FSU Assessment System:
Outcomes, Assessment, Analysis and Follow Through System

1. What is the FSU Assessment System?

The FSU Assessment System is a means by which we identify mission statements and associated outcomes for each academic department and non-academic or administrative unit to act as the basis for progress and improvement. These elements along with their assessments allow for systematic review of the effectiveness of our teaching, research and supportive activities that support our educational mission.

Our assessment system is composed of the development of distinct steps, all directed toward continuous improvement of our teaching and supportive and administrative efforts.

2. Why does FSU maintain and implement an assessment system?

The information and analysis gathered as part of our assessment requirements provides us with knowledge that will allow us to improve the education of our students and the support services that are needed by the University to:

- Respond to institutional effectiveness requirements for regional SACSCOC accreditation;
- Comply with the Board of Governor’s requirements for State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts (SMALCs);
- Assist FSU with external reviews—the Quality Enhancement Reviews conducted for the Board of Governors; and
- Support accreditation reviews that are specific to various disciplines such as Engineering, Public Administration and Music.

3. How is the information in the assessment system collected and recorded?

The university will use its institutional effectiveness portal (IEP) to enter the information and data with which to assess, analyze, review and approve department and program assessment efforts. The IEP is the record of our desired outcomes, assessment toward those outcomes, review and analysis of results and our efforts showing continuous improvement over time. This information, university-wide, is updated and revised as needed on an annual basis.

The assessment process is easily summarized in five (5) questions:

1. What do you want? (outcome)
2. How will you measure progress? (assessment)
3. What happened? (results)
4. Why do you think you got the result you did? (analysis)
5. How do you improve or sustain performance? (improvement plan)

Information on programs from units throughout the university is stored in the Institutional Effectiveness Portal (IE Portal). Its link is:


4. What are the Steps in the Assessment Process?

The steps in the Assessment Process include:

- Writing a mission statement or goal
- Writing a Student Learning Outcome
- Writing a Program Outcome
- Writing an Assessment Statement
- Collecting data based on assessment statement
- Analyzing the data to determine next steps
- Implementing steps to achieve continuous improvement or to sustain good results

NOTE: The assessment steps proceed in the order they are listed. Each fall, results, analyses and improvements/action plans are completed for the academic year just completed. For purposes of the assessment process, an academic year is Fall, Spring and Summer. So, for example, results, analyses and improvement plans are entered in Fall 2019 for the 2018-2019 academic year.

At the same time, outcomes and assessment measurements are developed and finalized for the current academic year. (In this case, 2019-2020) This timetable is appropriate to keep FSU’s assessment system current with planned improvements and changes in outcomes established at the beginning of the academic year. This manual presents the assessment system in this manner.

5. What is a mission statement/goal?

A mission statement is designed to communicate an organization's or unit’s reason for being or purpose to all those who have some stake in its performance. The mission of a unit or program should identify how the unit or program supports the overall mission of the university. It often does so quite succinctly, and should be comprehensive and memorable. The key is to think deeply about purpose. This includes:

- The purpose of the program
- The stakeholders of the program
- The activities of the program

Your department’s or program’s mission statements have been approved previously so you do
not have to develop one unless you are adding a new degree or certificate. However, it is important to note that every part of your assessment efforts must be tied toward progress to this goal/mission statement.

6. What are outcomes?

Outcomes identify what improvements you expect to achieve as a result of changes and enhancements in your program that will guide you toward your stated goal or mission statement. They must not be processes and must be tied toward attainment of your goal. The student learning outcomes of each educational program will be clearly related to the mission and goals of that degree program and clearly tied to course or other requirements necessary for graduation. The student learning outcome statement should not describe either educational processes or outputs.

Examples of processes and outputs include:
- Processes are a series of operations or activities that result in a program output. For example, the number of courses taken or the prerequisite courses satisfied.
- Outputs are the products and services delivered by the program or department. They include the quantity of units, services provided and people served (such as number of graduates or number of articles).

7. What kinds of outcomes are there?

There are two types of outcomes that are used in the FSU Assessment System:
- Student learning outcomes and
- Program outcomes.

8. Writing a Student Learning Outcome (SLO)

- Did you clearly indicate what learning you expect, from who and by when?

Simply stated, a student learning outcome should indicate what a student will be able to do at the end of a course of study that she or he couldn’t do at the beginning of that course of study. It is the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences.

Student learning outcomes must be framed as specific, measurable and achievable results. How many outcomes do I have to submit?

The following chart shows the minimum number of outcomes that must be submitted by various entities:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcome and Program</th>
<th>Student Learning</th>
<th>Program Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome Requirements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Departments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Departments</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Departments</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **How do I respond differently as a result of the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact (SMALC) requirements?**

All public universities in Florida are required by the Board of Governors to develop, implement, make available to the public and update a series of outcomes that are the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact between an undergraduate student and the university. SMALCs consist of a set of student learning outcomes and their assessment. In addition, the Board of Governors requires a process for gathering data, analyzing that data and using this analysis to develop an improvements/action plan for continuous improvement or to sustain good results.

According to the Board of Governors, a SMALC is comprised of the identification, for each academic Bachelor’s program, of what it is that students will have learned by the end of the program, and how that learning will be measured above and beyond course grades. The compact for each degree program identifies clearly articulated core student learning outcomes in three areas:

- communication skills,
- critical thinking skills, and
- content/discipline knowledge and skills

**Communication Skills** generally involve the ability to conduct written and oral communication in different modes with different audiences.

**Critical thinking skills** generally describe reasoning that involves framing a situation or problem and supporting the solution.

**Content/discipline knowledge** and skills generally describe the concepts, ideas, principles, relationships and information a student emerging from a program of study is expected to know and be able to use.
Each compact must contain at least one of each of the above skills to be measured. The University has selected three student learning outcomes which satisfy the requirements for demonstration of communication skills. You may add additional outcomes demonstrating communication skills if they are critical to your program but they are not necessary if you wish to focus your seven student learning outcomes on content/discipline knowledge and critical thinking skills.

Additional policies and guidelines containing information and processes regarding SMALCs are contained in the SMALC Guidelines, available at https://provost.fsu.edu/outcomes/outcomes-institutional-effectiveness/ Our current SMALCs can be found at https://provost.fsu.edu/outcomes/smalcs-report/.

10. What is a Program Outcome (PO)?

Program outcomes identify progress toward a goal that is non-academic or administrative in nature. The same criteria and the same process of identification of assessment method, gathering results, analysis and action plan for improvement is followed for a program outcome. The only difference is that neither their goals nor their outcomes measure activities related to educational goals.

Program outcomes are defined in terms of specific objectives toward goals that a unit intends to achieve. Program outcomes can refer to programmatic, operational, and administrative activities as well as support to educational and academic programs.

Administrative and support services, along with the non-degree elements of academic entities, conduct programs whose outcomes should be tied to the mission of the unit. Program outcomes are the result of processes and outputs of the unit designed to achieve its mission and goals. Program outcomes reflect what a unit accomplishes and captures the most important results or impacts of a unit’s activities.

Each university program that is non-academic or administrative is required to have at least two program outcomes.

11. Writing a Program Outcome

- Did you clearly state how you support the University’s mission and what you wish to review?

Simply stated, a program outcome should indicate what a unit has accomplished in realizing its goals at the end of a course of set of activities.

Program outcomes must be framed as specific, measurable, and achievable results whose attainment can be assessed after undertaking a set of program activities.
12. What comprises a good assessment?

- How do you know that progress is or is not being made?

In order to meet expectations by accrediting bodies, it is necessary to state clearly how you will assess progress in meeting student learning and program outcomes. It is necessary to record precisely what you will measure to establish performance, how the information will be collected, from whom it will be gathered, when it will be collected, and who will be responsible for collecting the information. It must also state the specific expectation or level of performance (standard) that the program has for establishing that the student learning has been successful. These standards are the point of comparison against which the progress toward your outcome will be judged once it is collected.

In your most skeptical mood, what sort of evidence would convince you that progress is being made toward the outcome?

The assessment process statement identifies the:

- **Specific behaviors** you are looking for as evidence of the learning or program outcome and indicate what information you will seek;
- **Standard or criterion or target** against which the outcome will be judged successful (what level of achievement constitutes success);
- **Measure and method** by which the assessment will occur. The template in the IE portal lists a series of choices from which you can choose (more than one can be chosen);
- **Responsibility** indicates who is to conduct the assessment; and
- **Conditions** in which the assessment will occur and the reasons why the specific conditions were chosen.
- **Location**. FSU uses the same SLOs of a program at all of its locations and regardless of its mode of delivery. Assessment results (the next section) vary by site and mode of delivery. The assessment process can vary slightly if, for example, there are material changes in the way in which assessment must be conducted. Results of the assessment vary by campus activities on main campus, online, Republic of Panama or the Panama City Florida campus but a program’s SLOs remain the same. Separate measurements must be taken and reported in the IE portal results section for each SLO of a program offered on the main campus, online, the Republic of Panama or Panama City Florida and Sarasota, Florida. This will require separate result statements for each locality.

Identification of location is also required for program outcomes.

The assessment process must be logically linked or aligned with the outcome statement.

13. What must be included in the results and analysis statement?

*The importance of analysis in the Institutional Effectiveness process cannot be overstated. Please remember that your results should inform decisions that lead to continuous improvement of your program. It forms the link between your data and your action plan and*
must lead the reader from one to the other.

• What were the results when you followed the assessment process?
• Did you or did you not make progress toward your goal?
• Why did you get the results that you did?

The results statement should contain enough detail to corroborate your assessment. It is not enough to collect information. It must also be analyzed. In particular, it must be considered against the standards you have set. Analysis should be used to identify ways in which performance could be improved or, if needed, additional examinations conducted.

Generally, your analysis should state its most valuable finding. It should attempt to explain any deviation from the established standards. It might also report other insights that you have uncovered. It should indicate how such findings might or will be used in making improvements or how it leads to further analysis. It may want to highlight areas of success in addition to areas needing improvement. It is worth remembering that the findings you report should be linked both to the outcomes you anticipated and the goals you set. Importantly, you must not forget to provide some evaluation of the method you used and its continuing status as a tool for assessment of outcomes.

Results should be summarized and presented in relation to the learning that is desired (it is helpful to use the same terms in the outcome statement as well as the assessment process);

• Reporting Period lists the academic year in which results were accomplished
• Relationship to Standard or target should be specifically noted;
• Conclusion or Deviation from Standard or target clearly indicates to the reader or reviewer whether or not the standard was met (this is a drop down box in the IE Portal template);
• Responsibility for collection of the data at the correct time from all data sources;
• Evaluation of assessment method (where necessary) to ensure it is providing the information needed.
• Location (To what do the results apply? Programs offered on main campus or Panama City Panama or Panama City Florida or Sarasota Florida or distance/online);
• An indication (of yes or no in a drop down box) of whether the envisioned improvement plan will have a budget impact
• Analysis of Results includes more than reporting of results. It should include the results of internal discussions or investigations regarding the data. What factors contributed to the results both positive and negative. Why did you achieve the results you did? An answer will help establish changes that could be made to improve the program;

The file bank associated with each outcome in the IE portal allows you to upload copies of the assessments you used, including examination items, rubrics, judging criteria. It also lets you store copies of results and analyses that you perform. This is the documentation required by accrediting bodies. We encourage you to include background information into the file bank if it is available and provides additional pertinent information.

Considerations of privacy
Under state and federal law, the information that can be legally included in the portal is rigorously restricted. Federal and state privacy laws protect student educational records. A university found in violation is subject to severe penalties, including the loss of federal funding. You must be exceptionally careful about the information you submit for entry into the Institutional Effectiveness Portal.

When in doubt, do not enter or upload information that provides information on specific students.

14. What must be present in an acceptable improvements made/action plan description?

- What are you going to do to improve learning or the program? Alternately, what are you going to do to keep your department or program operating at its high level? Who is responsible?

The results and analysis statement should spur some action to continue improvement. Such improvements might include the need to make changes in the student learning or program outcomes. More typically, they will include changes ranging from curricula refinements to proposed new educational tracks to enhancements in support services. They may also require new or modified assessment practices or special attention by the program faculty. Please remember if your program or students are already performing at a high level, you should state how you expect to retain that level of performance.

Your statements will provide a record over time of your efforts to improve the learning experiences of students and programs. They should be documented carefully and fully. Our record of institutional effectiveness efforts for SACS must show continuous improvement. If your prospective improvements or action plan requires additional resources, their potential budget impact should be noted.

NOTE: If you are pleased with your results, you must include specific examples of what you will do to sustain your good results. Statements such as “no improvement needed” or “no action required” are not acceptable.

- Improvement envisioned should be specifically stated;
- Time Frame should be indicated within which the improvement will be implemented;
- Responsibility will identify who should ensure implementation or planning for the improvement is complete (or on schedule);
- Actions to sustain results are required even if you are already performing at a high level; and
- Resources needed should be identified if necessary.

15. How do you know if each step has been executed well?

There are two methods to determine the completeness and quality of your submissions.
Instructions are included in this guide, along with an example available by clicking the question marks at the upper left of each section within the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Portal. In addition, standard rubrics have been developed to assist you with your preparation and submission.

A copy of suggested review questions is attached at the end of this document. They can also be found at [https://provost.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Revised-reviewing-tips.pdf](https://provost.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Revised-reviewing-tips.pdf).

16. Who is responsible for each of the steps?

- The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President is responsible for overall coordination of the FSU Assessment processes. A schedule will be provided by the Office. The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President will conduct periodic reviews of submissions as a result of these efforts.
- Department Chairs and Program Directors are responsible for development of the minimum required number of student learning and program outcomes, identification of the assessment method and related components, collection and reporting of data based on those assessments, analysis of data and development of improvement/action plans to further continuous improvement or sustain good results. All related components of these tasks are to be considered.
- Department Chairs and Program Directors are responsible for reviewing the components of the assessment process to ensure accuracy, completeness and timeliness of submissions.
- Deans and Vice Presidents are responsible for final review and approval of information required by the assessment process.

Suggested questions to assist with reviews are attached.
How do you review the Assessment plans in the IE portal?
Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Suggested Review Questions

These rubrics are suggested for Academic Deans, Curriculum Committees and Vice Presidents and aim to help in evaluating IE Portal entries.

The entries in the IE portal may be viewed in several ways. Perhaps the easiest way to review entries within a given assessment unit is to use the four-column report. It can be reached through the reports box under the assessment unit on the left of the template once you have arrived at the assessment unit you want to view. Select “standard reports” under the reports box and that will bring up a note for “Unit Assessment Four Column” which you can choose to get you to a site that asks you open the report. This will provide a four column report once you have made the appropriate of selections about which you will be prompted by the software.

Each assessment unit in the IE Portal has a mission statement that typically remains unchanged from year to year. The current unit mission statement associated with the program is reported in the Nuventive IE portal. It is useful to review it periodically although such an review is not required under university institutional effectiveness guidelines.

### Evaluating the Mission Statement: Colleges and Vice Presidents
1. Does your mission statement orient everyone in the university about your direction and contribution to the furtherance of the university’s mission statement?
2. Does the mission statement provide the scope of your college’s or program’s activities within the university?
3. Does the mission statement include what makes the program unique and necessary to the university?
4. Is the mission statement sufficiently brief to allow for its communication easily?
5. Does the mission statement logically lead the reader to the subsequent outcomes for your departments or programs?
6. Does the mission statement provide a sense of the change your college hopes to accomplish and the conditions it hopes to improve?

### Student Learning Outcomes

#### Evaluating the Outcome Statement:
1. Are you satisfied with the way in which the outcome is stated?
2. Is the outcome clearly related to the mission of the degree or certificate program?
3. Has responsibility for the outcome been assigned correctly?
4. Is this outcome significant enough to warrant the time, energy and commitment needed for continued assessment?
5. Is the outcome core to the degree or certificate program?
6. Has the outcome been agreed upon by the appropriate set of faculty in accordance with the norms of the discipline and criterion-related validity?
7. Has the outcome been written with the S.M.A.R.T in mind?

For SMALCs only (baccalaureate degrees)
8. Has the outcome been categorized (as communication, critical thinking, or content) correctly?

### Program Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluating the Outcome Statement:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you satisfied with the way in which the outcome is stated?</td>
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<td>6. Has the outcome been agreed upon by the appropriate set of reviewers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Has the Program Outcome been written with the S.M.A.R.T criteria in mind?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Does the outcome specify the year for which it will be assessed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. For solely administrative units, has a justification of the benchmark been provided?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluating the Assessment Statement:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the specific indicator measured in the assessment capture the outcome adequately? Does it provide a specific measure of student learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Is the standard set appropriately and at the right level? Does it avoid using grades?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Is the assessment method feasible?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Has the time frame for accomplishing the outcome been set appropriately? Has the year in which the assessment is made been reported?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Has the assessment method been reviewed and recommended by faculty?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Can the validity of the assessment measurement be corroborated?</td>
</tr>
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For SMALCs only (baccalaureate degrees)
Program Outcomes

**Evaluating the Assessment Statement:**

1. Does the specific indicator measured in the assessment capture the outcome adequately?
2. Is the standard set appropriately and at the right level?
3. Is the assessment method feasible?
4. Will the assessment method yield valid measurements?
5. Has the time frame for accomplishing the outcome been set appropriately?
6. Has the assessment method been reviewed and recommended by appropriate faculty or directors?
7. For solely administrative units. Is there evidence for the general use of the benchmark?

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Student Learning Outcomes and Program Outcomes

**Evaluating the Results and Analysis Statement:**

1. Are the results stated clearly?
2. Are the results summarized in a fair and representative fashion?
3. Is it clear how the results compare to the standards set in the assessment statement?
4. Is the significance of the deviation from the standard evaluated appropriately? Is there a conclusion whether the standard has been met?
5. Is there an analysis of the results? Why did these results occur?
6. Does the analysis consider the concerns raised by the results and provide a basis upon which an improvement plan can be developed? Does it lay out why you got the result you did?
7. Does the analysis avoid the use of student grades?
8. Is the evaluation method satisfactory?
9. Have separate sets of results been reported for each location and mode of delivery? (program results may not have to be reported for each location and mode of delivery depending upon its character)
Student Learning Outcomes and Program Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluating the Improvements Made and Action Plan Statement:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do the results and analysis support the recommended improvements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the recommended improvement or action plan feasible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the improvements based on the analysis of results?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Is the timetable outlined in the recommendation acceptable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Have any unintended or adverse consequences of the plan been identified?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Will the recommended improvements help ensure continuous improvement of the program?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Have budgetary implications been identified?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Has responsibility for the improvements been assigned correctly?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Do the budget recommendations merit further attention and forwarding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is there a separate improvement plan for each location and mode of delivery? (Improvement plans for each location and mode of delivery may not be required depending on the nature of program)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>