

Assessment Definitions

1. Program Goal – a goal your program wants to achieve, which should flow from Marshall University’s mission (<http://www.marshall.edu/www/mission.asp>). While program goals should stress student learning, they may also be related to faculty development, curricular development, program outreach to the community, etc. In stating program goals, it is helpful to begin with, “The Program will
2. Student Learning Outcomes – what you want students to be able to do as they progress through and complete your program. Student learning outcomes should
 - Be related to program goals and therefore, to Marshall’s mission.
 - Be program, not course, specific
 - Be measurable (Use active verbs to state what students will “do” to demonstrate mastery of the learning outcome, e.g. “When students complete the BA in _____, they will be able to
 - Cover multiple learning domains, e.g. knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, with an emphasis on higher orders of learning (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation)
3. Assessment
 - Formative – type of assessment used to improve instruction, thereby improving student learning
 - Summative – type of assessment used to determine final student learning outcomes
4. Assessment Methods (Tools) –
 - Direct Measures - Methods used to determine whether the student has mastered the learning outcome. Since program, rather than course specific, student learning outcomes are being assessed, direct assessments used should be developed by the entire faculty, not just by individual course instructors. Also, when there are multiple sections of a course in which learning activities that address student learning outcomes are being presented, assessments should be blind scored by more than one faculty member. In large programs, it is acceptable to assess a sample of students. Examples of appropriate direct assessment methods include:
 - Test questions specifically designed to measure the learning outcome
 - Rubrics designed to evaluate outcomes achieved through specific learning activities. Examples might include
 - ✓ Writing papers
 - ✓ Participating in discussions
 - ✓ Researching, preparing, and delivering oral presentations
 - ✓ Researching and writing original research papers
 - ✓ Designing, conducting, analyzing, reporting, and presenting the results of original research
 - ✓ Writing reflective essays
 - ✓ Observing a teacher (or someone else) demonstrate an activity, then doing the activity oneself
 - ✓ Designing something
 - ✓ Comparing and contrasting two theories

- ✓ Given a problem, deciding what information is needed to solve the problem
- ✓ After finding information that might help solve a problem, evaluating the strength of each piece of data, and arriving at a final solution
- ✓ Finding evidence to support (or refute) an argument
- ✓ Practicum experiences
- ✓ Assembling a portfolio
- ✓ Capstone experiences
- ✓ Role-playing
- ✓ Case Studies
- ✓ Simulations
- ✓ Debating
- ✓ Service Learning
- ✓ Projects completed in authentic (real world) situations
- ✓ Dramatizations
- Standardized tests such as licensure exams (when used for formative assessment, information related to specific student learning outcomes should be available)
- Essay Exams designed to measure specific learning outcomes – these should be blind scored by more than one faculty member using an agreed-upon rubric
- Indirect Measures – Methods used to assess opinions about or satisfaction with the program. Indirect measures can provide the program with valuable information, but they do not directly assess student learning outcomes. Examples of appropriate indirect assessment measure include:
 - Graduating Senior Exit Interviews
 - Assessment Day Focus Groups
 - Graduate Satisfaction Surveys
 - Employer Surveys
 - Alumni Surveys
- The following are NOT measures of student learning outcomes!
 - GPA – while GPA can be used as a program outcome for Program Review, it is not an appropriate measure of individual student learning outcomes.
 - ACT/SAT scores – these are incomes, not outcomes. They can, however, show a “value added” in terms of program effectiveness for Program Review, especially if students with low incoming scores do well in the program.
 - Employment Rates – while these suggest something about the necessity and viability of your program (Program Review), they say more about the current job market than they do about student learning.
 - Graduation Rates
- 5. Benchmarks – criteria you have set for mastery of student learning outcomes. You may want at least 95% of your students to score at a level of “proficient” or higher on each item in a scoring rubric or you may want your students’ mean score on each component

of the rubric to be at least a 3.5 on a 5-point scale. Your benchmark may be at least a 95% pass rate on a national licensure exam. Your benchmark may be a mean program score at or above the 50th percentile on a norm referenced national standardized test. You may want at least 95% of your students to answer at least 80% of the content knowledge questions correctly on the capstone examination or you may want the class mean capstone score to be 85%.

6. Results – what were your program’s results? What were your mean scores in each area assessed? What percentage of students assessed achieved the benchmarks set?
7. Analysis – were the results acceptable? Even if you consider your results to be acceptable, did your assessment reveal relative weaknesses in your program?
8. Action Taken – based on your results, what did you/will you do? Even if students are meeting your stated outcomes, a carefully conducted assessment should indicate some relative strengths/weaknesses. It can only strengthen student learning to address any relative weakness.