

# TOP 10 Considerations When Reviewing An Assessment Report

This list of considerations may be used in several ways. You may reference the list while reviewing reports, copy and/or paste items that are missing or need attention, and/or check off items as you find them and then share the document with the report writer.

## 1 Does the report have all necessary content?

- Date of assessment
- Date of next assessment
- Status (e.g., ready for college review)
- Program level
- Author of report
- Explanation for extended cycle (if applicable)

## 2 Are the learning outcomes S.M.A.R.T?<sup>1</sup>

- **Specific:** Do the outcomes focus on particular skillsets?
- **Measurable:** Words such as “know,” “understand,” and “learn” should be avoided.
- **Achievable** (and Improvable): Can these be met within a reasonable timeframe? Is there room for improvement?
- **Relevant:** Are they measuring skillsets that give you information about student learning in the discipline?
- **Time-Framed:** When were these outcomes assessed? And when will they be assessed again?

## 3 Is there at least one direct assessment for each outcome assessed?

- Each SLO is assessed by at least **one direct assessment** that is used to determine the level of student learning achieved against established learning outcomes. Some examples include exams, quizzes, oral presentations, dissertations, theses, essays, and portfolios.
- **Indirect assessment** is used to evaluate the quality of student learning experiences. Some examples include self-efficacy surveys, end-of-course evaluations, focus groups and questionnaires for alumni regarding program effectiveness and retention.

## 4 Are the assessment properly aligned to the SLOs?

If the SLO states that students will analyze literary texts in light of their historical, social and cultural contexts, the assessment for that outcome should be student work in which there is literary analysis. This is true for both direct and indirect assessments. Also, if the same assignment is used to assess multiple outcomes, an explanation should be provided as to how that assessment aligns with each outcome.

## 5 Is all necessary documentation provided?

Documentation should provide evidence that assessment took place and explain how it was implemented. Examples of necessary documentation include rubrics, copies of surveys, exams, scoring sheets, examples of assignments. Samples of student work can also be used as evidence, but the names of the students must be completely removed per FERPA regulations.

## 6 Is there a thorough presentation of results?

It is commonplace for reports to include overall results without a breakdown by rubric dimension, scoring sheet item or question: “Thirty students’ work was assessed. The average across the five questions relating to this outcome was 77%. This meets our benchmark of 75%.” A thorough analysis might also include a further breakdown of the average. For example<sup>2</sup>:

- Question 3: 75%
- Question 5: 64%

<sup>1</sup>The SMART acronym originates from Doran, G. T. (1981). There’s a S.M.A.R.T way to write management’s goals and objectives. *Management Review*, 70(11), pp. 35-36.

<sup>2</sup>This example is taken from the Assessment Steering Committee (2017, April). “Top Ten Tips for Improving the Annual Assessment Report.” Retrieved from: <http://sacs.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/2017/05/Top-Ten-Tips-v3.pdf>

## 7 Are the results analyzed completely?

A good analysis of data does not just present the results and state whether the benchmark was met. Rather, it communicates to the reviewer that the program faculty are using all the data collected (from past and present), and that they are thinking about the factors that may have contributed to the results. A good report also informs the reader that faculty are also taking steps to plan actions based on student performance.

## 8 Are the actions taken relevant to the results?

Actions taken should be consistent with the results presented. For instance, if a student learning outcome is not met, it is appropriate for program faculty to do something to address the situation and improve student learning.

## 9 Is there an explanation for extended cycle (if applicable)?

It is appropriate to put an outcome on extended cycle when the program faculty decide to assess an outcome at a later time or over a longer period of time. Some common justifications for extended cycle may include: having no or too few students to assess, restructuring a program, changes in faculty that might impact course offerings or a change in the requirements from an outside accreditor. If an outcome is placed on extended cycle, a justification must be provided in the Notes section of the report, and “extended cycle” must be selected from the dropdown menu on the “Program Status” of the report. This allows the Institution to track how many programs are on extended cycle.

## 10 Is there evidence of “closing the loop?”

Effective assessment is always cyclical. Once outcomes have been developed or identified, there is a process of assessing the outcomes and analyzing the results. Part of this process of analysis involves looking at results from previous assessment years to gauge whether or not a program has improved over time. After considering all data (past and present), program faculty can decide on actions that will promote improved student learning. The following year, the faculty examines the data again to determine whether the changes made have, in fact, led to improvement or if other changes to the program are required. When faculty have completed all of these steps, they have “closed the loop.”

### Additional Assessment Resources



In order to aid faculty with assessment, there are a number of resources available for program assessment, course assessment and assessment for experiential learning courses. You can find these on [teaching.utk.edu/assessment-resources](https://teaching.utk.edu/assessment-resources).



This handout was created by the Assessment Steering Committee and Academic Assessment Council. Learn more about these groups on [provost.utk.edu/committees](https://provost.utk.edu/committees).