SLOs a program should have, programs should assess a reasonable and manageable number of SLOs each year. Two to three SLOs are typical; SLOs should represent what is most important to the program in the coming year and should be related to the mission and strategic map of the University.

Selecting Appropriate Data Sources to Assess SLOs

Assessment is not intended to require additional work; it should be an extension of existing processes. Consider the types of information your program uses to make decisions – these are likely the data sources you will use to assess your SLOs. Remember, the Assessment Report requires units to provide a thoughtful analysis of assessment results based on the data; do not select data sources that you have no way of analyzing within the next year.

Data sources include a variety of items, which can be direct or indirect:

Direct Assessment Methods	Indirect Assessment Methods
Capstone course assignments/projects	National surveys (NSSE, CIRP, SSI, etc.)
Embedded test questions	Institutional surveys (alumni, satisfaction, etc.)
Performance appraisals	Advisory board surveys
Pre-post tests	Employer surveys
Research papers/projects	
Standardized tests/licensure exams	

Ideal data sources are those that:
- are already in place,
- can be easily analyzed, and
- have the potential to indicate areas for improvement within the program.

Additional Tips for Completing Assessment Plans

- Be realistic in the development of your assessment targets and methods.
- Involve all members of your program in designing, implementing and carrying out the assessment process.
- Avoid verbs such as "improve" or "enhance" in your goals and objectives unless you have clear baseline data to compare against. A list of potential action verbs, organized by Bloom's taxonomy, is provided in the Appendix A.
- Be as specific as possible when formulating your assessment plan; being intentional will make the assessment analysis and reporting process much easier.
- Write clearly and concisely. Avoid using jargon or abbreviations when possible.
- If you cannot specifically describe how the results from your assessment activities will be used to improve your program, consider using a different data source or analysis method.

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Guidance for Developing Assessment Reports

Upon completion of assessment data collection, the program should analyze and contextualize the findings to make meaning of the results.

A summary of these results and analyses are required to be submitted in the annual assessment report; summary results should be as detailed as possible, including percentages or numbers resulting from the assessments. While it is not necessary to submit artifacts and completed review rubrics, the program should maintain complete data results in its files.

Assessment results are meant to improve effectiveness and inform decision-making. The final sections of the assessment report require programs to reflect upon what they have learned from the collected results and demonstrate how they have converted that knowledge to action within the program. This is the foundation of continuous improvement.

Most importantly, the use of assessment results to make changes to improve effectiveness and inform planning is the reason <u>why</u> we assess. Even negative assessment results can have powerful, positive impact when they are used to improve performance and effectiveness.

SLO Assessment Example

SLO: Students will identify and summarize the important feature of major periods in the history of western culture.

Target: Students will achieve 80% or better on the embedded test questions.

Data source: Test administered to all students enrolled in Course X during Fall 2020.

Results: In Fall 2020, 324 students received the embedded test questions in Course X. 298 students (92%) achieved 80% or better on the embedded test questions.

Analysis of Results: The target for all students to attain a minimum of 80% on the embedded test questions was not met. Review of the questions most frequently missed by students indicated the need for additional emphasis on the Middle Ages.

Use of Results for Improvement: The target was met and analysis indicated the need for additional emphasis on the Middle Ages to better prepare students for success. As a result, the curriculum in Course Y has been revised to include a more detailed component which focuses on the Middle Ages.

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Additional Tips for Completing Assessment Reports

- Follow your assessment plan and collect data throughout the year. Assessment cannot be conducted as you write your report.
- Be as specific as possible when writing about the data you collected. Consider providing relevant data in appendices that can be referred to in the summary narrative responses.
- Indicate explicitly whether the target for each goal has been met (i.e., "target was met" or "target not met").
- Don't be afraid to admit that you didn't achieve the target. Assessment is about continuous improvement, not perfection.
- If data results are missing or incomplete, provide an explanation and a plan to avoid this situation in the future.
- Write clearly and concisely. Do not provide extraneous information. Avoid using jargon or abbreviations when possible.
- If the data are qualitative in nature (i.e., interviews, open-ended questions), consider counting the positive versus negative responses or counting the number of times a subject was mentioned.
- As you write your report, think about how any proposed modifications will inform the SLOs and budget planning for next year.

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Instructional Unit Assessment Calendar 2020-2022

June 15, 2020

- 2019-20 Assessment Report **and** 2020-21 Assessment Plan due to IRE by **June 15, 2020**

June 15, 2021

- 2020-21 Assessment Report **and** 2021-22 Assessment Plan due to IRE by **June 15, 2021**

June 15, 2022

- 2021-22 Assessment Report **and** 2022-23 Assessment Plan due to IRE by **June 15, 2022**

Summary Timeline

| **June 15, 2020** |
| Assessment Report for 2019-20 year <u>AND</u> Assessment Plan for 2020-21 year due due |

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| **June 15, 2021** |
| Assessment Report for 2020-21 year <u>AND</u> Assessment Plan for 2021-22 year due due |

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| **June 15, 2022** |
| Assessment Report for 2021-22 year <u>AND</u> Assessment Plan for 2022-23 year due due |

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Appendix A: Potential Action Verbs for Bloom's Taxonomy Levels

Remember Recall previously learned facts and concepts.	*Understand* Construct meaning from facts, ideas, or concepts.	*Apply* Use information in a new way.	*Analyze* Break down information into parts and explore connections.	*Evaluate* Critically examine information and make judgements.	*Create* Use information to produce new or original work.
define describe duplicate examine identify label list locate match memorize name observe quote recall recite recognize repeat reproduce select state	associate classify compare contrast convert describe discover discuss estimate explain extend generalize give examples group infer interpret organize paraphrase predict restate rewrite summarize transform translate	administer apply calculate change chart collect complete compute construct determine develop discover examine illustrate interpret manipulate modify operate predict prepare produce relate show simulate solve transfer	analyze appraise break down calculate categorize classify compare connect contrast diagram differentiate discriminate dissect distinguish estimate evaluate illustrate infer organize plan prioritize separate subdivide survey test	appraise argue assess choose compare conclude convince criticize critique debate defend discriminate distinguish evaluate find errors judge justify measure order persuade predict rank rate reframe summarize support	adapt assemble collaborate combine compile compose construct create design develop devise formulate integrate invent modify originate plan prepare produce rearrange reorganize revise rewrite simulate validate write

Adapted from Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing, Abridged Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

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Appendix B: Stetson University Mission Statement and Values

Stetson University's Mission Statement

Our mission at Stetson University is to provide an excellent education in a creative community where learning and values meet, and to foster in students the qualities of mind and heart that will prepare them to reach their full potential as informed citizens of local communities and the world.

At Stetson, the art of teaching is practiced through programs solidly grounded in a tradition of liberal learning that stimulates critical thinking, imaginative inquiry, creative expression, and lively intellectual debate. The art of learning is enhanced through small interactive classes, close student-faculty alliances, and collaborative approaches that provide the foundation for rewarding careers and advanced study in selective graduate and professional programs. We embrace diverse methodologies to foster effective communication, information and technological literacy, and aesthetic appreciation. We encourage the development of informed convictions, independent judgment, and lifelong commitments to learning that are characteristic features of the enlightened citizen. In bringing together learning and values, the University encourages all of its members to demonstrate personal integrity; to develop an appreciation for the spiritual dimension of life; to embrace leadership in an increasingly complex, interdependent, and technological world; and to commit to active forms of social responsibility.

Stetson University's Values

Stetson values the development of the whole person committed to engaging and building lifelong connections with the larger world through Personal Growth, Intellectual Development, and Global Citizenship. To that end, the University fosters policies, practices, and modes of inquiry to support and explore these values areas.

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Appendix C: Stetson University Roll Ahead Strategic Map Goals

Learning Excellence:

Through annual cycles of curriculum review and overall insight into our instructional programs, develop advanced methods to assure the highest opportunities for student learning. Examples of this include review and revision of FSEMs and Focus Orientation, expansion of student access to meaningful experiential learning experiences, continued improvement as a result of program review, and more universal implementation of academic and non-academic assessment.

Campaign:

Continue and complete on-going fundraising efforts for focused campaigns and lay the groundwork for the next comprehensive campaign. Engage alumni more fully in deepening their relationship to Stetson and securing resources to enhance the institution's financial sustainability.

Demand, National Reputation and Value Proposition:

In concert with new and continuing deans, the Provost and VPs of Enrollment Management, CLaSS and Marketing will develop and strengthen distinctiveness in our academic and campus life with demonstrated improvement in outcomes as measured by employment and graduate school enrollment in outcomes surveys. We will pursue increased national reputation for faculty scholarship and creative activity, as well as athletic competitive excellence.

ROLL AHEAD STRATEGIC MAP GOALS

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Advising and Engagement:

Review and revise advising and engagement activities based on best practices for institutions like Stetson. Examples include evaluation of faculty advising success; promoting advisor development; clearing pathways for Discovery students; and increasing awareness of the importance of effective advising.

Equity:

To assure broad understanding of Stetson's goals for providing an inclusive environment: concentrating on training opportunities for more inclusive searches, stressing the evolution into being a more open and respectful community, and adopting best practices in ways to promote equitable policies and practices within and throughout our campuses.

Financial Transparency and Translation:

Assure an understanding of the Stetson University finances and budget processes, and translate budget planning and execution to university constituents as a way to build confidence and expand awareness.

https://www.stetson.edu/other/strategic-planning/media/Roll%20Ahead%20Graphic%208-2019.pdf