



Academic Assessment

General Education Level

Program Level

Course Level

Faculty Toolkit

*Contents of this handbook will be updated annually each academic year.
Last Updated Spring 2017*

Contents

College Assessment Plan	4
Figure 1: Assessment Cycle Diagram	7
The Assessment Process	7
Detailed Description of Expanded Steps:	8
Observe and Collect Facts:	8
Analyze and Respond:	9
Evaluate:	9
Summarize, Plan and Communicate:	10
Developing Learning Outcomes	11
Types of Academic Assessment	11
Figure 2: Overview of NWACC Academic Assessment Plan	12
Figure 3: General Education Assessment Cycle	13
Figure 4: Alignment of General Education Outcomes with NWACC Common Learning Framework	14
Detailed Description for each General Education Learning Outcome	15
Program Outcomes	16
Course Outcomes	16
The Standard Course Outline	16
Choosing Appropriate Measures	18
Closing the Loop	21
Response to Results	21
Adjusting the Assessment Process	21
Standard Course Outline Template	24

General Education Outcomes Assessment Form Example	246
General Education Outcomes Courses Addressed AY 2017	27
Procedure for Identification of Courses for General Education	28

College Assessment Plan

College Assessment Plan to support the Institutional Effectiveness Plan and Formal Evaluation Process

The College Assessment Plan for NWACC 2016-2019 has been designed to determine how well we are meeting our goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan, Program/Classroom Assessment Plans and Co-Curricular Assessment Plans. Our assessment plan has been designed to meet the standards for accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission on Higher Education. It is also in accord with the College's commitment to Outcomes based funding.

The Relation of Academic Assessment to Governance, Administration, Strategic Planning and Budgeting

The Roles of Administration, Governance, and Faculty

The President oversees all institutional assessments through the Ends/Goals Objective Report and ensures that appropriate processes are in place to set goals, assess outcomes, and make improvements on the basis of evidence in every division of the College.

Cabinet member is responsible for reporting the results of their units' assessments to the President and for providing appropriate resources for their implementation and effective use of their results.

The Vice President for Learning (CAO) is responsible for guiding academic assessment activities and will be the responsible spokesperson for assessment at NWACC. The CAO monitors assessment plans and annual assessment reports to ensure that assessments are taking place regularly and systematically and that the College, through its departments, interdisciplinary programs, and College-wide structures, is responding to the findings of its assessments. The CAO provides appropriate budget support for academic assessment efforts. The CAO may delegate specific responsibilities for various assessment activities to appropriate administrators.

Department chairs and program directors have responsibility for guiding their academic programs' assessment planning, guiding the implementation of assessment activities, and, in their departments' annual assessment reports, reporting both results and how those results are being or will be used, as well as any follow-up on the effectiveness of changes made.

The Assessment Committee is responsible for reviewing, revising, and approving the three-year General Education Academic Assessment Plan for Northwest Arkansas Community College. The CAO has appointed the Assessment Committee to monitor academic assessment planning at the College level and to make recommendations to the CAO regarding annual institutional and program-level assessment plans, processes, and reports. (Program and Individual Accreditation) The AC also conveys assessment results to CAO bi-annually for consideration and follow-up.

The Faculty Assessment Coordinator serves as Chair of the AC and, working closely with the CAO, coordinates academic assessment activities across the college.

The **Coordinator of Accreditation** sits on the Assessment Committee and serves as co-chair of the Quality Council. The **Quality Council** works closely with the college community to maintain accreditation standards and helps align our strategic planning processes.

The faculty are responsible for developing assessment plans within their academic programs and for participating in and following up on academic assessments. As part of this work, faculty develop student learning goals for their courses—stated on their syllabi—that coordinate with departmental and College-wide goals for student learning and development.

The Curriculum Committee is responsible for reviewing and approving syllabi for new or substantially revised courses to assure that student learning objectives are clearly specified in both syllabi and department- and program-level documents.

The Library, Information Commons, Writing Center, Tutoring Center are responsible for assessing the effectiveness of their efforts to support the student learning and development.

Finance and Administration, Human Resources, Information Technology, Public Relations, and The Foundation are responsible for assessing the effectiveness of those aspects of their programs that support student learning and development.

Student Services is responsible for the initial onboarding and acclimation of students to the rigors and expectations of the college community. Student Services frequently collaborates with faculty and the academic leadership (Deans) and is responsible for assessing all activities within the division that support the academic mission of the college and personal and academic growth of its students.

Strategic Planning and Budgeting

Our strategic planning and budgeting processes use the results of our assessment activities to maintain, improve, and strengthen NWACC and its ability to educate our students. Planning and budgeting effectively requires the systematic gathering, analysis, and use of a variety of information about our efforts, all in support of our academic mission. Budgets provide appropriate resources for assessment activities.

The College Wide Assessment Plan is used to measure both annual goal setting and in-depth review is as follows:

1. Teaching and Learning

- Reports on Planning & Research website:
 - Data and Information (including enrollment, demographics, FTE, grades, and retention reports)
 - Fact Book - December
 - General Education Outcomes Report
 - Data due to IE in May of each year

2. Student Success/Satisfaction: (rotates annually among students enrolled in curriculum, basic skills, or non-credit classes)

- Academic Program Review (Yearly and ongoing)
 - Graduate/Completer Survey - yearly
 - Research based data on economic and employment trends
 - The Student Opinion Survey (NCCE every other year) due in 2017

3. Faculty evaluation Meeting Stakeholder Needs:

- Advisory Committee meetings (annual)
- Employer Follow-up Survey (continuous)
- Planning at the annual Board Retreat - July
- Needs assessment surveys for new programs
- Program Review

4. Valuing Faculty and Staff:

- Comprehensive Faculty/Staff Survey
- Development Opportunities Participants and Surveys

5. Key Performance Indicators and Outcomes Based Funding:

- Data from IPEDS
- State licensure boards
- State performance indicators
- Budget – April
- National Community College Benchmark Project surveys (mentioned above)
- Institutional Effectiveness Report: The annual Institutional Effectiveness Report is published each fall and compiles data from the above sources as well as reports of unit accomplishments and budget expenditures. The report is published at the beginning of fall semester. (Fall)
- System Portfolio Review

The following diagram illustrates the cyclical nature of academic assessment focusing on continuous improvement.

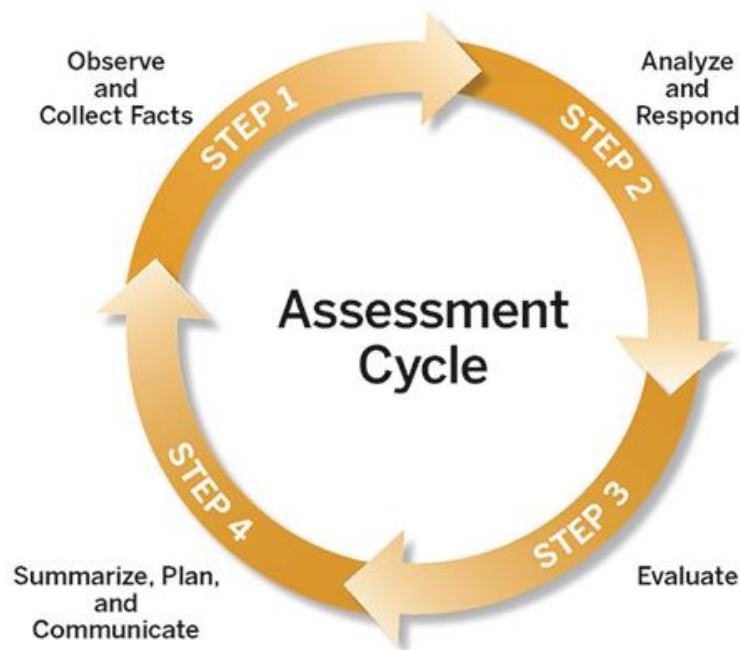


Figure 1: Assessment Cycle Diagram

The Assessment Process

If student learning is to be measured, then it is assumed that a certain level of learning is expected. The expectations of what a student should learn from a course are called learning outcomes. Before taking the first of the three steps, expectations of what a student should know, think and do have to be established. The accomplishment of these outcomes reflects on the effectiveness of an educational program- not an individual student or instructor.

Assessment is a cyclical process, changes can be made in instruction, clarifications can be made to the learning outcomes or improvements can be made to how those outcomes are measured. The purpose of learning assessment process is to document and improve student learning.

THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE's FOUR STEPS:

1. **Observe and Collect Facts:**
 - Develop learning outcomes
 - Identify assessment measures and objective criteria
2. **Analyze and Respond:**
 - Measure student learning, analyze results, suggest changes
3. **Evaluate:**
 - Evaluate proposed changes and effectiveness of changes previously made
 - Review the process: is it working?
4. **Summarize, Plan and Communicate:**
 - Formally report findings and share with all necessary constituent groups
 - Clearly communicate continuous quality improvements made as a result of the assessment cycle

Detailed Description of Expanded Steps:

Observe and Collect Facts:

Develop learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are descriptions of what academic departments intend for students to know (cognitive), think (affective) and do (behavioral) when they have completed their course, degree or department curricula.

Learning outcomes should be...

- Linked to Common Learning Framework.
- Results oriented. They focus not on what we as instructors will do, but what students ought to know, think and do. They explain what students should gain from the program/ courses/ degree.
- As simple and straightforward as possible.
- Measurable, meaning being able to make a general judgment on whether students know, think or do what we intend for them.
- Reasonable (not too high or too low).
- Set first before identifying assessment tools.

Identify assessment measures and criteria

Learning outcomes should be measurable. This step involves matching an outcome to a specific

form of measurement. Once a measurement tool is identified, then criteria, standards or benchmarks can be set. Without setting assessment criteria, it would not be possible to determine if an outcome had been met.

Assessment measures can be put in two categories: direct and indirect.

Direct Measures: Direct measures assess student performance of identified learning outcomes, such as mastery of a lifelong skill. They require standards of performance. Examples of direct assessments are: pre/post-test; course-embedded questions; standardized exams; portfolio evaluation; videotape/audiotape of performance; capstone course evaluation.

Indirect Measures: Indirect measures assess opinions or thoughts about student knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning experiences, and perceptions. Examples of indirect measures are: student surveys about instruction; focus groups; alumni surveys; employer surveys.

More about assessment measures can be viewed on page 19 in the section titled “Choosing Appropriate Measures”.

Analyze and Respond:

Measure student learning and Analyze Measurement Data

Faculty are responsible for giving and grading the assessment measure. They collect, tabulate and present the results to the department coordinator who is responsible for seeing that all appropriate parties are involved in analyzing the results: Department Chair/Program Coordinator, Dean, and Assessment Committee. After careful analysis, these parties work together to recommend the most appropriate response: which changes need to be made?

Evaluate:

Assessment is a means to improve student performance in academic programs, not an end in itself. Assessment results find their meaning in relationship to learning outcomes. This step in the process is easy if the outcomes and assessment criteria were strictly defined. Faculty establish the outcomes; faculty select the assessment tools; faculty are responsible for analyzing the results of the assessment, and making recommendations for improvements. Analyzing the results is intended to result in making different decisions and evaluating the effectiveness of previous changes made.

Decisions that may be made:

- Improve the means of assessment
- Take no action (what is being done is working)
- Make changes to instruction and/or curriculum

Improvements in the means of assessment includes:

- Reworking intended outcomes (goals, objectives or criteria)

- Changing or altering the assessment measure
- Changing or altering the results analysis to include or exclude certain types of information.

Changes in instruction and/or curriculum: These changes can be of two types: what is taught and how it's taught.

- Changes in what is taught can involve course offerings included in a program or what is covered within those courses pertaining to learning outcomes.
- Changes in how it's taught improve student mastery of outcomes by altering methods, techniques and approaches to teaching the content.

Summarize, Plan and Communicate:

Formally report findings and recommend changes

A report containing a summary of the assessment results and the response should be made to appropriate parties. These reports should include the intended outcomes, a summary of the results, the proposed changes in assessment and/or instruction and budgetary recommendations necessary to implement the changes. Budgetary proposals might include items such as instructional equipment, personnel, new courses, new support services or assessment tools. This input should be forwarded to individuals who develop annual budgets and institutional plans. Documentation of changes is crucial for public accountability and part of evaluation of the assessment process as a whole. Positive results can be used as a marketing tool for programs/degrees.

Implement approved changes

In this stage the recommendations that come from the analysis of student performance data become a reality. Follow-through on the adjustment recommended based on the analysis has to occur. Some adjustments may not be practical or cost effective immediately. Priorities have to be set and followed. Some recommended changes may require approval by college committees or administration (especially those that involve expenditures). Implementation of instructional or assessment adjustments cannot begin until approved and/or funded.

Repeat:

The assessment process is cyclical. The process should provide a means to document that implemented changes have helped improve student learning. Faculty and administrators have to work collaboratively to make the assessment cycle work effectively. Appendix B lists roles for faculty and instructional leadership in the process.

Developing Learning Outcomes

The first step and key component in the assessment process is developing expectations for student learning. Once the expectations have been established, the rest of the assessment process can be simply summarized in the form of three questions:

1. How can this learning expectation be measured?
2. Did the measurement show students performed to the level we expected?
3. What more can be done to help students meet the learning expectations?

Learning outcomes are descriptions of what academic departments intend for students to know, think and do when they have completed their course, degree or program.

At NWACC, four different levels of learning outcomes exist in a hierarchy: common learning framework (institutional), program, general education, and course.

Types of Academic Assessment

Faculty at NWACC are responsible for three of the four levels of academic assessment:

- ***Institutional Assessment:*** NWACC's Common Learning Framework aligns with the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. Faculty are not responsible for conducting Institutional Assessment unless assigned.
- ***General Education Outcomes Assessment:*** courses with the highest enrollment are selected to represent each of the general education learning outcomes. Faculty recommend the specific general education outcome to be assessed for each course identified.
- ***Course Level Outcomes Assessment:*** all credit level courses at NWACC are expected to have course level learning outcomes that align with the Institution's Common Learning Framework. These courses must be assessed a minimum of one time every three years.
- ***Program Level Outcomes Assessment:*** each program has an outcomes assessment plan in place that specifies how assessment is accomplished at the program level. Learning outcomes must align with the Institution's Common Learning Framework. Programs are assessed once every seven years.

Figure 2: Overview of NWACC Academic Assessment Plan



Overview of NWACC Academic Assessment Plan					
Assessment Task (3 Tiers)		Timeline		Results: Data is evaluated informing improvements (cycle is continuous)...	Overseeing Entity
Tier 1 Institutional(College-wide) Assessment		Annually	Reports due annually	...to ensure that the college is providing the quality education and educational experiences it promises stakeholders and the community.	Office of Institutional Effectiveness
Tier 2 General Education Assessment		Data collected every Fall	Reports due every Spring	...to ensure high enrollment courses are addressing Gen Ed Outcomes and align with national best practices.	Assessment Committee
Tier 3 Academic Program & Course Level Assessment	Course Level Assessment/ Outcomes Assessment	Data collected every Fall	Reports due every Spring	...to ensure results consistently provide evidence that quality instruction is being provided across departments and that courses are transferable.	Academic Program Faculty
	Program Review	Every 7 years	Reports due in the preceding Fall semester	...to ensure programs provide quality and breadth of education promised to community and meet requirements for program continuation.	Office of Institutional Effectiveness
	Program Specific Accreditation	Data collected every semester or annually	Reports vary by program	...to ensure continuous accreditation of programs.	Academic Program Faculty

Figure 3: General Education Assessment Cycle

General Education Assessment Cycle for Fall to Fall		
Timeline*	Action/Responsible Person	Activity
Week prior to classes beginning fall semester	Departmental Assessment Coordinators, Deans/Department Chairs	1. Assessment Coordinators send email to all faculty reminding them of the assessment expectations and provide all necessary forms and guidelines respective of their courses and department. 2. Deans/Department Chairs remind faculty at divisional/departmental meetings of assessment expectations.
Last few weeks of the fall semester (may be sooner according to individual course curriculum)	Faculty	Assessments are conducted and data collected.
Week following formal deadlines for submitting grades from fall semester	Departmental Assessment Coordinator and/or Faculty Subject Area Coordinators	Aggregate data from departmental faculty to facilitate review/discussion of assessment results.
Beginning of spring semester	Departmental Assessment Coordinator, Deans/Department Chairs, Faculty Subject Area Coordinators	1. Arrange for faculty to meet by discipline/content area to discuss assessment results, 2. Review and discuss implications of the assessment data, and 3. Make recommendations for improvement and note changes that will be made in this cycle, if any.
Week 6 of spring semester	Departmental Assessment Coordinators, Faculty Assessment Chair, Office of Institutional Effectiveness	Submit completed assessment forms with noted recommendations for improvements to the assessment committee for discussion.
Week 8 of spring semester	Assessment Committee, Faculty Assessment Chair	1. Faculty Assessment Chair will compile General Education Report Draft with the support of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. 2. Committee will make recommendations to divisions/departments.
Week 10 of spring semester	VP for Learning/CAO, Faculty Assessment Chair, Faculty Senate, Office of Institutional Effectiveness	1. The consolidated General Education Assessment Report is submitted to the VP for Learning and shared with Faculty Senate. 2. Final report is published to the assessment committee website as well as on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness website.
Week 12-16 of spring semester	Departmental Assessment Coordinators, Deans/Department Chairs, Faculty	1. Arrange times for faculty to meet to discuss overall assessment results from last year. 2. Deans/chairs/coordinators encourage faculty to make changes to curriculum. 3. Deans/chairs/coordinators designate courses to gather assessment data for the coming year.
Repeat the Cycle		
*Some courses may be assessed on a spring to spring cycle with Dean approval. The timeline would be adjusted accordingly and data from spring to spring cycle would be included in the following year's report.		

Figure 4: Alignment of General Education Outcomes with NWACC Common Learning Framework



Alignment of General Education Outcomes with NWACC Common Learning Framework

 NWACC Common Learning Framework	General Education Outcomes
KNOWLEDGE Students gain broad, integrative knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World through study in the sciences, mathematics, social science, humanities, histories, language, and arts. In each area students learn key concepts and methods of inquiry, examine significant debates and questions, and make evidence-based arguments Students gain specialized knowledge in a field of study. Students learn discipline and field specific knowledge and demonstrate applied skills in the field.	
INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS Students demonstrate quantitative literacy necessary for their chosen field of study. Students demonstrate that they are able to think critically and creatively . Students demonstrate that they are able to communicate effectively . Students demonstrate computer and information literacy . Students demonstrate that they are able to work in teams, collaborate, and solve problems .	Students can read at the college level— evaluate written materials objectively . Students can write clear, coherent, well-organized documents . Students develop effective oral communication skills . Students can achieve mathematical literacy . Students can employ a variety of sources to locate, evaluate, and use information . Students can use computer proficiently .
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY Students acquire knowledge and demonstrate their ability to address significant public problems and questions through one or more of the following: Civic Engagement, Intercultural Knowledge, Ethical Reasoning and Action, Foundational and Skills for Lifelong Learning.	Students gain greater awareness of cultural perspectives .
INTEGRATIVE AND APPLIED LEARNING Students demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply their learning through synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and/or specialized studies through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems. Examples may include research, projects, practicums, internships, work-assignments, performances, and creative tasks.	Students develop higher order thinking skills. Apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what they learn.

Established from Essential Learning Outcomes of the LEAP Campaign through American Association of Colleges & Universities and the Degree Qualifications Profile through NILOA

Detailed Description for each General Education Learning Outcome

- 1. Students develop higher order thinking skills.** Higher education goes beyond memorization and basic comprehension. Students must be able to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what they learn. While most first and second year college courses lay a foundation of basic knowledge of the subject matter, students will also be challenged to use their intellect, to think critically, to solve problems and/or to wrestle with complex issues.
- 2. Students gain greater awareness of cultural perspectives.** One of the traditional goals of a college education is to expand students' understanding of the world by presenting them with diverse ideas and attitudes. In America's pluralistic society, awareness of cultural perspectives is essential. An important element of this understanding is recognition of one's own culture and the impact it has on one's perspective. Across the curriculum, students will be exposed to different cultural perspectives to enhance their ability to understand and interact with others.
- 3. Students can write clear, coherent, well-organized documents, which are substantially free of errors.**
- 4. Students develop effective oral communication skills.** A college graduate should be able to speak effectively. Most NWACC students will develop public speaking skills to inform and persuade others. Some professional program students will focus on interpersonal communication skills essential in performing job-related duties. All students should have opportunities to improve their oral communication skills across the curriculum through class presentations and small group activities.
- 5. Students can achieve mathematical literacy.** College graduates should be able to understand and use numerical relationships and basic analysis of data in their roles as consumers, citizens, scholars, and professionals. Graduates should possess the computational, algebraic and quantitative skills necessary to solve problems and evaluate complex situations.
- 6. Students can use computers proficiently.** Because of society's increasing use of computer technology, college graduates must be able to use a computer. Employers are expecting computer skills in those they hire. For most students, proficiency means the ability to create, update and manipulate word-processing documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and databases. Students will be able to use email for communication and a browser to navigate the Internet. Other students will gain proficiency in specific computer applications related to their field of study.
- 7. Students can employ a variety of sources to locate, evaluate, and use information.** In support of personal, professional, and academic goals, students should be able to recognize a need for information and locate it. They must then be able to effectively evaluate the reliability and relevance of that information.
- 8. Students can read at the college level (waiting to officially remove if approved)**

Program Outcomes

Program level outcomes describe the knowledge skills and attitudes students gain in completing an educational program. These outcomes link their curriculum or degree to the institutional mission, objectives, and outcomes. The institutional outcomes apply to all NWACC graduates; program outcomes are unique to an educational program within a division. Under the leadership of division chairs and/or program coordinators, the program faculty establish the program level outcomes. These outcomes form the basis for program level assessment of student learning.

Course Outcomes

To help make the connection between institutional outcomes, program outcomes and what happens in the classroom, general course level outcomes (or more properly, objectives) should be developed for courses offered. These outcomes should be developed by the faculty who teach in the discipline and be as specific as deemed necessary by the faculty. Core course objectives (found in the standard course outline) should establish consistency in courses taught by multiple instructors and help provide support of program outcomes. For example, if the science department has agreed that in all lab science courses students should be able to use the scientific method, then the course objectives should indicate more specifically what students should know or think or do related to the scientific method. An individual instructor can use the course objectives to design their own class syllabus.

The Standard Course Outline

The course outlines identify the general boundaries of a course and the minimum standards. A class syllabus will be much more detailed and very likely contain additional activities and objectives. The standard course outline is not meant to limit the instructor but provide a foundation for setting up a course. Each instructor can use her or her preferences and insights in how the general objectives will be taught or how particular topics will be presented. For more information on the content of a syllabus, please consult the faculty handbook.

New courses must be approved through the Curriculum Committee. Changes to existing course outlines in learning outcomes need only to have the division dean signature on the revised outline.

The standard course outline should include these elements:

1. **Course number and title, and the department that offers it.**
2. **Catalog description**
3. **Prerequisite (if any).** Most courses have prerequisites listed in the description. This section can provide expanded explanation of and/or exceptions to prerequisites.
4. **Credit/ contact/ load hours.** Credit hours are the hours of credit that will appear on a transcript. Contact hours are the amount of time designated for class (with 50 minutes rounded to an hour). Load hours are used to determine instructor remuneration. For example, the credit, contact and load hours for history courses are all the same, three. For lab science courses, the credit is 4, the contact is six (3 hours lecture and three hours lab) and the load is 5. For art studio courses, the credit is three, the contact hours are six (two hours lecture and 4 hours lab) and the load designation is 4 2/3. See the Board Policy Manual 4-8-3 on load hour designation.
5. **Target Audience and Transfer.** Because catalog descriptions tend to be brief, the course outline includes a section expanding the rationale for the course by identifying the student groups who would take the course. A statement regarding the overall purpose of the course can be included in this section. A comment on how the course usually transfers is also helpful to those who are both preparing to teach the course and advising students.
6. **Learning Outcomes.** Learning outcomes are expectations agreed upon by the faculty that teach the course. They should be written in terms of what students should be able to know, think and do when they successfully complete the course.
7. **Required Text(s) & optional (if any)**
8. **Topics.** The topics to be covered may be simply listed or designated as chapters in the text. The course outline would be the logical document to make clear which topics are required and which are optional.
9. **Required Instructional Activities (if any).** Examples of required instructional activities might include:

- Laboratories. Courses with lab, clinical or a studio associated with them might describe the expectations for the amount of time spent and the types of activities expected.
- Assignments/ projects.
- Field trips. The course may have required field experience that all sections are expected to participate in not matter who teaches the course. A day astronomy course may have night observation requirements.
- Performances.

10. Required forms of assessment

11. **Resources (optional).** Many new instructors would find it helpful if a list of videos, software, equipment, test banks and other teaching resources were available to them through the department, library and learning lab. These types of resources could be listed in this section.

Please contact the Learning Assessment Coordinator for samples and additional information about the document format.

The Course Outline Template (word document) is located in the Appendix as well as on the Assessment web site.

Choosing Appropriate Measures

The appropriateness of the measure is determined by the nature of learning outcome. Measures may be identified as one of two types: direct and indirect.

Direct Measures

Pre- & post- tests, capstone courses & projects, oral exams, internships, portfolios, exams, performance of licensure, certification professional exams, juried reviews and performances. Surveys can be considered direct measures for the affective domain if they are used to document a change in attitude or opinion over time.

Indirect Measures

Alumni, employer and student surveys (these usually give opinions about learning but not measure specific learning), exit interviews, focus groups, graduate follow up studies, retention and transfer studies, length of time to the degree, SAT scores, graduation & transfer rates, job placement data.

Non-measures

Program and curriculum reviews that are resource oriented and do not describe student learning, class grades & GPAs, student teacher ratios, class attendance records, enrollment and retention trends, graduation rates, student or faculty diversity, faculty credentials, faculty recognition or publications, class/faculty evaluations, satisfaction oriented surveys

Because an item is in the indirect or non-measure category does not mean it is unimportant or should not be considered in a program's overall effectiveness. This list only reflects its usefulness in gauging the degree of student learning. In general, direct measures of student learning are preferred over indirect measures.

Assessment measures can be qualitative.

Qualitative assessment activities include portfolio reviews, public performances, oral examinations or dissertation defenses. While judgments can be made as if the student successfully accomplished what was intended, the results are not easily assigned a numerical value. Complex skills or affective outcomes may be measured with qualitative measures.

Limitations to qualitative assessment include:

- Identification of specific criteria for assessment and standards for success is difficult.
- Objectivity of the evaluators
- Consistency of judgments

Portfolios can be used in assessment particularly for collection of work over time that demonstrates improvement. Complex skills (like writing or critical thinking) or affective outcomes might utilize portfolio assessment. Portfolios are easy to collect but difficult and time consuming to analyze to produce meaningful feedback. For portfolios to be used effectively, they should:

- Contain specific items (artifacts)
- Have evaluation protocols to help establish level of "quality" of work
- Be evaluated by faculty trained in the scoring rubric to help insure consistent evaluation.
- Be closely linked with goals and objectives for student learning

Assessment measures can be quantitative.

Traditional examinations are examples of quantitative instruments. Cognitive outcomes are most often measured through testing. Tests can be standardized or locally developed.

Standardized tests are:

- Relatively easy to administer
- Minimal time investment
- Objective
- Nationally normed
- Statistically valid and reliable
- Not always reflective of a department's specific outcomes
- Relatively expensive to purchase and score
- Not always compared to appropriate national normative group
- Lacking feedback specific enough to make changes.

Locally developed tests are

- Reflective of specific intended outcomes
- More available to detailed analysis
- Flexible in format
- Lacking in external credibility or comparative data
- Time and effort intensive locally in developing, analyzing and maintaining.

Behavioral measures

Behavioral measures are not assessment instruments, but rather are an indirect means to learn what a student does or can do as a result of accomplishing intended educational outcomes. Behavioral measurement usually takes the form of surveys, enrollment data or employment statistics. Examples of this form of assessment include: employment rates, admission to graduate/professional school records, voting patterns, performance of particular tasks, problem solving, and successful internships.

Measuring Affective Outcomes

Affective measures identify changes in feelings, values, ethics or morals associated with a discipline. To identify this change, student attitudes should be identified coming in to a program to serve as a benchmark. Attitudinal surveys then can be given to graduates, exiting students, or alumni.

Logistics

Once a measure has been identified for an outcome, it must be administered, the data collected, compiled, analyzed and presented to appropriate parties for a response. To make sure the assessment is successful and there is an opportunity for feedback, the assessment outcome plan form asks some helpful questions about logistics.

Closing the Loop

What are the assessment results telling you? What actions should you take? Closing the loop means using the results of student performance assessment to make adjustments in instructional efforts, assessment measures or intended learning outcomes. If the assessment data is never analyzed or responded to, then the effort in collecting it is wasted. Assessment results should be used to inform and reform.

Response to Results

Results can initiate three possible responses:

- Take no action (results indicate that is being done is working)
- Adjust the assessment process
- Adjust instruction

Adjusting the Assessment Process

The assessment process is dynamic. In the cycle, adjustments to the process can be made to improve its efficiency or the usefulness of the feedback. Adjusting the assessment process includes changing or altering learning outcomes, assessment measures or the results analysis.

There is almost no limit to the types of changes that could be made in response to student learning assessment.

- Change textbook
- Change or modify assessment tool
- Change or modify syllabus, assignments, rubrics, other course materials
- Department Meetings-discussion, exchange of information, teaching practices, etc.
- Publish results on web sites, newsletters, press releases, brochures, student orientation materials
- Conduct workshops for faculty or students
- Presentations on assessment results
- Conduct student surveys
- Contact other institutions-what do they do?
- Partner with library or other campus organizations
- Professional development for faculty

- Faculty mini workshops for learning new delivery methods
- Add prerequisite(s) for the course
- Conduct student focus groups

Examples of Closing the Loop-Actions Taken

Listed below are examples submitted by faculty, Jacqueline Jones describing how faculty close the loop in assessment for English Comp I and English Comp II:

- Celebrate Learning Session on interesting, active teaching approaches
- Department Peer Mentoring, explored scaffolding of assignments
- Fall/Spring English Department Meetings
- Fall/Spring ECE Department Meetings
- Monthly Composition Newsletters
- Instructional Activities shared on the English Department's Blackboard Resource Page (BRP) and K:Drive
- Composition Chit-Chat on effective feedback
- Chit-Chat on instructor-facilitated peer review
- Composition Chit-Chat on style and voice
- Lunch & Learn on ramification and student learning
- Student Workshops at Writing Center
- Web resources added to the Writing Center's website
- Web resources added to the Libraries website
- Books and media on topics related to assessment findings purchased for the Library
- Student models selected for *Expressions/Reflections*
- Faculty, self-reflections on instructional techniques during Faculty Performance Reviews
- Instructional Activities collected during Faculty Performance Reviews

Results of action(s) taken must be documented in the report the next time you assess the course.

What are some things that faculty can do to support the assessment process?

- Taking advantage of opportunities for training in assessment.
- Learning what is and is not considered good practice of assessment.
- Thoughtfully considering and discussing with peers the reasons for and uses of measuring student academic achievement across entire academic programs.
- Becoming familiar with the institution's overall assessment program.
- Helping develop explicit and measurable objectives (intended outcomes) for department programs. These objectives are what faculty agree students will have learned. When successfully completing a program (cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains).
- Articulating department goals and objectives for learning to students and the public.

- Choosing assessment measures and performance criteria that are appropriate to the intended outcomes (objectives).
- Helping administer and grade certain assessment measures.
- Helping produce summaries of assessment results.
- Using assessment results to document and improve student learning.
- In response to assessment results, making recommendations for improvements in teaching, curriculum, professional development, library holdings, student services, equipment, and personnel.
- Helping prioritize recommendations and develop program plans and budgets.
- Investigating the use of better instruments.
- Helping prepare appropriate reports for other faculty, students and administrators.
- Supporting the division chair in his or her responsibilities for the department's part in the overall assessment plan.
- Periodically serving on the assessment committee.

Standard Course Outline Template

NorthWest Arkansas Community College

Course Number and Title

Catalog Description

Prerequisites

Credit hours/Contact hours/Load hours

Target Audience/Transferability

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will:

Topics

Forms of Assessment

Division Dean

Date

General Education Outcomes Assessment Form

Outcome #: *I.E. 1: Students develop higher order thinking skills.*

Outcome Description:

Courses Selected for Assessment:

Course Name and Course Number/Code:			
Course Description:			
Enrollment Data			
<i>Term</i>	<i>Number of Sections</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	
Fall 20XX			
--Fall 20XX Face to Face			
--Fall 20XX Online			
Fall 20XY			
--Fall 20XY Face to Face			
--Fall 20XY Online			
Fall 20XZ			
--Fall 20XZ Face to Face			
--Fall 20XZ Online			
Reporting for General Education Results			
Name of Person Completing Assessment:			
Department:			
Terms:	Fall 20XX	Fall 20XY	Fall 20XZ
Total Number of Sections Assessed			
Total Number of Students Assessed			
Percentage of Face to Face Students Assessed			
Performance Target for Face to Face Students			
Percentage of Face to Face Students Scoring Proficient			
Percentage of Online Students Assessed			

Performance Target for Online Students			
Percentage of Online Students Scoring Proficient			
Means of Assessment (Method of selecting students and tool used for evaluation): Fall 20XX: Fall 20XY: Fall 20XZ:			
Results and Analysis: Fall 20XX: Fall 20XY: Fall 20XZ:			
Strengths: Fall 20XX: Fall 20XY: Fall 20XZ:			
Weaknesses: Fall 20XX: Fall 20XY: Fall 20XZ:			
Outcome Was Met? (Y/N): Fall 20XX: Fall 20XY: Fall 20XZ:			
Proposed Action(s):			
Was Proposed Action from Previous Cycle Effective? (Y/N) Detailed Explanation:			

General Education Outcomes Assessment Courses Addressed AY 2017	
General Education Student Learning Outcome	Courses Assessed
1. Students develop higher order thinking skills. Higher education goes beyond memorization and basic comprehension. Students must be able to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what they learn. While most first and second year college courses lay a foundation of basic knowledge of the subject matter, students will also be challenged to use their intellect, to think critically, to solve problems and/or to wrestle with complex issues.	PSYC 2003 BIOL 1544 ECON 2013 ARHS 1003
2. Students gain greater awareness of cultural perspectives. One of the traditional goals of a college education is to expand students' understanding of the world by presenting them with diverse ideas and attitudes. In America's pluralistic society, awareness of cultural perspectives is essential. An important element of this understanding is recognition of one's own culture and the impact it has on one's perspective. Across the curriculum, students will be exposed to different cultural perspectives to enhance their ability to understand and interact with others.	MUSI 1003 PLSC 2003 ENGL 2213 SOCI 2013
3. Students can write clear, coherent, well-organized documents, which are substantially free of errors.	ENGL 1013
4. Students can read selections at the college level. Students can describe the main ideas and supporting ideas in their reading. Students can evaluate written materials objectively.	HIST 2003 HIST 1033
5. Students develop effective oral communication skills. A college graduate should be able to speak effectively. Most NWACC students will develop public speaking skills to inform and persuade others. Some professional program students will focus on interpersonal communication skills essential in performing job-related duties. All students should have opportunities to improve their oral communication skills across the curriculum through class presentations and small group activities.	COMM 1303 OSIM 1103
6. Students can achieve mathematical literacy. College graduates should be able to understand and use numerical relationships and basic analysis of data in their roles as consumers, citizens, scholars, and professionals. Graduates should possess the computational, algebraic and quantitative skills necessary to solve problems and evaluate complex situations.	MATH 1204 MATH 1003 MATH 53 CHEM 1104
7. Students can use computers proficiently. Because of society's increasing use of computer technology, college graduates must be able to use a computer. Employers are expecting computer skills in those they hire. For most students, proficiency means the ability to create, update and manipulate word-processing documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and databases. Students will be able to use email for communication and a browser to navigate the Internet. Other students will gain proficiency in specific computer applications related to their field of study.	CISQ 1103
8. Students can employ a variety of sources to locate, evaluate, and use information. In support of personal, professional, and academic goals, students should be able to recognize a need for information and locate it. They must then be able to effectively evaluate the reliability and relevance of that information.	ENGL 1023 DRAM 1003

Procedure for Identification of Courses Used to Assess General Education Outcomes

With the help of the office of institutional research the assessment committee selects courses to use for assessment of general education outcomes. The selection process involves the following steps:

1. IR provides a list of highest enrollment courses from the previous year
2. High enrollment courses are compared to a list of courses compiled due to them being a required course for a majority of majors on campus
3. The courses that are both required for the majority of majors on campus as well as have the highest enrollment are selected to be reviewed by faculty for goodness of fit to a Gen. Ed. Outcome
4. Faculty review the outcomes and courses selected and as a department approve whether or not the courses will be used to collect general education outcome data
5. Once approved these courses are placed on the General Education Outcomes Assessment Course List for that assessment cycle (3 years)
6. At any time faculty can use additional courses to collect assessment data on any outcome of their choosing that they deem appropriate for that specific outcome; however, the courses selected via the above steps 1-5 are then required courses for that assessment cycle (3 years). Changes can be recommended to the assessment committee for review and consideration during the next cycle.