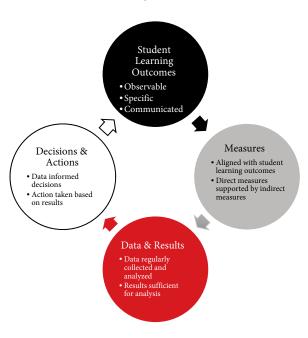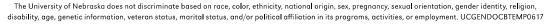# Academic Assessment & Program Quality

Overview

The primary purposes of academic assessment are to enhance student learning and to lead to continuous program improvement. Assessment occurs in many ways, and all types of assessment contribute to a campus-wide culture of improvement.

At the institutional level, student learning and academic program quality for *existing General Education (GenEd) courses and academic programs* are assured through three primary means:

- *General Education Assessment*
  https://www.unomaha.edu/general-education/assessment/index.php
  o Assessment activities occur routinely for each area of the GenEd curriculum to ensure that core courses are resulting in the basic knowledge and skill development that all students should have.
  o GenEd assessment is the responsibility of the General Education Committee, which submits results to the Academic Assessment Committee.

- *End-of-Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Assessment*
  https://www.unomaha.edu/academic-program-assessment-and-review/student-learning-outcomes/index.php
  o Unit level assessment is the responsibility of the faculty, occurs annually, and is intended to ensure that degree programs are of high quality, remain relevant, and provide students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to be successful.
  o Degree level assessment plans and reports are reviewed every 2-3 years by the Academic Assessment Committee and provide evidence that assessment is informing the continuous improvement of academic program quality.

- *Academic Program Review*
  https://www.unomaha.edu/academic-program-assessment-and-review/review/index.php
  o Occurs at a minimum of every 7 years and is intended to facilitate long-term strategic planning and evaluation of program quality.
  o Involves the review of all facets of an academic unit including degree programs, faculty qualifications and activities, assessment plans and reports, and research institutes or centers.
  o Academic program reviews are the responsibility of the Academic Planning Council, and when appropriate, incorporate program level accreditation.

Continuous Improvement Cycle

Student Learning Outcomes
- Observable
- Specific
- Communicated

Measures
- Aligned with student learning outcomes
- Direct measures supported by indirect measures

Data & Results
- Data regularly collected and analyzed
- Results sufficient for analysis

Decisions & Actions
- Data informed decisions
- Action taken based on results

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Levels of Assessment

Assessments of student learning occur at the course, program, and institutional levels.

Task Assessments & Course Objectives

Developed at the course syllabus level

Guided by a faculty member's expertise

Provides evidence an individual student met objectives

Informs a faculty member's teaching

Informs an individual student of his/her progress

End-of-Program Assessments & Student Learning Outcomes

Developed at the academic degree program level

Guided by program faculty expertise and/or the discipline

Provides evidence all or most students who complete an academic program are meeting learning outcomes

Informs program improvement

Informs external stakeholders (e.g., prospective students, parents, funders, campus administrators, etc.)

Institutional Accreditation & Assessment Processes

Developed at the university level

Guided by accountability structures (e.g., Higher Learning Commission, accreditation bodies, etc.)

Provides evidence of meeting a standard of excellence across academic units

Informs institutional improvement

Informs external stakeholders (e.g., prospective students, parents, state/national/global community, funders, central administrators, etc.)

Essential Assessment Questions

@Task Level
- What is the learning objective for an activity, class period, or unit of instruction within a course?
- How can an assignment, examination, presentation, or performance provide evidence students have met the learning objective?
- How can this data inform the future implementation of the task?

@Course Level
- What are the learning objectives for the course?
- How is it determined that students have mastered the content or developed the skills outlined in the course objectives?
- How can this information lead to improved teaching and learning within the course?

@Program Level
- What knowledge, skills, and experiences characterize the degree program and how are these reflective of stakeholder input.
- What data are collected and analyzed to determine what students know and are able to do at the completion of the program?
- How can the program use this information to inform program improvement efforts?