**Academic Support Unit Assessment**

Guidelines and Template



Submitted to the University Assessment Panel

AY 2021-2022

**Academic Support Unit Assessment**

**GENERAL DIRECTIONS**

Each academic support unit will submit two documents: (1) an updated assessment plan and (2) a status report detailing current and prior assessment efforts. The assessment plan describes the who, what, when, and where of the assessment system—it is forward thinking. The status report spells out what has happened in the past based on the previous assessment plan and what changes are being proposed. It should be noted that assessment plans evolve, meeting current and projected needs; revision to the assessment plan is to be expected.

Detailed directions with examples are provided in separate templates that follow and can also be found on our website at: <https://www.niu.edu/effectiveness/assessment/support-unit.shtml>

**RATIONALE**

Each academic support unit within the Division of Academic Affairs is guided by a mission statement and set of goals and objectives. These give purpose to the day-to-day operations of the unit, which ideally further and advance student successes. To foster continuous improvement efforts, support units regularly collect data on the degree to which they are meeting unit goals and objectives. Every five years, each academic support unit submits an updated assessment plan and a status report documenting assessment and program improvement activities. This provides an opportunity for academic support units to share assessment results—and receive constructive feedback and support for their assessment system.

University Assessment Panel members and Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation staff will review the updated assessment plans and status reports, noting strengths in the assessment system and offering suggestions for improvement where appropriate. Feedback from peers and colleagues has led many programs and units to improve efficiencies and effectiveness. The university uses this peer feedback to provide tailored support to individual academic support units and to the university as a whole. Having an effective and efficient assessment system will go a long way in supporting student successes.

**Academic Support Unit Assessment**

**Part I: Assessment Plan Explained**

The assessment plan for academic support units begins with an introduction that includes a history of the unit and a description of the unit’s major responsibilities, programs, and products. This is followed by a mission statement, set of unit goals (each with underlying objectives), and a description of the assessment methods that will be used to determine whether the goals are being met. Target performance levels are set for each assessment method, along with a timeline indicating when each assessment will be carried out and who is responsible for carrying it out. The assessment plan is forward thinking.

The general format for the assessment plan is:

**Cover Page**

**1. History and Context**

**2. Mission, Goals and Objectives**

**3. Assessment Methods**

Explanation of Assessment Methods Table

Assessment Methods-by-Outcomes Matrix

The cover page for the assessment plan follows on the next page.

**Part I: Assessment Plan**

[Insert Unit Name]

[Insert Date of Plan]

Submitted to the University Assessment Panel by:

Insert Name and Title of Person Submitting Plan

**1. History and Context of Unit Mission**

Describe the history of the unit in enough detail to **provide a contextual background that helps to clarify the unit’s mission**, especially as it relates to the unit’s contributions to the university and student success. Include a description of major unit responsibilities, programs, and products.

Insert history and context here.

**2. Mission, Goals and Objectives**

List the unit’s mission statement, goals, and objectives in the appropriate spaces provided below. See the *UAP Academic Support Unit Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist* for a list of characteristics often seen in well-crafted mission statements, goals, and objectives. It is not expected that all characteristics are present, but that essential ones are, such as:

* mission clarifies the unique role of the unit and helps to differentiate the unit from similar units,
* unit goals focus on unit effectiveness and student learning outcomes (where appropriate),
* a sufficient number of goals to carry out the mission of the unit (3-5 is manageable), and
* a sufficient number of objectives per goal to operationalize and guide the attainment of each goal (2-4 objectives per goal is manageable).

The aim is to continually improve goals and objectives over time. Challenge your unit to move from product/process outcomes to student learning outcomes, as relevant. Take the next step.

*Mission Statement*

Insert the unit’s mission statement here.

*Unit Goals and Objectives*

Insert the unit’s goals and objectives here, using a format similar to the illustrated examples below:

**Goal 1.** Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation will manage and coordinate university-wide assessment initiatives that meet the needs of multiple stakeholders while promoting continuous quality improvement of student learning.

**Objective 1.1.** The assessment programs of academic degree programs and support units will be of high quality, demonstrating: clear, appropriate, and measureable student learning outcomes; appropriate direct and indirect assessment methods that address all student learning objectives on a regular basis; effective data analysis, interpretation, and reporting; and appropriate use of results for continuous improvement efforts.

**Objective 1.2.** AAE will manage major university-wide assessment initiatives efficiently by acting on opportunities to constrain costs or improve efficiencies (i.e., increase impact for the same cost). Repeat same pattern for identifying other goals and objectives.

**3. Assessment Methods**

This final section of the assessment plan describes the assessment methods your unit is using to measure how well the unit is meeting its goals. See the *UAP Academic Support Unit Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist* for a description of characteristics seen in well-functioning assessment methods. Make sure the first three criteria are addressed. Aim for more than one direct assessment method per goal; one or more assessments per objective should suffice.

**Explanation of Assessment Methods table**

The first part of the assessment methods section is a description of each assessment method you will use. The description of each assessment needs to be in enough detail to communicate to others what the assessment is, what the desired target level of performance is on the assessment (to gauge if the unit is meeting the goal or goals), when the assessment will be given, and who is responsible for carrying out the assessment. See the *UAP Academic Support Unit Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist* for a list of characteristics seen in well-devised assessment methods.

Below is an **example** of a table you may use to clearly communicate each of the assessment methods to other stakeholders.

| **Assessment Method** | **Explanation** |
| --- | --- |
| Description | Assessment-Level Target a | When Data Will be Collected | Person Responsible | Goal(s)/objective(s) addressed: |
| Example 1: Annual Assessment Update Report | An authentic assessment of the quality of degree program assessment activities conducted over the past year. Degree programs annually report on data collection, analysis, and use of results for two program student learning outcomes. A rubric is used to assess the quality of the assessment activities, with a focus on clear and appropriate student learning outcomes, appropriate direct and indirect assessment methods, effective data reporting, and appropriate use of results for continuous improvement efforts. | All degree programs are at the Proficient level in all areas (student learning outcomes, assessment methods, time-frame and responsibilities, reporting results, and use of results). | Data is collected in the spring, report written in summer | Associate Director | Goal 1, obj. 1.1 |
| Example 2: XYZ Event Participation Survey | Insert a brief description in enough detail for an outside reader to get a picture of the assessment method. For example, describe the XYZ Event Participation Survey- be specific about which items provide information related to individual goals/objectives. Attach all instruments, surveys, reports, etc. | Insert the target level of performance on the assessment e.g., x% of participants indicate an average rating of 4 or above on a 5 point scale for specific items | Insert when the data will be collected. | Insert the title of the person responsible for assessment. | Insert the goals/objectives addressed |
| Example 3: Trends in graduation and retention rates of participants in specific programs e.g., mentoring program, ABC Center |  … | … | … | … | … |
| *Note.* a Assessment-level target is the level of performance the unit hopes to see on the assessment (e.g., 85% percent of participants demonstrate X, Y, and Z). |

**ASSESSMENT METHODS-BY-OUTCOMES MATRIX**

The assessment methods section concludes with an assessment methods-by-outcomes matrix mapping which assessments will measure each goal. Goals are listed in the first row, and each assessment method is listed in the first column. For each assessment method determine: (1) which goal(s) it ***primarily*** measures, (2) if it is being used for formative (F) or summative (S) purposes, and (3) whether it is an indirect (I) or direct (D) measure of the goal.

**Formative assessments** are used to see if the unit is on track and progressing well; **summative assessments** occur at or near the end of a project or program and are used to see if the unit has successfully met the unit goal(s) and objective(s).

**Direct assessments** are those that compellingly and clearly measure an outcome (e.g., an assessment measuring increased collaboration, a direct observation, etc.). **Indirect assessments** are rough estimates and proxies of goals and objectives (e.g., satisfaction survey, self-reports of changes in attitudes, etc.).

Place an F or S and an I or D in the corresponding cell. This will map out where your unit is planning to conduct formative and summative assessments using direct and/or indirect methods. Look for opportunities and gaps. *Capitalize on what people are already doing*. Below is an example of an assessment methods-by-outcomes matrix you can modify or model.

**Note**: **Each assessment method does NOT have to measure ALL goals**. All assessment methods listed in this section should also be explained in the previous *Explanation of Assessment Methods Table*.

| **Assessment Method** | **Goal** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Insert brief description of first goal/objective | 2. Insert brief description of second goal/objective | 3. Insert brief description of third goal/objective | … | … | … | Insert brief description of last goal/objective |
| Annual Assessment Update Report | S, D |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Event Participation Survey |  | F,I |  |  |  |  |  |
| Project Cost Allocation Report | S, D |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Yearly Published Articles by Staff |  |  |  |  |  | S, D | S, D |
| *Note.* F=formative assessment, S=summative assessment, D=direct assessment, and I=indirect assessment |