

# The University of Arizona Plan for Institutional and Program Level Student Outcomes Assessment

*A Monitoring Report Prepared in Response to the 05-20-2011 Request by the IAC of the Higher Learning Commission*

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## Institutional Oversight of Assessment

The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA) has oversight over institutional and program level assessment. The VPAA collaborates with the Vice President for Student Affairs to assure student programs also receive appropriate assessment. The Assistant Vice Provost for Instruction and Assessment (AVPIA) reports to the VPAA and provides direct oversight of the Office of Instruction and Assessment, the Assessment Coordinating Council, and the University-Wide General Education Committee. College and departments report their assessment results to the VPAA, the AVPIA, and the OIA Coordinator of Program Assessment via the Academic Program Review self-study and the UA's assessment website (see [http://assessment.arizona.edu/academic\\_degree\\_programs](http://assessment.arizona.edu/academic_degree_programs)).

## The Central Role of the OIA in Assessment

In January 2010, the Office of Instruction and Assessment (OIA) was established to create and support capacity for excellence in teaching and assessment at the UA. The OIA's administrative leader, the AVPIA, reports directly to the VPAA. The creation of this unit and the work for which it is responsible has resulted in a strengthened connection between the goals of academic affairs and the instructional mission of the university. The 30+ OIA staff members coach faculty on improvements in their teaching, their use of instructional technologies, and their use of the UA's online course management system to support student learning. In addition to their instructional support and professional development mission, the OIA is also responsible for supporting faculty and their departments in program level assessment. The model used to assist faculty in doing program assessment *well* is shown and described on page 2. In order to support the successful implementation of the model at the program level, a set of activities have been implemented to address the assumptions underlying the model. These activities comprise the *UA Plan for Program Assessment*, and are described on Table 1 (pages 3-5).

The OIA also plays a key role in facilitating the use of data collected from program level assessment in order to conduct institutional level assessment (see diagram on page 6). The AVPIA and the OIA Coordinator of Program Assessment together lead the Assessment Coordinating Council members in reviews of: (a) program assessment websites, and (b) assessment sections of Academic Program Review reports. The OIA Coordinator of Program Assessment, in collaboration with faculty colleagues from the English department, also directs the Critical Thinking Study in the General Education program. The University's consolidated approach to program level assessment now aligns all activities, with the exception of the National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE), under OIA. (For 2006 and 2009 NSSE data disaggregated by item and college see UA assessment website at: [http://assessment.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/2006%20and%202009%20College%20by%20College%20NSSE%20Data%20Summary\\_v2.pdf](http://assessment.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/2006%20and%202009%20College%20by%20College%20NSSE%20Data%20Summary_v2.pdf))

## The UA Plan for Program Assessment

The *UA Plan for Program Assessment* is built upon a cyclic model of faculty-driven assessment. The model includes: (1) identification of student learning outcomes, (2) analysis of assessment data at the program level, (3) summarization and reporting of assessment findings, and (4) follow-up changes and improvements in programs (see Fig. 1 below).

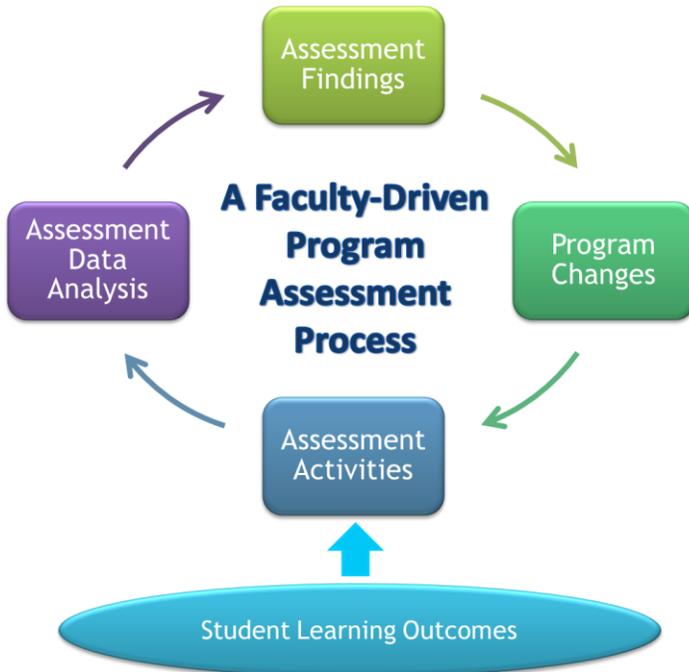


Figure 1: A Faculty-Driven Process for Program Level Assessment of Student Outcomes

The model is based upon the following assumptions:

1. Ongoing assessment of program level student learning outcomes is best accomplished with sustained engagement by the faculty members who create and teach the curriculum.
2. Faculty members understand how to conduct program assessment and recognize the potential of the process to improve academic programs.
3. A faculty-driven assessment process is strongly supported by university level administration and valued in the process of reviewing academic programs.

The success of our program assessment is dependent upon the assumptions underlying our model being operational at our institution. To insure that this is indeed the case, we have implemented a plan of key actions and activities designed to support conditions necessary for each assumption. The plan is outlined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. UA Plan for Program Assessment**

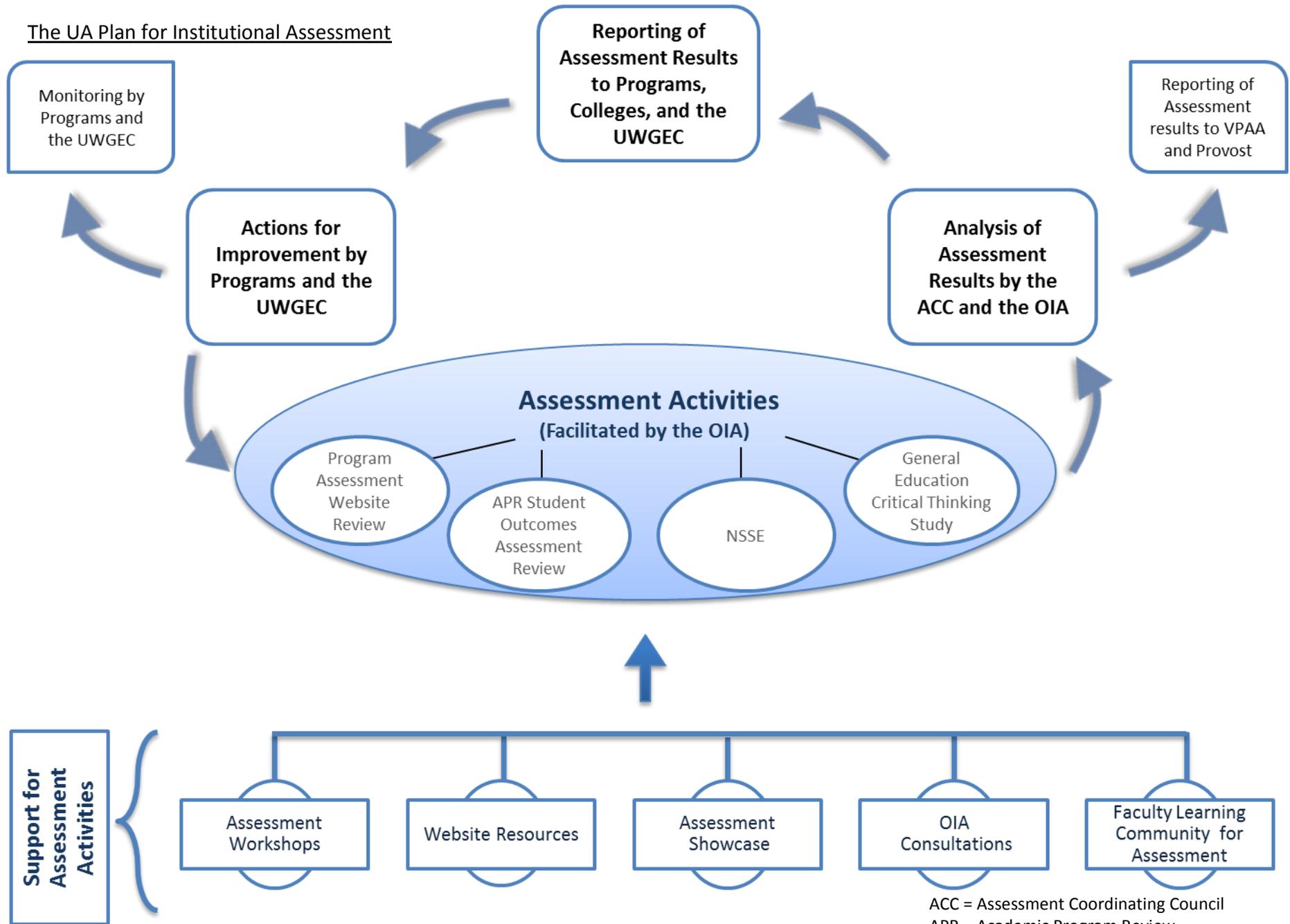
<p><i>Assumption 1: Ongoing assessment of program level student learning outcomes is best accomplished with sustained engagement by the faculty members who create and teach the curriculum.</i></p>	
<p><i>Schedule</i></p>	<p><b>Activity 1a: Required Program Level Assessment</b> - All academic programs are required to identify student learning outcomes, identify or build activities/tools and data collection plans for measuring outcomes, collect-summarize-report outcome findings, discuss findings as a faculty, and make changes in programs. Individual programs use a variety of indirect and direct measures to measure student learning at the program level. For an example of this information posted by one of our programs, see: <a href="http://assessment.arizona.edu/eng/Mining%20and%20Geological%20Engineering%20Undergrad">http://assessment.arizona.edu/eng/Mining%20and%20Geological%20Engineering%20Undergrad</a></p>
<p>Annual</p>	<p><b>Activity 1b: Regular Assessment of All Campus Program Assessment Processes</b> - All academic program assessment websites are reviewed with a rubric to assess the quality of the programs' assessment processes. A baseline review was completed in March 2011 (see the rubric as Appendix A on pages 7-8 with the average scores from the baseline review of all 165 programs). From our baseline assessment, we have learned that programs need the most help in creating assessments to measure outcomes, organizing their assessment findings, and making changes in response. Individual scored rubrics are sent to each program and each Dean receives copies from all programs in his/her college. Program heads are encouraged to meet with OIA personnel or Assessment Coordinating Council members from their colleges (see Plan Component 2a below) for assistance in improving their assessment plans and processes. A time schedule for review of program assessment websites was developed in May 2011. Each of the 165 programs' websites will be reviewed every 3 years.</p>
<p>Once every 3 years after baseline review of all programs</p>	<p><b>Activity 1c: The Critical Thinking Assessment Project (CTAP) for General Education</b> – The CTAP uses a course-embedded approach to measure critical thinking skills from samples of student work in General Education and Foundations courses. The critical thinking assignments are developed by the participating faculty members and used in class as assignments. However, the assigned writings, based on a common reading, are then also scored independently using a standardized rubric developed for the project. The CTAP began in the Fall 2009 as a pilot and continues to be implemented today. For a summary report of the first two years of the project, see: <a href="http://assessment.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/Critical_Thinking_Assessment_Project_Report_Fall_2010.pdf">http://assessment.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/Critical_Thinking_Assessment_Project_Report_Fall_2010.pdf</a></p>
<p>Annual</p>	<p><b>Activity 1d: General Education Course Reviews</b> - Subsets of Tier One and Tier Two General Education courses are reviewed in alternative years by faculty members of the University-Wide General Education Committee (UWGEC). The reviews take the form of interviews conducted by 2 UWGEC members and the instructor of one of the randomly selected Gen Ed courses. The purpose of the reviews are to document best practices in instruction and to determine the degree to which Gen Ed instructors are implementing the content and instructional criteria expected of the courses. The UWGEC members use a standardized list of questions to conduct the interviews, the notes are submitted to a faculty leader in the group, and the findings are summarized in an annual report. For the summary report for the most recent Tier One review, see: <a href="http://gened.oia.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/UWGEC%20Tier%20One%20Survey%20Findings,%20Recs%2009-27-10.pdf">http://gened.oia.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/UWGEC%20Tier%20One%20Survey%20Findings,%20Recs%2009-27-10.pdf</a></p>
<p>Annual</p>	<p><b>Activity 1d: General Education Course Reviews</b> - Subsets of Tier One and Tier Two General Education courses are reviewed in alternative years by faculty members of the University-Wide General Education Committee (UWGEC). The reviews take the form of interviews conducted by 2 UWGEC members and the instructor of one of the randomly selected Gen Ed courses. The purpose of the reviews are to document best practices in instruction and to determine the degree to which Gen Ed instructors are implementing the content and instructional criteria expected of the courses. The UWGEC members use a standardized list of questions to conduct the interviews, the notes are submitted to a faculty leader in the group, and the findings are summarized in an annual report. For the summary report for the most recent Tier One review, see: <a href="http://gened.oia.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/UWGEC%20Tier%20One%20Survey%20Findings,%20Recs%2009-27-10.pdf">http://gened.oia.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/UWGEC%20Tier%20One%20Survey%20Findings,%20Recs%2009-27-10.pdf</a></p>

<i><b>Assumption 2:</b> Faculty members understand how to conduct program assessment and recognize the potential of the process to improve academic programs.</i>	
Monthly during the academic year	<b>Activity 2a: Program Support by College Colleagues</b> - The Assessment Coordinating Council (ACC) is comprised largely of associate deans representing the majority of UA colleges, but also includes faculty representation from the General Education program, and staff representation from Student Affairs. The ACC meets regularly to discuss program level assessment and strategies for working with faculty to improve assessment. ACC members serve as information links between academic programs, the OIA, and the Office of the VPAA. The ACC will also, beginning in the 2011-12, assist with the rubric-facilitated assessment of program assessment websites (see discussion in Activity 1b). See the ACC membership at: <a href="http://assessment.arizona.edu/council_membership">http://assessment.arizona.edu/council_membership</a>
Beginning in September 2011 and ongoing for several years	<b>Activity 2b: The Faculty Learning Community (FLC) for Assessment Project</b> – The concept of learning communities is identified by the LEAP Program (AAC&U) as a high-impact educational practice. We are creating a FLC for Assessment to engage more faculty members in program level outcomes assessment through interactions with colleagues involved in the FLC. The UA has successfully supported two FLCs, one focused on curriculum challenges and the other focused on developing high quality online programs. At the start, the FLC for Assessment will be comprised of 7-10 faculty members who share an interest in program assessment and improvement. The FLC members will learn about successful program assessment, implement changes in their departments, and become influential assessment leaders in their colleges. Selection of the first Faculty Fellow (leader) for Assessment will occur in August 2011. A 6-member team of faculty members and administrators from our institution who attended a recent AAC&U “Engaging Departments” institute, called the Assessment Advisory Group, will support and mentor the Faculty Fellow in his/her work with FLC faculty colleagues. The FLC will document their assessment activities within their own programs or colleges as well as their interactions with colleagues for use in assessing the success of the FLC model. In addition, the AVPIA will provide support for scholarly publication of the most significant findings of the FLC members’ work.
Annual in spring semester	<b>Activity 2c: Assessment Showcase</b> – The Showcase is held to highlight campus programs that demonstrate best practices in program level assessment. The showcases typically feature keynote speakers of national stature in program assessment and brief updates/talks by department heads or faculty in charge of program assessment in their units. These annual events generally attract between 40-70 faculty, staff, and administrators from all UA colleges. Five annual showcases have been held in 2001, 2002, 2009, 2010, and 2011. See information on the most recent Assessment Showcase, held in 2011, at: <a href="http://assessment.arizona.edu/node/1285">http://assessment.arizona.edu/node/1285</a>

*Assumption 3: A faculty-driven assessment process is strongly supported by university level administration and valued in the process of reviewing academic programs.*

Ongoing throughout each year	<b>Activity 3a: Institutional Level Support for Program Assessment Assistance</b> – The AVPIA and the OIA Coordinator of Program Assessment are available to consult with and support program faculty and program heads in their efforts to build or improve their program assessment plans and practices. In the 12-month period ending in mid-May 2011, the AVPIA and the OIA Coordinator of Program Assessment interacted with approximately 240 faculty members and administrators through invited presentations, one-on-one consultations, the 2011 Assessment Showcase, and written feedback or emails to faculty.
Ongoing throughout each academic year	<b>Activity 3b: Review of Assessment Sections in Academic Program Review (APR) Self-Studies</b> – Each academic program at the UA is reviewed every 7 years for quality of its program. Reporting of program assessment results has long been a requirement of the APR process. However, beginning in the Fall 2011, all assessment sections in the APR self-studies will be reviewed for quality using a rubric (see Appendix B on pages 9-10). Members of the Assessment Coordinating Council, the OIA Coordinator of Program Assessment, and the AVPIA will conduct each review and forward the assessment results to the VPAA. If evidence for “closing the loop” by using program assessment findings to make program improvements is missing, the VPAA will place the program on probation and request that the department seek assistance from the OIA to improve its practice of program assessment. A follow-up review will be planned to determine whether the program has made progress on its program assessment activities.

The UA Plan for Institutional Assessment



ACC = Assessment Coordinating Council  
 APR = Academic Program Review  
 NSSE = National Survey of Student Engagement  
 OIA = Office of Instruction and Assessment  
 UWGEC = University Wide General Education Council  
 VPAA = Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

## APPENDIX A: Assessment Rubric-Improving Your Academic Program Assessment Website

**Baseline Assessment of all Program Assessment Website completed in March 2011**  
 (n = 165 programs; includes graduate, undergraduate, and interdisciplinary)

	Excellent	Achieving	Needs Development	Inadequate
<p><b><u>Overview of the program</u></b></p> <p>The program overview provides the reader with a brief description of its academic goals.</p>	<p>A description is provided that gives the reader a general description of program goals in two paragraphs or less.</p> <p><b>75% of programs received this score</b></p>		<p>Insufficient description is provided to give the reader a general description of the program goals.</p> <p><b>25% of programs received this score</b></p>	
<p><b><u>Expected Student Learning Outcomes</u></b></p> <p>Expected student outcomes identify the intended knowledge, understandings, or abilities that students will acquire through the academic program.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b>  <b>EX 1:</b> Mechanical Engineering program  <b>EX 2:</b> Critical Writing program</p>	<p>Outcomes are included which explicitly describe what students know, understand, or are able to do.</p> <p><i>EX 1: Using nontechnical forms of communication in a presentation to non-engineers, students will present mechanical problems addressed in their projects, their engineered solution to the problem, and the assumptions that the solution is built upon.</i></p> <p><i>EX 2: Students will identify an issue, develop an arguable thesis about the issue, locate relevant evidence to support the argument, analyze the evidence, and draw a well-supported conclusion.</i></p> <p><b>51% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Outcomes are included, but do not explicitly describe what students know, understand, or are able to do.</p> <p><i>EX 1: Students will present their final engineering projects in a presentation to students in the Intro to Engineering class.</i></p> <p><i>EX 2: Students will demonstrate their critical writing skills by developing an argument on an issue.</i></p> <p><b>26% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Outcomes are included that describe course level evaluation. No program level outcomes are included that explicitly describe what students know, understand, or are able to do.</p> <p><i>EX 1: Students will earn grades of C or higher on their final engineering project presentations given to the Intro to Eng. class.</i></p> <p><i>EX 2: Students will earn a passing grade on a critical writing assessment assigned in the capstone senior colloquium.</i></p> <p><b>4% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Outcomes are absent. Rather, the expected learning outcomes section describes program goals and objectives rather than student learning outcomes.</p> <p><i>EX 1: One of the goals of the Mechanical Engineering program is to develop our students' communications skills with nontechnical audiences.</i></p> <p><i>EX 2: The Critical Writing program is designed to enhance students' abilities to critically examine complex issues through writing.</i></p> <p><b>19% of programs received this score</b></p>

<p><b><u>Assessment Activities</u></b></p> <p>Activities for assessing outcomes are listed and described along with when and by whom the data are collected. The activities appropriately measure the outcomes. Examples of activities are: rubric-scored papers or presentations, an exit program exam, senior survey, or employer survey.</p>	<p>Activities are listed and described for the outcomes. The activities are appropriate measures of the outcomes. Direct and indirect measures of student outcomes are collected through the activities.</p> <p><b>9% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Activities are listed and described for the outcomes. The activities are appropriate measures of the outcomes. The activities may not include multiple measures of student outcomes.</p> <p><b>41% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Activities are listed and described for the outcomes. Some activities may not be appropriate measures of the outcomes (e.g., Students' final grades will be collected from all required courses).</p> <p><b>13% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>A discussion of assessment activities is absent or vague.</p> <p><b>37% of programs received this score</b></p>
<p><b><u>Assessment Findings</u></b></p> <p>The findings describe what was learned from the assessment activities. <b>Examples</b> of findings may include <i>summaries</i> of: rubric scores, exit exam scores, survey responses, narrative responses.</p>	<p>Findings from assessment activities are summarized and clearly reported in ways that align with expected outcomes. The reported findings are recent, based on data collected no more than one year after the date when data were collected in the program's assessment activities.</p> <p><b>5% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Findings from assessment activities are summarized, but not reported in a clear and concise way. The most recent findings reported on the website may be more than one year old.</p> <p><b>9% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Findings from assessment activities are not directly reported. Rather, assessment activities are described and anecdotal information is provided as findings. The most recent findings reported on the website may be more than one year old.</p> <p><b>27% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Findings from assessment activities are absent or vaguely presented on the website. The most recent findings reported on the website may be more than one year old.</p> <p><b>59% of programs received this score</b></p>
<p><b><u>Changes Made in Response to Assessment Findings</u></b></p> <p>The findings are used to drive change and improvement in programs. <b>Examples</b> of changes made by program faculty include <i>descriptions</i> of: curriculum and course changes, revised teaching strategies, or new course assessment strategies.</p>	<p>Assessment findings are appropriately used as information that drives program improvements in instruction and curriculum. Specific program changes are described that link back to findings from assessment of student outcomes.</p> <p><b>4% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Assessment findings are appropriately acknowledged as drivers of improvements in learning, instruction, and curriculum within the program. However, specific program changes linking findings to student outcomes are not described.</p> <p><b>9% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>Assessment findings are vaguely or inappropriately acknowledged or described in relation to their use in improving learning, instruction, and curriculum within a program.</p> <p><b>25% of programs received this score</b></p>	<p>No discussion is provided that describes how the findings are or will be used to make changes in the program(s).</p> <p><b>62% of programs received this score</b></p>

Comments to the Program Head:

## APPENDIX B: Rubric for Assessing APR Assessment Plans (to begin Fall 2011)

	<b>4- Excellent</b>	<b>3- Achieving</b>	<b>2- Needs Development</b>	<b>4-Inadequate</b>
<p><b><u>Expected Learning Outcomes</u></b> Expected student learning outcomes identify the intended knowledge, understandings, or abilities that students will acquire through the academic program.</p> <p><b>EX 1:</b> <i>Mechanical Engineering program</i> <b>EX 2:</b> <i>Critical Writing program</i></p>	<p>Outcomes are included which explicitly describe what students know, understand, or are able to do.</p> <p><b>EX 1:</b> <i>Using nontechnical forms of communication in a presentation to non-engineers, students will present mechanical problems addressed in their projects, their engineered solution to the problem, and the assumptions that the solution is built upon.</i></p> <p><b>EX 2:</b> <i>Students will identify an issue, develop an arguable thesis about the issue, locate relevant evidence to support the argument, analyze the evidence, and draw a well-supported conclusion.</i></p>	<p>Outcomes are included, but do not explicitly describe what students know, understand, or are able to do.</p> <p><b>EX 1:</b> <i>Students will present their final engineering projects in a presentation to students in the Intro to Engineering class.</i></p> <p><b>EX 2:</b> <i>Students will demonstrate their critical writing skills by developing an argument on an issue.</i></p>	<p>Outcomes are included that describe course level evaluation. No program level outcomes are included that explicitly describe what students know, understand, or are able to do.</p> <p><b>EX 1:</b> <i>Students will earn grades of C or higher on their final engineering project presentations given to the Intro to Engineering class.</i></p> <p><b>EX 2:</b> <i>Students will earn a passing grade on a critical writing assessment assigned in the capstone senior colloquium.</i></p>	<p>Outcomes are absent. Rather, the expected learning outcomes section describes program goals and objectives rather than student learning outcomes.</p> <p><b>EX 1:</b> <i>One of the goals of the Mechanical Engineering program is to develop our students' communications skills with nontechnical audiences.</i></p> <p><b>EX 2:</b> <i>The Critical Writing program is designed to enhance students' abilities to critically examine complex issues through writing.</i></p>
<p><b><u>Assessment Activities</u></b> Activities for assessing outcomes are listed and described. The activities appropriately measure the outcomes. Examples of direct measures are rubric-scored papers or presentations, or an exit program exam. Examples of indirect measures are senior exit surveys and employer surveys.</p>	<p>Activities are listed and described for each outcome. The activities are appropriate measures of the outcomes. Direct and indirect measures of outcomes are collected through the activities.</p>	<p>Activities are listed and described for each outcome. The activities are appropriate measures of the outcomes. Some activities may not include direct and indirect measures.</p>	<p>Activities are listed and described for the outcomes. Some activities may not be appropriate measures of the outcomes. Some activities may not include direct and indirect measures.</p>	<p>A discussion of assessment activities is absent or vague.</p>

<p><b><u>Process Involvement</u></b> The ways in which faculty, staff and students are involved in the development, implementation, and use of student learning outcomes assessment are described.</p>	<p>The involvement in the process by faculty, staff, and students is substantive and appropriate.</p>	<p>Involvement in the process by faculty, staff, and students is substantive. Yet, the process could be improved in order to better align development, implementation, and use of assessment results.</p>	<p>Involvement in the process by faculty, staff, and students is described. However the process needs major changes if program improvements are likely to result from the process.</p>	<p>No evidence is provided in the self-study of shared involvement in the program assessment process by faculty, staff, or students.</p>
<p><b><u>Assessment Findings</u></b> The findings describe what was learned from the assessment activities. <i>Examples</i> of findings may include <b>summaries</b> of: rubric scores, exit exam scores, survey responses, and narrative responses.</p>	<p>Findings from assessment activities are summarized and clearly reported in ways that align with expected outcomes.</p>	<p>Findings from assessment activities are summarized, but not reported in a clear and complete way.</p>	<p>Findings from assessment activities are not directly reported. Rather, the report simply states that data were collected.</p>	<p>Findings from assessment activities are absent or vaguely presented in the self-study.</p>
<p><b><u>Changes in Response to Findings</u></b> The findings are used to drive change and improvement in the program. <i>Examples</i> of changes include: revised instructional strategies, curriculum changes, new classroom assessment strategies, and incorporation into the department's strategic planning.</p>	<p>Assessment findings are appropriately used as information that drives improvement in learning, instruction, curriculum, or strategic planning. Specific changes are described that clearly link to the findings.</p>	<p>Assessment findings are appropriately acknowledged as drivers for improvement in learning, instruction, curriculum, or strategic planning. However, specific changes are not described.</p>	<p>Assessment findings are vaguely or inappropriately described in relation to their use in improving learning, instruction, curriculum, or strategic planning within a program.</p>	<p>No discussion of program changes in response to assessment findings is provided in the self-study.</p>
<p><b><u>Reporting on the Website</u></b> The program's assessment website is current and updated with all of the information reported in the APR self-study.</p>	<p>A summary of the program's student outcomes assessment appears on the website. The information includes outcomes, assessment activities, findings, and discussion of changes made in response to findings.</p>	<p>A summary of the program's student outcomes assessment appears on the website. However, the requested information is not complete.</p>	<p>A summary of the program's student outcomes assessment appears on the website. However, the information is either vague or inappropriately described.</p>	<p>Either no information is provided on the website or the information has not been updated.</p>

Comments to the Program Head: