UTICA UNIVERSITY

GUIDE TO ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

2025- 2026

Principles of Good Assessment

Assessment processes at Utica University are guided by accreditation requirements and best practices as defined by the Association for American Colleges & Universities (AAC & U), the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE), and other agencies relevant to Utica University 's curricular and co-curricular offerings.

Consistent with the guiding principles articulated in the University 's *Guide to Institutional Effectiveness,* academic assessment is

- Governed by the faculty
- Non-punitive
- Relevant, realistic, and sustainable
- Well-planned and well-documented
- Student centered
- Used to inform improved change and to promote the program

Effective assessment processes are characterized by the following:

- They are organized around goals, not individual courses or activities.
- They use multiple methods to assess each individual goal.
- They rely primarily on direct evidence; indirect evidence is used to supplement the narrative.
- They provide specific evidence regarding areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
- They result in a compelling narrative.
- They produce results that are useful to planning and resource allocations.
- They are shared with and analyzed by all relevant stakeholders.

Assessment Processes and Expectations

Academic Departments and General Education

Annual Goal Reports

All academic departments that have certificate or degree programs and the General Education Program are expected to assess program-level student learning and operational goals on an annual basis. Plans and results should be completed and uploaded to the program's assessment portfolio in the shared Google drive by September 15. Departments are responsible for reporting assessment findings only for majors or minors in their programs.

Best practice recommends assessing each learning goal twice during a 5-year review cycle. Direct methods should be used to assess student learning. Indirect methods may be used to supplement findings. Departments are urged to use assessments that measure multiple learning goals ("work smarter, not harder") and capitalize on assessments already being done systematically, such as internship evaluations, student teaching reviews, and clinical assessments. Both qualitative and quantitative measures are appropriate for assessing student

performance.

All full-time faculty in a program are expected to participate in the department's assessment process, from administering the assessments to interpreting the results and generating an action plan. Efforts should be made to include adjunct faculty in the process as well. When warranted, results should be shared with other stakeholders, such as students or alumni.

The Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) reviews each assessment report and plans and provides feedback directly to departmental faculty. This review focuses primarily on assessment processes and their effectiveness.

Departments should submit their assessment plans for the current academic year to their respective school deans by October 15. The executive summaries from the previous cycle should likewise be submitted to the deans.

School deans may review the annual goal reports and, if warranted, provide written, formative feedback to departments. If the department's assessment findings suggest a need for additional or increased resources, the program director/chair should make an appointment to meet with the school dean to discuss the findings and the recommended action plan/resource request. When appropriate, deans will advocate for academic departments in their school.

Course Syllabi

Course-level learning goals are expected to be clearly articulated in each syllabus and congruent with program-level learning goals. Syllabi should also include information about how the learning will be assessed, when the assessments will occur, and how much each assessment is worth towards the final grade.

Faculty are required to submit copies of their course syllabi to the respective school office during the first week of classes. Syllabi are filed in the school's shared drive.

5-Year Self-Study Review

Academic programs are also required to complete a self-study every five years. Departments scheduled for 5-year self-studies should have the report completed by November 1 of the academic year when it is due. Policies, processes, and procedures related to the 5-yearself-study may be found in the *Academic Assessment Committee's Handbook* or accessed at https://www.utica.edu/academic/Assessment/new/review.cfm.

For programs that have specialized accreditors, the accreditation reports typically replace the self-study. However, the University may require the program to engage in additional analyses of data, particularly with respect to enrollment trends and economic forecasts.

Institutional Assessments of Student Learning

Utica University systematically collects information related to its effectiveness in achieving its mission, goals, and institutional priorities. Indirect assessments of student learning include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes, and Undergraduate Withdrawal surveys. These reports may be found at the following site: https://www.utica.edu/ir/studentsurveys.cfm.

To reduce the likelihood of survey fatigue, any unit that plans on administering a campus-wide survey beyond the scope of a program or department should contact the Senior Associate Provost to make sure the timing does not coincide with the administration of another survey. The University's survey schedule is posted on the following site: Institutional Surveys at Utica University | Utica University

The institutional learning goals are directly assessed in courses designated for general education. These assessments are coordinated and administered by the Office of Academic Affairs. Results are publicly shared at https://www.utica.edu/academic/Assessment/new/institutional.cfm

Sharing Assessment Results

All members of a department or program have a shared responsibility regarding assessment, both doing it and analyzing the results. Program-level assessment results should be shared with and reviewed by all departmental faculty members.

Program-level assessment results, whether related to student learning or operational effectiveness, are likewise shared with the respective school dean and the Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) as part of the annual review process. The dean uses this information to determine resource needs; AAC uses it to assess the institution's assessment processes and identify faculty development needs. The Academic Assessment Committee reports at the close of each traditional semester to the Provost and the Faculty Senate on the status of assessment at Utica University. The Senior Associate Provost is responsible for reporting significant findings and evidence of continuous improvement to the University 's leadership and the Board of Trustees.

Departments are urged to look for additional ways to share assessment findings with important stakeholders— i.e. advisory boards, alumni, prospective and current students.

With all learning assessments, assessment data remains confidential and is reported only in aggregate form at the program level. Faculty and program directors should adhere to FERPA regulations when reporting assessment results. When student artifacts are being submitted as part of the annual goal report or program review, all identifiable information should be scrubbed from the document. Likewise, if "raw" data are attached as supporting evidence for an assessment finding, all identifying information (students' names, ID numbers) should be removed.

Connecting Assessment to Planning and Budgeting

The 5-year self-study provides the opportunity for programs to identify resource needs that are supported by clear evidence in the self-study report. When departmental faculty meet with the Provost, they discuss these resource needs. The Provost, in a follow-up communication to the department, acknowledges these requests and outlines which resources the institution may be able to support. Resource requests may also be made through the University's budget process.

Assessment Resources

Assessment resources are available to faculty and staff on the "Assessment at Utica University " webpage (https://www.utica.edu/academic/Assessment/new/resources.cfm). These resources include links to professional development materials, University documents, and rubrics to assess student learning. The University also has a blog dedicated to sharing ideas about assessment and pedagogy. Blogs may be accessed at https://assessmentuc.blogspot.com/.

Members of the Academic Assessment Committee, including its chair, the Senior Associate Provost, are likewise available to support faculty and staff with their assessment processes.

Glossary of Terms Associated with Assessment

Academic Program – According to NYS Education Department, an academic program is organized around the set of educational requirements necessary to qualify for a registered degree. The curriculum or program includes general education or specialized study in depth in a particular field, or both (NYSED, 2012).

Artifacts – The work produced by students while engaged in a learning experience.

Analysis of Findings - Examination of the data gathered during the assessment cycle, including reflective consideration about what actions, if any, should be taken.

Action Plans - Actions taken to improve the program or assessment process based on the analysis of results; "Closing the loop."

Assessment – Measures the degree to which goals have been met; provides specific evidence of strengths and areas needing improvement.

Assessment Method – Indicates how an assessment was conducted. Examples include surveys, tracking, focus groups, performance evaluations, rubrics. Also referred to as **assessment measure.**

Assessment Process – The systematic collection, review, and use of information about student learning, educational programs, student support programs, and University services undertaken to improve teaching/learning and institutional effectiveness.

Assessment Plan - A document which outlines how and when selected outcomes will be assessed.

Assessment Report - An annual document based on the Assessment Plan that presents and explains assessment results and shows how assessment results are being used to improve the program.

Benchmark - A standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or assessed.

Closing the loop – The term used to signify the next step or ongoing steps in the assessment cycle. Also referred to as **action plan.**

Co-curricular Units – The areas outside the classroom where the University also achieves its educational mission.

Course-embedded Assessments – Direct methods to assess student-learning that are well integrated into and organic to the educational experience.

Course Student Learning Goals (CSLG) – the measurable learning/knowledge/skill expectations for all students completing an academic course, documented in the syllabi and program review documents. Direct measures are to be used; indirect measures/results will be used to support the direct measure findings. CSGL are identified by faculty, described in the course syllabus, and it is the faculty of each course who determine what to measure and the tool to use for this faculty-driven process.

Course Operational Goals –focus on the functioning of the course, rather than the learning achieved by the students. Examples include development of new courses, deletion of a course, edits to a course, and course mapping to program goals.

Course Syllabus – A document that lays out the expectations, including the learning goals, for a single course.

Curriculum Map – A matrix representing a program's learning goals and indicating where they are developed in a program and to what extent.

Direct Methods of Assessment – Measures used to document student performance. Examples of direct measures include rubrics for capstone projects, portfolios, papers, and performances.

5-Year Program Review – Required of academic departments, the 5-year program review is a self-study completed within a 5-year review cycle. The self-study requires departments to examine curriculum, student learning, faculty expertise, enrollment in the major(s) and minor(s), and other areas of relevance to the institution.

Findings - Results (evidence, data and/or information) gathered from assessment.

Formative Assessments – Assessments that occur throughout the learning process that aim to understand and, therefore, improve learning.

Institutional Effectiveness - Institutional effectiveness refers to how well an institution is achieving its mission and goals. An effective institution is characterized by a clearly defined mission that articulates who it serves, what it aspires to be, and what it values. Likewise, an effective institution has clear goals that are broadly communicated to its stakeholders.

Indirect Methods – Measures used to assess students' perceptions of their learning and educational experiences. Examples of indirect measures include surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Institutional Student Learning Goals – The measurable student learning goals that are realized in the complete educational experience, both curricular and co-curricular.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Measurable values that indicate the extent to which the institution is achieving its mission and goals.

Metrics - Standards of measurement used to assess efficiency, performance, progress, or quality.

Mission Statement - A concise statement outlining the purpose of a program, who it serves, and what distinguishes it.

Program Student Learning Goals (PSLG) – the measurable learning/knowledge/skill expectations for all students graduating from a particular curriculum/major or students being served by a particular unit.

Program Operational Goals – Goals set for and by a program, usually during the 5-year program review process. However operational goals may be set during a review for an external accreditor or in the interim between program reviews. Operational goals address the functioning of the program.

Program Review – Required self-study process completed by each academic program. It is usually conducted on a five-year rotation, unless external program accreditation cycles require a different review timeline.

Rubric - Specific sets of criteria that clearly define for both student and teacher what a range of acceptable and unacceptable performance looks like. Criteria define descriptors of ability at each level of performance and assign values to each level.

Strategic plan – A plan developed through a participatory process that articulates the University's mission and values and identifies long-term goals and the tactics to achieve them. A strategic plan reflects the institution's priorities and informs decisions about resources.

Target - A value that indicates whether or not a goal has been achieved.

Validity - The extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure and the extent to which inferences and actions made on the basis of test scores are appropriate and accurate.

Value added – Evidence that shows the effects educational providers have had on students during their programs of study beyond what would have occurred through natural maturation. A comparison of the knowledge and skills students bring to the educational process with the knowledge and skills they demonstrate upon completion of the educational process.