

## Historical Context (synthesized from '95, '04, '11 assessment plans)

St. Ambrose University has been involved in assessing institutional student learning outcomes for nearly 70 years. Archival data shows St. Ambrose participated in the National College Sophomore Testing Program from 1947-1954 and tested first-year students as early as 1950.

A more coordinated approach to assessment began in 1991, with the formation of a task force on mission, values, and assessment. This task force, with the Educational Policies Committee, Faculty Development Committee, General Education Task Force, and Strategic Plan Action Team, examined how best to assess students. This work led to the development of the University's first academic assessment plan, which was approved in 1995 by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

In 2002, the Educational Policies Committee approved an assessment purpose statement: "The primary purposes of assessment are to determine whether the University is meeting its goals and objectives for teaching and learning, and to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the future. At times, students will be asked to participate in the assessment process by completing specialized assessment activities. These assessment activities can be completed in a variety of settings (such as the classroom, at home, or at a testing center) as well as in a variety of ways (such as online, paper-and-pencil, in small or large groups) depending upon the activity. All students, regardless of class level or enrollment status, are asked to assist with this important process."

In 2004, in preparation for a 2007-08 HLC site visit, the Assistant VP of Academic Affairs for Assessment and the University Assessment Coordinator evaluated the University Assessment Plan in relation to guidelines provided by the HLC. As a result, the Assessment Plan was updated to include co-curricular program assessment and to map assessments to institutional outcomes. Further work in preparation for the HLC site visit included developing a common assessment vocabulary; creating a warehouse of assessment resources and programmatic assessment plans; refining the assessment requirements for academic and co-curricular program reviews; training faculty to write student learning outcomes; developing an annual assessment review process; aligning institutional assessments with institutional outcomes; developing an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment; and developing an institutional assessment website.

Also in 2004, the task force on assessment was reconstituted as an ad-hoc group to guide institutional assessment efforts. In 2008, the task force evolved into a presidentially-appointed University Assessment and Evaluation Advisory Board. This Advisory Board served as a consultative body to the University and evaluated the progress of assessment and evaluation activities at St. Ambrose.

In 2011, the plan received a major revision reflecting what was learned through cycles of implementing and evaluating institutional assessment activities. This 2011 Institutional Assessment & Evaluation Plan documented the continuing development of a culture of learning at St. Ambrose and instituted an annual assessment process for academic programs.

In 2013, the plan was revised to reflect an evolution in our assessment practices in the face of new internal and external demands. The plan, detailing a reinvigorated annual assessment process, demonstrated increased institutional expectations for assessment at the institution- and program-levels. It also introduced a new rubric-based assessment process to determine student attainment of the new General Education student learning outcomes.

The 2015 revision to the plan focused on evaluation, mirroring increased expectations for the evaluation of institutional and programmatic activities. The plan documented evaluation activities, such as the institutional prioritization process, the Delaware Study, and surveys administered by co-curricular offices. The plan also outlined how assessment and evaluation results informed planning and budgeting.

This 2017 revision adds a summary evaluation of assessment activities at St. Ambrose in comparison to a rubric of best practices.

"American education has become evaluation-conscious. Objective tests & other instruments that are not so objective have been used and misused to evaluate individuals, instructors, departments, colleges, and even the educational systems of entire states. Some of this evaluation is significant and useful. Much of it is harmless and also useless."

(1939) *Report of the 8th Annual National College Sophomore Testing Program*

"The purpose of doing assessment at St. Ambrose University is to systematically gain information regarding how well our students are learning what we intend them to learn, and to use this knowledge to improve their educational experience."

(1995) *St. Ambrose Assessment Plan*

"The mission of the ad hoc St. Ambrose University Assessment committee is to evaluate current university-wide assessment activities; prepare a systematic and institutional model for university-wide assessment; and implement a systematic university-wide assessment program."

(2004) *St. Ambrose Assessment Plan*

"We reserve the term 'assessment' for activities specifically related to student learning outcomes. The term 'evaluation' refers to all other activities for which we develop goals and objectives and measure outcomes."

(2007) *St. Ambrose Assessment Plan*

# Assessment Purpose and Values

## Purpose

The mission of St. Ambrose, focused on student development, demands that we investigate the extent to which learning occurs and the degree to which our institutional activities contribute to that learning.

The purpose of assessment at St. Ambrose is to provide useful feedback to students, faculty, and external stakeholders.

## Values

Effective assessment at St. Ambrose University...

1. Provides timely results to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness
2. Is efficient and feasible, using existing resources, data, and structures when possible
3. Meets both internal demands and external expectations
4. Synthesizes information from high-quality assessments for benchmarking
5. Is developed and sustained by faculty and staff, with support from campus leaders
6. Is continuously evaluated and improved
7. Aligns with institutional commitments to student development & integrated learning
8. Comes in many forms, but is informed by scholarship and good practice

# Guidelines on Assessment endorsed by the HLC

## 1. Set ambitious goals

- Learning outcomes clearly articulate what students should be able to do, achieve, demonstrate, or know upon the completion of each undergraduate degree.
- Outcomes reflect appropriate higher education goals and are stated in a way that allows levels of achievement to be assessed against an externally informed or benchmarked level of achievement or assessed and compared with those of similar institutions.
- Institutional practices, such as program review, are in place to ensure that curricular and co-curricular goals are aligned with intended learning outcomes.
- The institution and its major academic and co-curricular programs can identify places in the curriculum where students encounter or are expected to achieve the stated outcomes.
- Learning outcome statements are presented in prominent locations and in ways that are easily understood by interested audiences.

## 2. Gather Evidence of Student Learning

- Policies and procedures are in place that describe when, how, and how frequently learning outcomes will be assessed.
- Assessment processes are ongoing, sustainable, and integrated into the work of faculty, administrators, and staff.
- Results can be assessed against an externally informed or benchmarked level of achievement or compared to other institutions and programs.
- Evidence also includes assessments of levels of engagement in academically challenging work and active learning practices.
- Results can be used to examine differences in performance among significant subgroups of students.

## 3. Use Evidence to Improve Student Learning

- Well-articulated policies and procedures are in place for using evidence to improve student learning at appropriate levels of the institution.
- Evidence is used to make recommendations for improvement of academic and co-curricular programs.
- There is an established process for discussing and analyzing these recommendations and moving from recommendation to action. Where feasible and appropriate, key recommendations for improvement are implemented.
- The impact of evidence-based changes in programs and practices is continuously reviewed and evaluated.

## 4. Report Evidence and results

- Regular procedures are in place for sharing evidence of student learning with internal and external constituencies.
- Internal reporting includes regularly scheduled meetings, publications, and other mechanisms that are accessible to all relevant constituencies (e.g., faculty, staff, administrators, students, the governing body).
- Reporting to external constituencies via the institutional website includes evidence of learning as well as additional descriptive information and indicators of institutional performance (e.g., retention rates, time to degree).
- Reporting on student learning outcomes is both accessible to and appropriate for the relevant audience.
- The results of evidence-based changes in programs and practices are reported to appropriate internal and external constituencies.

## Institutional Mission Documents

**Mission** St. Ambrose University – independent, diocesan and Catholic – enables its students to develop intellectually, spiritually, ethically, socially, artistically and physically to enrich their own lives and the lives of others

**Vision** St. Ambrose will be recognized as a leading Midwestern university rooted in its diocesan heritage and Catholic Intellectual Tradition. Ambrosians are committed to academic excellence, the liberal arts, social justice and service

**Core Mission Values and Guiding Principles:**  
Catholicity, Integrity, The Liberal Arts, Life-long Learning, Diversity

## Previous purpose statements:

### 2004 Assessment Plan

*...to determine whether SAU is meeting its goals and objectives for teaching & learning, and to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the future.*

### 2011 Assessment Plan

*...to improve institutional effectiveness in fulfilling its mission, vision, & goals; to document the extent to which students achieve the intended learning outcomes; to determine the extent to which institutional activities contribute to student learning.*

## External Expectations

In addition to satisfying internal demands, our assessment activities must meet regional accreditation standards.

### HLC Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components (related to assessment)

#### Criterion Three. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

- 3.A.2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
- 3.C.1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
- 3.E.1. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

#### Criterion Four. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

- 4.A.1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
- 4.A.6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs.
- 4.B.1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
- 4.B.2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
- 4.B.3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
- 4.B.4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

#### Criterion Five. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

- 5.C.1. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
- 5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

### HLC Criteria for Accreditation: Guiding Values

- 1. Focus on student learning  
*A focus on student learning encompasses every aspect of students' experience at an institution... [including] the breadth, depth, currency, and relevance of the learning they are offered; their education through co-curricular offerings; the effectiveness of their programs; what happens to them after they leave the institution.*
- 4. A culture of continuous improvement  
*A process of assessment is essential to continuous improvement and therefore a commitment to assessment should be deeply embedded in an institution's activities. Assessment applies not only to student learning and educational outcomes but to an institution's approach to improvement of institutional effectiveness. For student learning, a commitment to assessment would mean assessment at the program level that proceeds from clear goals, involves faculty at all points in the process, and analyzes the assessment results; it would also mean that the institution improves its programs or ancillary services or other operations on the basis of those analyses. Institutions committed to improvement review their programs regularly and seek external judgment, advice, or benchmarks in their assessments.*
- 5. Evidence-based institutional learning and self-presentation  
*Assessment and the processes an institution learns from should be well-grounded in evidence. Statements of belief and intention have important roles in an institution's presentation of itself, but for the quality assurance function of accreditation, evidence is critical.*

### HLC Assumed Practices related to assessment

- A-6: The institution assures that all data it makes public are accurate and complete, including those reporting on student achievement of learning and student persistence, retention, and completion.
- B-2-c-4: Faculty participate substantially in analysis of data & appropriate action on assessment of student learning & program completion.
- C-6: Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate & address the full range of students who enroll.
- D-4: The institution maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information.

# Institutional General Education Outcomes

## 1. Fundamental Skills

Develop fundamental skills and knowledge necessary to flourish in a rapidly changing world

*This outcome will be addressed by students demonstrating competency in critical thinking, teamwork, globalization, and diversity, especially through such fundamental skills and knowledge as oral and written communication, research, quantitative reasoning, , health, creative expression, and second language*

## 2. Liberal Arts Perspectives

Develop competencies that produce Liberal Arts perspectives to influence culture

*This outcome will be addressed by students examining the global richness of the liberal arts, including natural sciences, arts, social sciences, and humanities*

## 3. Catholic Intellectual Tradition

Evaluate truth claims derived from Philosophy & Theology in order to scrutinize the relationship between faith and reason

*This outcome will be addressed by students reflecting on the core truth claims and spiritual and ethical values derived from philosophy & theology especially in the Catholic intellectual tradition, including diversity, justice, peace, & service*

## 4. Integrative Learning

Critically explore complex issues using knowledge and skills from the liberal arts and catholic intellectual tradition

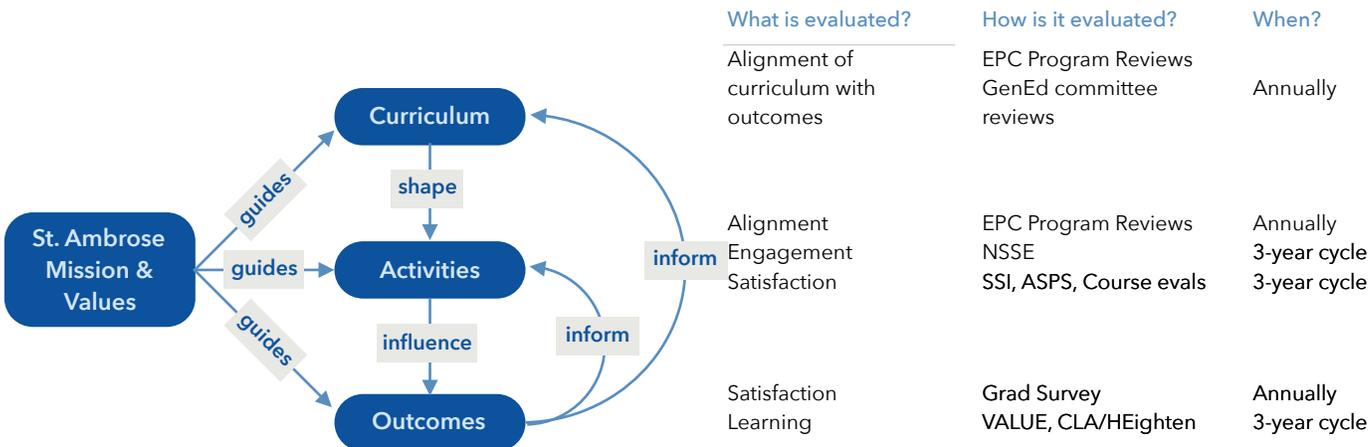
*This outcome will be addressed by students integrating these various dimensions of a signature Ambrose education.*

# General Education Assessment Plan

## Model

The 2011 Assessment Plan established the simplified model of student learning and assessment displayed below:

- University mission and values guide curriculum development, educational activities, and student learning outcomes.
- The General Education curriculum shapes academic and co-curricular activities offered to students.
- Participation in these activities influences student learning, as evidenced by student learning outcomes
- Evidence regarding student learning outcomes informs improvements to the curriculum and activities.



## Institutional Support for Assessment

- Assessment & Evaluation Committee  
Purpose: To promote a culture of student learning by:
  - serving as a consultative body to the University and its curricular and co-curricular units.
  - sharing assessment and evaluation resources and results with the university community
  - evaluating the progress of university-wide assessment and evaluation activities.

The following members were appointed for 2017-18 by the President in consultation with the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs:

- Brad Thiessen, University Assessment Coordinator (Chair)
- Tracy Schuster-Matlock, Dean for Academic Programs
- Jie Peng (COB)
- Sandra Lund (CHHS)
- Ann Preston (A&S)

- Office of Institutional Research & Assessment  
Kreiter Hall – 563-333-6160 – staff:
  - Jerry Fowler, Data Analyst
  - Lori Maher, Administrative Assistant
  - Sara Pearson, Research Analyst
  - Tracy Schuster-Matlock, Dean of University Academic Programs
  - Brad Thiessen, Assessment Coordinator

- Website: [sau.edu/Assessment.html](http://sau.edu/Assessment.html)  
Annual Assessment Process  
Assessment Plans; Resources; Reports  
Common Data Sets  
Data Request Form  
Online annual assessment forms  
Training workshop materials
- General Education website and outcomes

## General Education (GenEd) Assessment Plan (continued)

### Evaluating the Alignment of Curriculum Activities, and Outcomes

To guide educational activities, the GenEd curriculum must align with the intended GenEd student learning outcomes. This alignment is primarily evaluated through the EPC (Educational Policy Committee) academic program review process. As part of this process, academic programs must identify how GenEd course-level outcomes align with institutional GenEd student learning outcomes. For a program review to be approved by EPC, programs must obtain a letter of support from the Director of General Education.

From 2014-17, the following information was collected for all *new* GenEd courses in *Course Summary Sheets* (Appendix A):

1. course-level outcome(s) that align with the GenEd focus on critical thinking
2. which GenEd outcome (fundamental skills, liberal arts perspectives, or CIT) the course is designed to address
3. an area of focus (i.e., discipline or skill) within the GenEd outcome the course is designed to address
4. course-level outcomes aligning with the area of focus and at least one fundamental skill

Beginning in 2017, the course summary sheet was modified to streamline GenEd information. Appendix A shows this new sheet.

The University Assessment Coordinator will synthesize five years of these course summary sheets in 2019 to summarize the degree to which the GenEd curriculum aligns with the GenEd outcomes.

The alignment of *existing* courses with the GenEd outcomes will be evaluated primarily through the use of VALUE rubrics embedded within GenEd courses. As part of this process, faculty teaching GenEd courses identify the extent to which their course content and activities align with VALUE rubric components that have been identified as assessing our GenEd outcomes.

### Evaluating Student Engagement with Academic and Co-curricular Activities

*... the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development.... Those institutions that more fully engage their students in the variety of activities that contribute to valued outcomes of college can claim to be of higher quality in comparison with similar types of colleges and universities. Kuh, G. (2003)*

Recognizing this link between student engagement and learning, St. Ambrose evaluates student engagement with academic and co-curricular activities. Increasing student engagement in these activities will improve student attainment of GenEd outcomes.

The [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) evaluates the degree to which students are engaged at St. Ambrose. This nationally-normed survey defines student engagement in terms of two features:

1. the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities
2. how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that decades of research studies show are linked to student learning

Student responses to NSSE items are combined to form 10 [engagement indicators](#) within 4 engagement themes (academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, and campus environment). The NSSE also evaluates student participation in 6 [high-impact practices](#): learning communities, service learning, undergraduate research, study abroad, culminating senior experiences, and internships/field experiences/clinical placements. Engagement indicator scores and participation in high-impact practices are tracked over time and compared to external benchmarks.

At St. Ambrose, the NSSE has been administered on a 3-year rotation to freshmen and seniors since 2005-06. This 3-year rotation allows for status comparisons (comparisons to national norms for a single year), cross-sectional comparisons (seniors compared to freshmen in a single year), and longitudinal comparisons (seniors compared to scores from the year they were freshmen). Results from recent NSSE administrations appear on the [St. Ambrose Assessment website](#).

The NSSE is funded from the university assessment budget and administered by the test publisher in coordination with the University Assessment Coordinator. The summer following administration, the University Assessment Coordinator analyzes NSSE results in comparison to national norms, local peer institutions, and an aspirational peer group. Results are summarized and disseminated to university constituents via email and faculty assembly presentation the following Fall.

During the Spring of 2014, the Assessment Coordinator met with the University Life Committee to develop the following NSSE goals:

- Improve response rates to 40% overall and no less than 20% among any major subgroup of students
- Improve average scores on NSSE engagement themes to meet or exceed those of the top 50% of institutions
- Improve scores on five diversity-related NSSE items to meet or exceed the top 50% of institutions

## General Education (GenEd) Assessment Plan (continued)

### Evaluating Student Satisfaction with Academic and Co-curricular Activities

Student satisfaction with educational activities, and other aspects of St. Ambrose, is evaluated with data from the [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#) (SSI) published by Noel-Levitz. The 98 items on the SSI provide information about 12 scales listed to the right.

Responses to the Instructional Effectiveness items (listed to the right) provide evidence of student satisfaction with General Education activities:

As with the NSSE, the SSI has been administered to freshmen and seniors on a 3-year rotation since 2000.

In 2007 and 2012, the [Adult Student Priorities Survey](#) (ASPS) was also administered to assess the satisfaction of adult learners.

Results for the SSI and ASPS are summarized by the Assessment Research Analyst, published on the [assessment website](#), and disseminated to the campus community.

### Evaluating Student Satisfaction with Learning

A graduating senior survey was administered from 2003-2014 to evaluate the level of satisfaction St. Ambrose students have with their learning. The survey, developed and administered by the Career Center, asked students about their employment status and professional development, along with:

- Perceived importance of each General Education student learning outcome
- Level of satisfaction with the preparation they received in each GenEd outcome
- Satisfaction with 15 aspects of their academic department and major
- Overall level of satisfaction with St. Ambrose University

The Assessment Research Analyst analyzed and disseminated results from this survey. Results are available on the [assessment website](#).

### Course Evaluations

The course evaluations completed by students at the end of each semester also provide evidence of student satisfaction with General Education activities. St. Ambrose administers the [SIR II](#) (Student Instructional Report) course evaluation survey published by ETS. The SIR II provides an externally benchmarked measure of 8 dimensions of instruction listed to the right.

The Dean of University Academic Programs maintains SIR II results and disseminates them to faculty and College Deans. SIR II summary reports appear on the [assessment website](#).

### Evaluating Student Learning

To assess the degree to which students attain General Education outcomes, St. Ambrose employs two methods:

1. The administration of **externally-benchmarked, standardized assessments**
2. The use of **externally-developed rubrics** to rate student performance on key assignments in General Education courses

### Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)

- 12 scales
  1. Academic Advising
  2. Campus Climate
  3. Campus Support Services
  4. Instructional Effectiveness
  5. Concern for the individual
  6. Registration Effectiveness
  7. Responsiveness to Diverse Populations
  8. Safety and Security
  9. Service Excellence
  10. Student Centeredness
  11. Campus Life
  12. Recruitment and Financial Aid
- SSI instructional effectiveness items:
  3. Faculty care about me as an individual
  8. The content of the courses within my major is valuable
  16. The instruction in my major field is excellent
  25. Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students
  39. I am able to experience intellectual growth here
  41. There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus
  47. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course
  53. Faculty take into consideration student differences as they teach a course
  58. The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent
  61. Adjunct faculty are competent as classroom instructors
  65. Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours
  68. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field
  69. There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus
  70. Graduate teaching assistants are competent as classroom instructors

### Student Instructional Report (SIR II) dimensions of instruction:

1. Course organization and planning
2. Faculty communication
3. Faculty / student interaction
4. Assignments, exams, and grading
5. Instructional methods and materials
6. Course outcomes
7. Student effort and involvement
8. Course difficulty, workload, and pace

## General Education (GenEd) Assessment Plan (continued)

### Externally-benchmarked, Standardized Assessments

To allow for comparisons with external benchmarks and peer institutions, St. Ambrose administers externally-normed, standardized assessments of student achievement. In 1996, the Academic Profile (published by ETS) was administered to students as part of an overall assessment of the General Education program. In 2002, the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP, published by ACT) was administered to assess institutional critical thinking outcomes.

The 2004 revision to the University Assessment Plan set a 3-year rotation for administering standardized measures to assess institutional student learning outcomes. This led to the administration of the Academic Profile (a.k.a. Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress; a.k.a. the [ETS Proficiency Profile](#)) in 2004 and 2007 to approximately 200 freshmen in New Student Seminar classes and to 30-60 senior volunteers. Results are available on the [assessment website](#).

In 2010, the University Assessment Coordinator evaluated the alignment of the AP/MAPP exam with St. Ambrose General Education outcomes, the participation rates we were able to obtain, and the usefulness of the results. Based on this analysis, and a comparison to other available standardized assessments, the recommendation was made to replace the multiple-choice AP/MAPP exams with the constructed-response [Collegiate Learning Assessment](#) (CLA).

The CLA (updated to the CLA+) combines constructed- and selected-response items in an attempt to measure the following skills:

- |                               |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Critical Thinking          | 4. Writing effectiveness                         | 7. Scientific and quantitative reasoning |
| 2. Writing                    | 5. Writing mechanics                             | 8. Critical reading and evaluation       |
| 3. Analysis & problem solving | 6. Recognition of logical fallacies in arguments |  |

The CLA was piloted to a sample of freshmen and 100 seniors in 2011-12. Based on results from this pilot, the CLA+ was administered again in 2013-14 to 137 students. Results are available on the [assessment website](#).

While the CLA+ measures important skills (and its digital badges may motivate students to take the test), it is resource-intensive. The test takes 90-minutes to complete, costs \$35 per student (as of 2015), and requires computer lab space. Because of this, and because of the limited usefulness of the scores generated by the CLA+, other standardized measures are currently being evaluated, including:

- [CAAP](#) (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) from ACT, Inc.
- [CAT](#) (Critical Thinking Assessment Test) from Tennessee Tech University
- [Global Competence Aptitude Assessment](#) (GCAA) from Global Leadership Excellence, LLC
- [HEIghten™ Outcomes Assessment Suite](#) and [iSkills](#) from ETS
- [Madison Assessments](#) in info literacy, quantitative & scientific reasoning, US Society/Politics, Natural World, and oral comm.
- [PIAAC](#) (Survey of Adult Skills) developed by the OECD and the European Union
- [Quant Q: Measure Quantitative Reasoning](#) from Insight Assessment
- [UniLOA](#) (University Learning Outcomes Assessment) developed by faculty at Indiana State University
- [Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal](#) (WGCTA) from PsychCorp
- [WORKING](#) (Assessing Skills Habits and Style) from H&H Publishing

In Spring of 2016, the HEIghten assessment suite (published by ETS) was piloted. 100 students were administered a test of written communication. This pilot will be followed-up by pilots of critical thinking, civic competency & engagement, and intercultural competency & diversity assessments in 2016-17. Results from these pilots will be available by November of 2017.

## General Education (GenEd) Assessment Plan (continued)

### Externally-developed Rubrics Embedded Within General Education Courses

While externally-developed assessments provide valuable data for benchmarking, these standardized measures do not assess all St. Ambrose General Education student learning outcomes. Because of this, an embedded assessment system was piloted in 2006.

The embedded assessment system capitalizes on faculty expertise to synthesize data from assignments, assessments, and instructor observations of student performance in General Education courses. In the pilot at the end of the Fall 2006 semester, faculty teaching General Education courses in the Humanities were asked to record the number of students who demonstrated each of four levels of achievement of General Education student learning outcomes:

**Below expectations:** Student performance is regularly below expectations for students at this level. Substantial improvement is needed.

**Approaching:** Student performance does not meet expectations consistently; student performance is approaching expectations.

**Meeting:** Student performance consistently meets expectations for students at this level in this student learning outcome.

**Exceeding expectations:** Evidence suggests student performance in this outcome regularly exceeds expectations for students at this level.

Faculty also identified the artifacts they used to assess each student's level of attainment of the GenEd outcomes.

Following the Fall 2006 pilot, the Embedded Assessment System was implemented in Spring 2007 for outcomes related to the Social Sciences and in Spring 2008 for outcomes related to the Natural Sciences. Data were collected by the Associate Vice President for Assessment and Institutional Research.

The Embedded Assessment System was suspended from 2009-2012, as the General Education Committee worked to develop a new program with new student learning outcomes. During this time, the embedded assessment process was evaluated and modified. A new, refined embedded assessment system was reinstated during the 2013-14 academic year.

This new embedded assessment system, like the previous system, still takes advantage of key assignments, assessments, and faculty expertise embedded within General Education courses. Instead of using a vague common institutional rubric, however, the new system uses the **VALUE rubrics** (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) published by AAC&U in 2010.

The VALUE rubrics provide a standardized set of definitions, criteria, and characteristics that can be used to evaluate the quality of student work in the following areas:

- Civic Engagement
- Ethical Reasoning
- Integrative Learning
- Oral Communication
- Reading
- Global Learning
- Creative Thinking
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence
- Problem Solving
- Teamwork
- Critical Thinking
- Inquiry and Analysis
- Foundations for Lifelong Learning
- Quantitative Literacy
- Written Communication

In this embedded assessment system, faculty teaching General Education courses are asked, at the end of the semester, to rate their students' performance using the VALUE rubric they believe is most appropriate for their course. For example, instructors in a General Education communication class would most likely choose to assess their students using the oral communication rubric. The alignment of the VALUE rubrics with our General Education outcomes is displayed on page 12.

These faculty are then asked to submit the number of students in their course falling within each category of the rubric (e.g., 3 students scored a 2 on organization, 12 students scored a 3, etc.). As we further develop this assessment system, we hope to record this information at the student-level (e.g., Student A scored a 3 in organization, a 4 in delivery, etc.).

Additionally, faculty submitting VALUE rubric results are asked to identify the sources of evidence they used to rate student performance. To evaluate the usefulness of the rubric and the alignment of the course with our General Education outcomes, faculty are also asked to evaluate the extent to which their course content and activities address the criteria and characteristics as defined in the rubric. Faculty are also asked to provide feedback on how the rubric can be adapted to better align with our General Education outcomes and institutional culture.

Data from this Embedded Assessment System will be collected and synthesized by the University Assessment Coordinator each summer and disseminated to the Director of General Education. Results are available on the [assessment website](#).

## General Education (GenEd) Assessment Plan (continued)

### Alignment of Assessments with General Education Outcomes

To summarize the approaches used to assess General Education student learning outcomes, the following table displays the alignment between outcomes and the various assessment methods. The table, maintained by the University Assessment Coordinator, shows the assessment items and/or score scales that can be used to assess each General Education outcome.

GenEd Outcome	Program Review	NSSE Indicators/items	CLA+	Other External	VALUE Rubric	Other measures
<b>Fundamental Skills</b>						
Critical thinking	All programs	higher-order learning, 17c	Critical Thinking Logical Fallacies	CAAP, CCTST-N, CAT, ETS-PP, HEIghten, PIAAC, QUANT-Q, UniLOA, WGCTA	Critical Thinking	HEIghten
Teamwork	(various programs)	collaborative learning, 17f		WORKING	Teamwork	
Globalization	2017: International Studies	11d, 17j		GCAA	Global Learning	Global Perspectives Inventory
Diversity	(various programs)	discussions with diverse others		UniLOA	Intercultural Competence	
Oral communication	2019: Communications	1i, 17b		Madison, UniLOA	Oral Comm.	
Written comm.	2019: English	1b, 7abc, 17a	Mechanics, Effectiveness	CAAP, ETS-PP, HEIghten	Written Comm.	WAC, Placement essay, HEIghten
Research	2015: Information Literacy	3b, 11e	Critical Eval.	iSkills, Madison	Info Literacy	Info Lit Exam
Quantitative reason.	2017: Mathematics & Stats 2018: FEDS 2020: Comp/Info Sci, Psych	quantitative reasoning, 17d	Quant Reason.	CAAP, CCTST-N, ETS-PP, QUANT-Q, HEIghten, Madison, PIAAC	Quant. Lit.	HEIghten
Health	2016: Kinesiology	14f				ACHA-NCHA II
Creative expression	2016: Music, Theatre, Art	1d			Creative Think	
Second language	2016: Modern Languages					STAMP4S
<b>LibArts Perspectives</b>						
Natural Sciences	2016: Engineering/Physics 2017: Chemistry 2019: Biology		Scientific reasoning	CAAP, Madison	Inquiry/Analysis	Bio/Chem Placement Test
Arts	2016: Music, Theatre, Art				Creative Think	
Social Sciences	2018: Political Science 2019: Women/Gender Std. 2020: Psych, Sociology		Analysis Prob. Solving	Madison	Inquiry/Analysis	
Humanities	2016: Art History, History 2019: English				Reading	
<b>Catholic Intellect. Trad.</b>						
Justice	2019: Theology 2020: Philosophy				Ethical Reason.	
Peace	2019: Theology 2020: Philosophy					
Service	2019: Theology 2020: Philosophy	12, 15a			Civic Engagemnt	Outcomes Survey
<b>Integrative Learning</b>	<b>201x</b> General Education Program Review	reflective & integrative learning, 11f			Integrative Learn., Problem Solving, Lifelong Learning	Capstone rubric

Notes: NSSE indicators and items do not include optional modules. Other external measures are not currently administered at St. Ambrose.

## General Education (GenEd) Assessment Plan (continued)

### Scheduled Rotation of General Education Assessment Activities

During the 2018-19 academic year, the University Assessment Coordinator is scheduled to review the Measuring Quality Inventory and update the scheduled rotation of assessments. It's anticipated that some assessments, such as the NSSE, will remain on a 3-year rotation, while other instruments may move to a longer (perhaps 6-year) rotation.

For now, the following table displays the scheduled rotation of General Education assessment activities:

Instrument	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
VALUE rubric	Fund. Skills	Liberal Arts	CIT	Fund. Skills	Liberal Arts	CIT
NSSE	Spring 2015	Spring 2016		Spring 2018		
SSI		Spring 2016			Spring 2019	
External Measure		HEighten	HEighten			CLA+ or other
Program Reviews	continuous	continuous	continuous	continuous	continuous	continuous
Other		Update plan	Evaluate measures	HLC Site Visit		
Workshops	3 workshops	on demand	3 workshops	on demand		

### Logistics of Administering, Analyzing, Reporting Results from General Education Assessments

Activity	Administered...			Analyzed...		Disseminated...	
	when	by	to	by	when	how	by
VALUE rubric	Each semester	Univ. Assessment Coordinator	faculty teaching GenEd courses	Univ. Assessment Coordinator	Following summer	Presentation, Blackboard	Univ. Assessment Coordinator
NSSE	Spring semester	Univ. Assessment Coordinator	Freshmen & Seniors	Univ. Assessment Coordinator	Following summer	Presentation, Website	Univ. Assessment Coordinator
SSI	Spring semesters	Assessment Research Analyst	Freshmen, Seniors, Adult Students	Assessment Research Analyst	Following summer	Presentation, Website	Assessment Research Analyst
Program Reviews	Throughout the year	EPC	Programs with GenEd courses	Assessment Coordinator & Director of GenEd review GenEd assessment		EPC Minutes	Chair of EPC
Workshops	As needed	Univ. Assessment Coordinator	Faculty who need or request help				

### Use of General Education Assessment Results

To encourage the use of assessment data in guiding strategic planning, summaries of all assessment and evaluation results will be shared with the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. The results will also be shared with University stakeholders by posting summaries online and/or hosting presentations.

The Dean of University Academic Programs and University Assessment Coordinator will work to develop an annual report summarizing results from assessment and evaluation activities.

## General Education (GenEd) Assessment Plan (continued)

### Analysis Methods

Beginning with the 2004-05 administration of the Academic Profile, most standardized assessments have been administered to freshmen and seniors on a 3-year rotation. The diagram to the right demonstrates this 3-year rotation

As the diagram shows, this 3-year rotation allows for 4 different analyses:

#### (1) Current Status

Results can be used to determine the current status of first-year students (or seniors) in any given year. From this, areas of relative strength and weakness can be identified by comparing results with external benchmarks, when available.

#### (2) Cross-sectional

Results can be compared between first-year students and seniors within a single year. This would provide weak evidence of institutional effectiveness. A value-added analysis would strengthen this evidence.

#### (3) Longitudinal

Results from first-year students (or seniors) in one year can be compared to results from first-year students (or seniors) in a later year. This could provide evidence for the effectiveness of any changes to the first-year curriculum/experience

#### (4) Cohort

Results from seniors can be compared to the same cohort of students when they were first-year students (3 years prior). This provides the most compelling evidence of institutional effectiveness.

Value-added analyses attempt to estimate the contribution of SAU to student learning outcomes, controlling for other factors such as incoming student ability. While the use of value-added scores to evaluate individual instructors has been controversial, value-added modeling will be carefully used to estimate overall institutional effectiveness whenever possible.

### Analysis of Embedded VALUE Rubrics

As described earlier, General Education course instructors rate student performance using VALUE rubrics. Because each instructor has their own level of expectations for students at the end of the course, it is difficult to track results from this System over time. Appendix C in the 2011 Assessment Plan provides a statistical approach (nonparametric effect sizes) to synthesize and analyze results longitudinally. Workshops will also be provided for faculty in order to estimate and improve rater consistency.

### Establishing Criteria

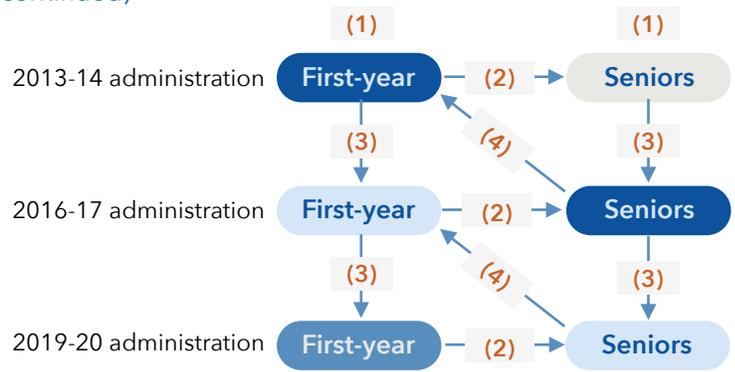
To maximize the usefulness of results from institutional assessment and evaluation methods, the Assessment & Evaluation Committee will strive to set criteria (a priori) for determining if the institution is meeting its goals for each assessment. These criteria will be derived from previous results, as well as through discussions with faculty, staff, and campus leadership

### Ongoing Evaluation of General Education Assessment

The Assessment & Evaluation Committee will conduct an ongoing evaluation of the usefulness, appropriateness, cost-effectiveness, meaningfulness, and overall quality of institutional assessment methods. This evaluation will be guided by resources from the Higher Learning Commission, such as the Assessment Culture Matrix and the Statement on the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement, as well as resources from other experts and professional organizations.

This evaluation will include a look at the quality and alignment of student learning outcomes, assessment measures, and assessment methods. It will also include evaluations of methods used to administer, analyze, and disseminate results from assessment measures to the campus community. The evaluation will also ensure assessment methods are meeting accreditation requirements.

The University Assessment Coordinator will work to document the quality of all measures used for institutional assessment and the validity of inferences made from assessment results. See the academic program review section of this plan for more information about evaluating the quality of assessment instruments.



## Other Institutional Evaluation Instruments

In addition to the instruments used to assess General Education outcomes and evaluate satisfaction and engagement, St. Ambrose administers other institutional-level assessments, including:

### **AlcoholEdu®**

This survey was first administered pre-test/post-test to 333 students in 2011-12 as part of an online alcohol prevention program.

### **Global Perspectives Inventory**

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the St. Ambrose Center for International Education administered the GPI at the beginning and end of the semester to 155 residential students and 46 students who studied abroad. Results, available in previous assessment plans, provided evidence of the impact of study abroad on the global perspectives of our students.

### **LIPSS**

During the 2012-13 academic year, St. Ambrose participated in the [Linking Institutional Policies to Student Success \(LIPSS\)](#) project hosted by Florida State University. LIPSS attempted to identify specific institution-wide policies that might be leveraged to increase college student engagement. Results are available on the [assessment website](#).

### **MAP-Works®**

[MAP-Works®](#), [Making Achievement Possible](#), a series of four online surveys, has been administered since 2011 to students at 4 key points in their first year at St. Ambrose. The results are used to monitor and improve student retention and success.

The MAP-Works surveys are coordinated by the [Office of First Year Experience](#). Results from each MAP-Works administration (including a predicted retention rate for the first-year class) are summarized by the University Assessment Coordinator and shared with the Director of First Year Experience and the Dean of University Academic Programs.

Students also see their survey results and are provided with helpful tools for navigating their transition to college. MAP-Works® identifies students early in the term allowing for immediate support and intervention.

As part of our institutional Quality Initiative Proposal, we began administering MAP-Works® surveys to sophomores in 2014.

A sample of MAP-Works® results appears on the [assessment website](#)

### **National College Health Assessment**

The [American College Health Association's NCHA](#) was first administered to 308 students in 2011 to assess health habits, behaviors, and perceptions. Results from the 2014, 2015, and 2016 administrations appear on the [assessment website](#)

### **Measuring Information Services Outcomes (MISO)**

The [MISO](#) was first administered to students, faculty, and staff in 2014 to measure their view of library and computing services. Results from the 2014 administration appear on the [assessment website](#)

### **Student Affairs Years in Review**

Beginning in 2010, the division of Student Affairs has published an annual Year in Review documenting highlights, outcomes, and strategic priorities for Campus Recreation, the Career Center, Counseling, Health Services, Residence Life, Security, and Student Activities. These documents, which include evaluations of each office, are available on the [assessment website](#).

### **Student Retention, Graduation, and Gainful Employment**

As a general measure of institutional effectiveness, St. Ambrose tracks retention rates, 6-year graduation rates, and [gainful employment](#) of its students. [This data](#) is published online.

### **The Outcomes Survey**

Beginning in 2014-15, the Career Center will administer [The Outcomes Survey](#) in an effort to gather data related to post-graduation success. The survey – published by [CSO Research, Inc](#) – is designed to collect employment and graduate school admissions data from recent college graduates. Results are available on the [assessment website](#)

# Academic Program Assessment

## Overview

In addition to institutional-level assessment, St. Ambrose requires all academic major and degree programs to participate in ongoing assessment of student learning. This assessment is implemented and evaluated through EPC program reviews and the annual assessment process.

## History of Academic Program Assessment at St. Ambrose

While EPC program reviews have long required academic departments to submit assessment-related information, it wasn't until 2006 that St. Ambrose began developing a more systematic, ongoing process of documenting the assessment of its academic programs. In the summer of that year, academic programs were encouraged to submit a simple form documenting their assessment activities for the year. The form asked department chairs to document:

1. Assessment/Evaluation Activities Engaged in During the Academic Year
2. Changes Made During the Academic Year as a Result of Assessment/Evaluation Activities
3. Changes Anticipated During the Next Academic Year as a Result of Assessment/Evaluation Activities
4. Evidence of improvements from changes made as a Result of Assessment/Evaluation Activities
5. What resources are needed, based on assessment or evaluation evidence, for improvement?

This process was intended to fulfill three purposes:

1. To encourage faculty to recognize that assessment is an ongoing process
2. To allow the institution to track assessment activities and evaluate academic program assessment
3. To encourage the use of assessment results for planning

This annual assessment process was suspended after the 2007-08 academic year due to low response rates (only 9 academic departments completed the form that year).

In an effort to meet increasing internal and external expectations for assessment, a new annual assessment process was proposed in 2011. To encourage participation, faculty were informed that participating in the annual assessment process would ensure their programs met minimum institutional assessment standards. EPC also agreed that programs could substitute the annual assessment process for the more onerous assessment section of their five-year program review. This new annual assessment process received a statement of support from the Educational Policies Committee in Spring 2011.

By the end of the 2011-12 academic year, 36 (86%) of the 42 academic departments at St. Ambrose participated in the annual assessment process, with 32 (76%) departments meeting at least some of our expectations for assessment. The University Assessment Coordinator shared the results of this annual assessment process with the Assessment & Evaluation Committee, the Academic Deans, and faculty within each College.

In discussing the annual assessment results with the campus community, the annual assessment process was once again updated during the 2012-13 academic year to reflect best practices in assessment. This 2013 update to the annual assessment process reflects increasing institutional expectations for assessment. The most significant change is that instead of requiring academic departments to submit annual assessment information, the process requires all major and degree programs to participate. The new process also expects academic programs to seek out external benchmarks, to develop curriculum maps aligning outcomes with curricular requirements, and to condense their schedule of assessments so that all program student learning outcomes are assessed at least twice every five years.

The following four pages describe this annual assessment process.

## Academic Program Assessment (continued)

### Annual Assessment Process

In August of each academic year, the University Assessment Coordinator sends department chairs a link to the [online annual assessment form](#) along with a list of major and degree programs that will participate in the annual assessment process. As the [sample template](#) shows, the annual assessment form allows programs to document:

1. Basic program information
  - a. Name of the department where the program is housed
  - b. Name of the major or degree program
  - c. Name of the Chair of the Department or Program Director
  - d. Name of an individual within the program who is willing to serve as the assessment contact
  - e. Date of the program's next EPC program review
  - f. Name of the program's external accrediting body, if applicable
2. Program assessment plan
  - a. Student learning outcomes
  - b. Assessment tools and methods used to assess each outcome
  - c. Methods used to ensure the quality of assessment tools and methods used
  - d. Identification of who will be assessed using each tool or method
  - e. Logistics
  - f. A schedule of when each assessment tool will be administered next
  - g. (optional) Criteria for determining if assessment results met faculty expectations
3. Program curriculum map (visualizing how curricular requirements align with student learning outcomes)
4. Results from program assessment activities

The form also contains a rubric displaying institutional expectations for assessment along with space for the Assessment & Evaluation Committee to provide feedback to faculty.

Department chairs are able to update or modify information on the assessment form at any time. Likewise, members of the Assessment & Evaluation Committee are able to add comments and provide feedback on any program's annual assessment form at any time.

Then, by July 1st each year, department chairs are asked to submit results from that year's assessment activities, along with any comments they have about the feedback they received from the Assessment & Evaluation Committee.

### Annual Assessment Process

The University Assessment Coordinator reviews annual assessment forms throughout the summer and provides feedback to faculty. To assist in this process, a rubric was developed to document our institutional expectations for assessment in the following areas:

1. The assessment model
2. Student learning outcomes
3. Number and type of assessment tools or methods used
4. Quality of assessment tools and measures used
5. The schedule of assessment
6. Documented results of assessment activities

By the end of the academic year, the Assessment & Evaluation Committee summarizes their evaluations of the annual assessment forms and provides a "state of assessment report" to the Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs. A sample of this report can be found in Appendix B.

The sections that follow explain our institutional expectations for assessment in greater detail.

## Academic Program Assessment (continued)

### Expectations for the Annual Assessment Process

Every degree or major program at St. Ambrose is expected to participate fully in the annual assessment process. This expectation is supported and enforced by the Educational Policies Committee during each program's annual review process.

While each academic program is free to choose the most appropriate, useful, and effective methods for assessing their student learning outcomes, the following expectations for assessment allow for an evaluation of our assessment activities.

### Expectations for Assessment Models

All academic programs are expected to document assessment models that are logical, feasible, and will yield useful information. Assessment models should assess not only the level of mastery attained by students nearing the end of the program, but the growth in student performance throughout the program.

Assessment models should also assess the degree to which program activities (courses, faculty, student opportunities) contribute to student learning. One way of documenting this contribution is through the creation of a curriculum map. The minimum expectation is that programs display how each course in the program contributes to each student learning outcome in the program. Some programs develop more detailed curriculum maps that also show how courses contribute to the progression of student performance in each outcome. The [online annual assessment form](#) displays a template programs may use in developing their curriculum maps.

Assessment models are also expected to demonstrate how all faculty contribute to the assessment process.

### Expectations for Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Beginning in 1995, all academic departments at St. Ambrose have been expected to explicitly state student learning outcomes. Departments were supported in meeting this expectation through assistance from the University Assessment Coordinator (in consultation or through workshops such as the 2006 and 2013 workshops on developing high-quality outcomes).

In reviewing these outcomes, it became apparent that while departments had outcomes, not all academic programs had documented SLOs. Many departments documented a single set of outcomes even though the department may have housed multiple major or degree programs.

Beginning in 2013-14, the annual assessment process was updated to require high-quality SLOs for all major and degree programs. Student learning outcomes are high quality if they are:

1. Clearly stated (not only understood by experts in the discipline)
2. Student-focused (not stated in terms of what the course instructor attempts to do)
3. Specific (not vague)
4. Statements of knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes expected for students (not statements about processes)
5. Appropriate for the level of the program (not too simple or complex for the undergraduate or graduate program)

Programs are encouraged to review SLOs developed by professional organizations or similar programs at other universities. To assist in determining if outcomes are appropriate for the level of the program, faculty have been encouraged to consult the [Degree Qualifications Profile](#) developed by the Lumina Foundation.

### Expectations for the Quantity, Quality, Type, and Frequency of Assessment

Because assessment instruments differ in quality and scope, a strict number of instruments needed to adequately assess program SLOs cannot be mandated across all academic programs. Programs are encouraged to assess each SLO using as many instruments as they need to confidently (reliably) make inferences about student achievement. At a minimum, programs are expected to assess each outcome using results from at least two instruments.

To ensure inferences made from assessment data are valid, programs are expected to work to document and evaluate the quality of the instruments they use to assess each SLO. This evaluation of instrument quality requires a great deal of time and resources. Therefore, whenever possible, information from test developers or external researchers would be sourced as evidence of assessment quality. When this information is not available (for internally developed assessments), programs should work to develop plans to collect evidence of the quality of their chosen assessment instruments.

## Academic Program Assessment (continued)

When using internally-developed measures, programs are expected to take some basic steps to ensure inferences made from these assessments are valid:

1. Consult with other faculty within the program to ensure instruments align with the intended outcomes (each measure actually assesses something relevant to the outcome).
2. When student performance is evaluated across different courses or instructors, faculty should work to locate or develop a common rubric to ensure consistency in ratings.
3. When feasible, programs should use multiple faculty to evaluate (a sample of) student work
4. When possible, programs should use an externally-benchmarked instrument

Direct Measures are analyses of actual student behaviors or products. Examples: analyses of written tests, essays, portfolios, presentations, performances, and simulations

Indirect Measures are analyses of perceptions about student performance. Indirect measures indicate rather than provide evidence of student achievement. Examples: surveys, interviews, focus groups

Assessments are often dichotomized in many ways (direct/indirect; formative/summative; objective/subjective; criterion-/norm-referenced; formal/informal; performance/written; standardized/classroom; selected-/constructed-response; internal/external), with claims made that certain types of assessment are inherently superior to other types. Programs are encouraged to remain flexible in choosing assessment procedures/instruments.

The following guidelines are intended to assist programs in choosing assessments that best measure student performance:

1. Assessment instruments with documented evidence of quality are preferred to those with little/no available evidence of quality.
2. Externally-benchmarked assessments (such as the [ETS Major Field Tests](#)) should be used when possible to allow comparisons of student performance to external norms or criteria.
3. Programs are expected to assess each SLO using information from at least one direct measure of student performance. This information may be supplemented by indirect measures.

While indirect measures do not provide valid evidence that SLOs have been achieved, they do provide useful information regarding student perceptions, satisfaction, and engagement. This information is important to collect, analyze, and use, especially in regards to institutional student engagement goals.

Course grades typically represent many factors outside any one particular SLO. Because of this, course grades and student GPAs are not recommended as measures of student performance on programmatic SLOs. Programs may use course grades if they can document evidence that course grades do represent student performance on any particular SLO (and do not include many other irrelevant factors). This could be the case if a course uses standards-based assessment and grading.

Most program-level SLOs are statements of expectations for students who complete the program. Therefore, assessing student learning outcomes once – near the end of the program – could determine the level at which students attained each outcome.

Even though students may not be able to meet intended outcomes until graduation, it is important to continually monitor student progress. Therefore, programs are encouraged to assess student learning outcomes multiple times throughout a student's career. Programs could assess students at a baseline level (close to the start of the program), developmental level (at a midpoint of the program), and mastery level (close to program completion) to help gauge program effectiveness. Additionally, programs should strive to assess the satisfaction, performance, and status of their alumni.

### Expectations for Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Programs are encouraged to document and report assessment results in a format that best serves the needs of the program. At a minimum, programs are expected to report participation rates alongside the results. Programs should also provide a brief explanation of how assessment results compare to expectations of faculty in the program.

Programs are expected to report results from the assessment of at least one SLO every year. Over the course of five years, programs are expected to report results from the assessment of all their SLOs.

Throughout the academic year, the University Assessment Coordinator hosts workshops to train faculty in the assessment process:

Materials from the: [2005 SLO workshop](#)      [2008 evaluating assessment workshop](#)      [2013 SLO workshop](#)  
[2013 plan workshop](#)      [2014 curriculum map workshop](#)      [2014 results workshop](#)  
[2015 EPC retreat](#)      [2015 EPC training](#)

## Academic Program Assessment (continued)

### Programs Participating in the Annual Assessment Process and Meeting Expectations

The following table displays the number of programs (out of 69 total\*) meeting our rigorous expectations for the annual assessment process. The goal is to reach 100% of programs meeting expectations by 2018.

Expectations	2011-12**	2012-13***	2013-14****	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17*
<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>						
Published online	40 (56%)	30 (42%)	62 (87%)	66 (97%)	67 (96%)	68 (100%)
Meet all expectations (student-focused, clear, measurable, appropriate)			46 (65%)	52 (76%)	48 (69%)	52 (76%)
<b>Assessment Plans</b>						
Published online	40 (56%)	30 (42%)	51 (72%)	60 (88%)	60 (86%)	68 (100%)
Meet all expectations (multiple measures, direct measures, quality evidence, schedule)			32 (45%)	35 (51%)	19 (27%)	24 (35%)
<b>Curriculum Maps</b>						
Published online	Not required	Not required	44 (62%)	46 (68%)	51 (73%)	55 (81%)
<b>Assessment Results</b>						
Published online*****	40 (56%)	30 (42%)	38 (54%)	49 (72%)	55 (86%)	55 (83%)
Meet all expectations (aligned with SLOs, aligned with plan, includes interpretation/use)			32 (45%)	40 (59%)	14 (21%)	27 (40%)
<b>Full participation</b>			34 (48%)	40 (59%)	51 (73%)	55 (83%)
<b>Meets all expectations</b>			19 (28%)	19 (28%)	21 (32%)	24 (35%)
Programs with no assessment documentation	31 (44%)	41 (58%)	BAIS, BSS	BAIS, BSS	(none)	(none)

\* 68 programs as of July 1, 2017. The number of programs changes each year as programs are added, closed, or merged.

\*\* Assessment requirements were at the departmental-level; not the program-level. These participation numbers are estimates

\*\*\* First year all programs were expected to complete assessment forms. Expectations increased.

\*\*\*\* First year all programs were expected to complete online assessment forms with curriculum maps. Expectations increased

\*\*\*\*\* Percentages based on number of programs with current enrollment

## EPC Program Review Expectations

### Assessment Expectations for Program Reviews

In addition to the annual assessment process, academic program assessment activities are evaluated during the formal program review process conducted by the Educational Policies Committee. Each summer, EPC members retreat to review and modify program review standards. For the 2013-14 academic year, EPC required the following assessment-related information:

For each academic department:

1. A statement of support from the Assessment & Evaluation Committee:
  - a. Is the academic program performing appropriate assessment?
  - b. Does the program appear to be meeting student learning outcomes?
  - c. Identification of areas the program should work towards strengthening prior to the next review
  - d. Identification of areas of strength
  
2. An evaluation of resources, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats based on trends in enrollment and productivity

For each academic program within the department:

1. Program evaluation results from surveys (students, graduates, employers, stakeholders), course evaluations, departmental achievements/awards, focus groups, advisory boards, etc
2. A collection of annual assessment forms submitted since the last program review
3. An explanation of how SLOs are appropriate to the program's mission and students
4. Documentation of how the program analyzes and uses evidence of student learning
5. A description of how faculty within the program share responsibility for student learning and its assessment
6. A reflection on assessment results and a description of findings
7. Proposals to improve SLOs or curricular requirements
8. A description of how the program evaluates and improves its assessment efforts
9. A description of how the program informs stakeholders of what and how well students are learning

During the 2015-16 academic year, EPC worked to evaluate and improve the program review process in comparison to best practices and HLC standards. This led to the development of a new program review template to be piloted in Spring 2017.

### Academic Program Evaluation

In addition to the annual assessment process, academic program assessment activities are evaluated during the formal program review process conducted by the Educational Policies Committee. Each summer, EPC members retreat to review and modify program review standards. For the 2013-14 academic year, EPC required the following assessment-related information:

## Academic Program Evaluation

### Evaluation Activities

In addition to assessing student learning, academic programs have evaluated their effectiveness using a variety of measures, including:

1. **The Delaware Study**, which measures instructional costs and productivity. This data was collected and disseminated by the Office of Assessment from 2010-14. Because the Delaware Study didn't provide enough actionable data, St. Ambrose switched to a Revenue and Expense Allocation report method of evaluating program productivity.
  
2. Student/alumni/employer surveys and focus groups, which measure satisfaction and perceived gains as a result of completing a program. Individual programs coordinate these surveys.

During the 2012-13 academic year, each academic program completed a prioritization self-study using a modified version of the **Dickeson Model**. These self-study reports included evaluations of internal and external demand for each program; inventories of program inputs, processes, and outcomes; and analyses of program revenues and expenses.

## Summary of Academic Program Evaluation System

### Evaluation Activities

With the annual assessment and program review processes, St. Ambrose has built an assessment system similar to the [NILOA Transparency Framework](#).

- Programs publish student learning outcomes, assessment plans, and curriculum maps online.
- By July 1st each year, programs publish assessment results for the year
- The Assessment Committee evaluates assessment plans and provides feedback.
- The evaluation of the assessment plan, along with the annual assessment form and results, are embedded in the program review process. Programs supplement this information with a reflection on their assessment activities since the previous program review and a list of proposed improvements to the program.
- The Educational Policies Committee (EPC) considers this assessment evidence, along with other evaluative measures (enrollment, financial data) in completing the program review and submitting a response form to the program and Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs.

We still need to work to:

- more clearly link assessment results to budgeting and planning, perhaps through a memorandum of understanding
- increase transparency of assessment by publishing outcomes, plans, and assessment results publicly.

## Co-Curricular Unit Evaluation

### Expectations for Co-Curricular Unit Evaluation

Beginning in Fall 2005, all co-curricular and administrative offices or departments that consult with the Academic Support Committee (ASC) were required to submit an evaluation plan to the ASC containing:

- A mission statement, goals, and objectives
- Specific plans (with implementation timelines) for evaluating the objectives
- A timeline for implementation
- A letter from the supervising Vice President of record indicating that he or she has reviewed and supports the plan

The Academic Support Committee reviews and evaluates annual reports of these offices and meets with directors of these offices on a regular basis, at least once every five years. ASC addresses concerns about the policies and procedures of the above offices raised by members of the campus community. ASC makes policy recommendations to the appropriate officers and directors and to the Faculty Assembly. The Committee submits regular reports to the University official responsible for assessment as part of the University's on-going assessment of academic support services to help ensure organizational excellence and accountability to the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association and other external agencies. Procedures for submitting reports to be considered by the Committee can be found on the ASC pages of the Chief Academic Officer webpage.

Campus ministry, campus recreation, counseling services, health services, international student services, residence life, security, and student activities are evaluated by the University Life Committee. These evaluations focus on the quality of services provided and involve a review of annual student services reports and data from surveys and focus groups.

Within the Division of Student Affairs, co-curricular programs frame their student learning outcomes and program evaluations by standards from the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). These standards and outcomes drive assessment and evaluation efforts, which culminate in annual Student Affairs Year in Review reports. The University Life Committee reviews these annual reports.

### Placement Testing

Placement tests are administered by the [Placement Office](#) within the Student Success Center. Faculty establish standards for placement tests to ensure proper course placement for students in the following disciplines:

Chemistry: Students who intend to major in Biology, Chemistry, Exercise Science, Pre-Medicine or Physical Therapy are required to take the 45-minute, multiple choice Chemistry Placement Test. Test scores determine student readiness for required Chemistry and Biology courses

Second Language: The 30-minute online Second Language Placement Test is intended for students who have not successfully completed at least 3 years of the same language in high school

Writing: 500-word placement essays written by incoming first-year students are read and scored by a panel of St. Ambrose readers. These scores are used to place students in either ENGL 100 or ENGL 101. Students with ACT English scores above 23 and high school GPAs greater than 2.5 are not required to write the placement essay

Math: Based on in-depth analyses of student success and previous placement test trials (using ACT scores, placement tests, and online developmental programs), placement testing for mathematics was ended beginning with the Fall 2015 incoming class. Students with ACT Math scores of 28 or higher have fulfilled General Education quantitative reasoning requirements.

### Credit by Exam

Students can earn up to 60 credit hours through examination. The [Records & Registration](#) website displays a list of credit by exam equivalency

# Appendix A: General Education Sections of Course Summary Sheets

General Education Outcomes

- All General Education courses are expected to address critical thinking.
  - Critical Thinking  
Course outcomes that align with critical thinking are outcomes #: (identify outcomes by # from previous page)
- Identify the General Education outcome and area of focus most aligned with this course. Check one box:
  - Develop fundamental skills and knowledge necessary to flourish in a rapidly changing world  
Area of focus: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with area of focus: outcome(s) #
  - Develop competencies that produce Liberal Arts perspectives in order to influence culture  
Area of focus: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with area of focus: outcome(s) #  
Fundamental Skill/Knowledge: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with fundamental skill/knowledge: outcome(s) #
  - Evaluate truth claims derived from Philosophy & Theology in order to scrutinize the relationship between faith & reason  
Area of focus: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with area of focus: outcome(s) #  
Fundamental Skill/Knowledge: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with fundamental skill/knowledge: outcome(s) #

<- 2014-17 version

2017 pilot version ->

Revised 4/25/17

**IF** this course is offered as **General Education**, please complete the section below concerning gen ed outcomes.

- All General Education courses are expected to address critical thinking.  
Identify the student learning outcomes (by # from above) that align(s) with critical thinking.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- All General Education courses are also expected to meet one of the three General Education Outcomes.  
Identify the General Education outcome and area of focus (see gen [ed wkst](#) for explanation) most aligned with this course. (check one):
  1. \_\_\_\_\_ Develop fundamental skills and knowledge necessary to flourish in a rapidly changing world  
Area of focus: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with area of focus: outcome(s) #
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ Develop competencies that produce Liberal Arts perspectives in order to influence culture  
Area of focus: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with area of focus: outcome(s) #  
Fundamental Skill/Knowledge reinforced: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with fundamental skill/knowledge: outcome(s) #
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluate truth claims derived from Philosophy & Theology in order to scrutinize the relationship between faith & reason  
Area of focus: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with area of focus: outcome(s) #  
Fundamental Skill/Knowledge reinforced: (Choose one...)  
Course outcome(s) aligned with fundamental skill/knowledge: outcome(s) #

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To be completed by Program Chair/Director prior to submission

Program chair/director confirms (please initial):  
\_\_\_\_ Syllabi for this course meets institutional requirements (see EPC syllabus requirements)  
\_\_\_\_ Information contained in syllabi for this course align with information in this summary  
\_\_\_\_ Program currently has adequate resources to staff and offer this course

# Appendix B: 2017 State of Assessment Report

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Missed self-imposed deadline extensions</b>						
Master of Business Administration						
Psychology - BA						
Psychology - Behavioral Neuroscience						
Psychology - BS						
Psychology - Forensic Psychology						
<b>No students enrolled in courses contributing to assessment</b>						
French					no students	no students
Spanish Education						no students
<b>Submitted Results</b>						
Accounting						
Art History						
Art: Graphic Design						
Art: Painting						
BAMS						
Biology						
Book arts						
Business - Economics						
Business - Finance						
Business - International						
Business - Management						
Business Administration - ACCEL (BBA)						
Business Core						
Chemistry - BA						
Chemistry - BS						
Communication - Multimedia Journalism						
Communication - PR & Strategic Comm						
Communication - Radio/TV						
Computer and Network Investigations						
Computer Network Administration						
Computer Science						
Criminal Justice						
Doctor of Business Administration						
Doctor of Occupational Therapy (+MOT)						
Doctor of Physical Therapy						
Engineering - Industrial						
Engineering - Mechanical						
English						
English - Writing						
Health Sales						
History						
Integrated Studies (BAIS)				no students	no students	
International Studies						
KIN - Exercise Science						
KIN - Human Performance and Fitness						
KIN - Sport Management						
Marketing						
Master of Accounting						
Master of Criminal Justice						
Master of Education in Ed Administration						
Master of Organizational Leadership						
Master of Pastoral Theology						
Master of Physician Assistant						
Master of Social Work						
Master of Speech-Language Pathology						
Mathematics						
MS - Info Tech Management						
Music						
Music - Teaching						
Nursing - BSN						
Orthopaedic Residency Certificate						
Philosophy						
Political Science						
Sales						
Sociology						
Spanish						
Special Studies - ACCEL (BSS)						
Teacher Education						
Theatre					updated plan	
Theology						
Women & Gender Studies						
<b>Programs submitting results:</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Total programs with students:</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>% submitting results:</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>92%</b>

The table to the left displays participation in the annual assessment process from 2012-2017.

Programs actively participating in the process (by submitting assessment results prior to the July 1st deadline) are identified with green boxes.

Grey boxes identify programs that did not submit results.

## Appendix B: 2017 State of Assessment Report (continued)

In 2015, the University Assessment Coordinator began recording scores to evaluate academic program assessment activities each year. Scores are updated as programs modify their assessment plans (typically as part of the program review process) and submit results (annually).

Numbers in the following tables represent the proportion of academic programs scoring 0, 1, 2, or 3 in each assessment component.

Scores of 2 or 3 represent programs fully meeting institutional expectations.

### Student Learning Outcomes

Effective student learning outcomes are student-focused, clear, measurable, and appropriate.

Student-Focused Outcomes	Percent of Programs			
	2015	2016	2017	
3 All SLOs are student-centered and describe which students should be assessed.	79	80	82	94% meet expectations
2 All SLOs are stated in terms of what students should demonstrate upon completion of the program (or throughout the program).	11	9	12	
1 Most SLOs are stated in student-centered terms. Some describe learning processes instead of outcomes.	8	8	6	
0 No SLOs are stated in student-centered terms. Outcomes actually describe learning processes or what the instructor will do.	3	3	0	

Clear, Measurable Outcomes	Percent of Programs			
	2015	2016	2017	
3 All SLOs are student-centered and describe which students should be assessed.	18	20	19	74% meet expectations
2 All SLOs are stated in terms of what students should demonstrate upon completion of the program (or throughout the program).	52	50	55	
1 Most SLOs are stated in student-centered terms. Some describe learning processes instead of outcomes.	23	23	19	
0 No SLOs are stated in student-centered terms. Outcomes actually describe learning processes or what the instructor will do.	8	8	6	

Appropriate Outcomes	Percent of Programs			
	2015	2016	2017	
3 All SLOs are student-centered and describe which students should be assessed.	32	32	31	95% meet expectations
2 All SLOs are stated in terms of what students should demonstrate upon completion of the program (or throughout the program).	62	62	64	
1 Most SLOs are stated in student-centered terms. Some describe learning processes instead of outcomes.	2	2	1	
0 No SLOs are stated in student-centered terms. Outcomes actually describe learning processes or what the instructor will do.	5	5	3	

## Appendix B: 2017 State of Assessment Report (continued)

### Curriculum Maps

Curricular requirements must align with program-level outcomes.

Curriculum Map	Percent of Programs			
	2015	2016	2017	
3 The map displays alignment of SLOs & experiences, with multiple experiences aligned with each SLO. The map shows sequential progression throughout the curriculum. Pedagogy and student support services are intentionally aligned with each outcome.	36	36	36	81% meet expectations
2 The map displays how each outcome is mapped to at least one experience (course or activity). Each course is also linked to at least one SLO.	36	39	45	
1 Activities or experiences (courses) are listed, but they are not linked.	8	8	9	
0 Curriculum map has not been completed. There is no clear relationship between outcomes and the curriculum a student experiences.	20	17	10	

### Assessment Plans

Multiple high-quality measures should be administered regularly and efficiently.

Number and types of instruments	Percent of Programs			
	2015	2016	2017	
3 All SLOs are assessed with multiple measures, including at least one direct measure per SLO. At least one externally-benchmarked exam is employed.	18	18	18	54% meet expectations
2 The assessment plan identifies at least two instruments or methods to assess each SLO. Each SLO is assessed by at least one direct measure.	26	32	36	
1 The assessment plan identifies at least one instrument or method to assess each SLO. Some outcomes are not assessed directly. All measures are described beyond general terms (e.g., exam, paper, presentation)	24	24	27	
0 The assessment plan does not list instruments or methods to assess all SLOs. If instruments are listed, they are too vague (e.g., exam, paper, presentation)	32	26	19	

Quality of Measures	Percent of Programs			
	2015	2016	2017	
3 The program has documented evidence of the quality of their chosen assessment instruments or methods. Supporting materials (rubrics, assignments) are included.	3	8	7	43% meet expectations
2 The program is working to gather evidence regarding the quality of the assessment methods or instruments. Methods to ensure consistency (rubrics, multiple raters, external benchmarks) are being employed when appropriate.	39	35	36	
1 The program identifies methods to ensure consistency (rubrics, multiple raters, external benchmarks), but the methods are not explained in any detail.	38	41	48	
0 The program has no evidence regarding the quality of their chosen assessment instruments or methods. Assessments may not provide useful information. Course grades are employed as measures (without clearly indicating how grades provide pure measures of performance on the intended outcome)	20	17	9	

Logistics	Percent of Programs			
	2015	2016	2017	
3 The plan describes who is responsible for administering which assessments at what points in time to which students. The plan also describes how results will be collected and analyzed. The instruments, methods, and analyses are described in enough detail to be meaningfully and consistently applied	8	8	7	49% meet expectations
2 The plan describes who is responsible for administering which assessments to which students at what points in time. The instruments and methods are described in enough detail to be meaningfully and consistently applied.	35	39	42	
1 The plan identifies which assessments will be administered when (or in which courses)	39	38	42	
0 The plan does not specify the intended audiences, times, or locations.	18	15	9	

## Appendix B: 2017 State of Assessment Report (continued)

Schedule of Assessments		Percent of Programs			
		2015	2016	2017	
3	Every SLO will be assessed multiple times within a standard program review cycle. The program provides evidence that the schedule is sustainable.	45	50	49	74% meet expectations
2	Every SLO will be assessed multiple times within a standard program review cycle. The schedule is sustainable.	26	21	25	
1	Every SLO will be assessed within a standard program review cycle, but not all SLOs will be assessed multiple times.	6	8	9	
0	Not every SLO will be assessed within a standard program review cycle.	23	21	16	

Assessment Model		Percent of Programs			
		2015	2016	2017	
3	Multiple assessments of each outcome occur at multiple points throughout the program (and at multiple levels). This ensures students are provided opportunities to develop increasing sophistication as they progress through the program.	29	29	28	68% meet expectations
2	SLOs are assessed within individual courses, but no overall sequence of assessment is in place that evaluates mastery at multiple levels.	36	38	40	
1	SLOs are assessed only near the end of the program (typically in capstone experiences), but no overall sequence of assessment is in place that evaluates mastery at multiple levels. Students are not given feedback about performance on the program-level SLOs until they have nearly finished the program.	12	14	16	
0	The assessment model will not provide useful information to evaluate student learning and the contribution each learning experience makes towards student achievement.	23	20	15	

### Use and Reporting of Assessment Results

If it's not useful; it's not assessment.

Specification of Desired Results		Percent of Programs			
		2015	2016	2017	
3	Desired results are specified and justified (e.g., Last year, the typical student scored 20 points on this measure. With curricular and pedagogical improvements, we hope the average score will increase to 23). External benchmarks are used, when appropriate.	8	9	13	55% meet expectations
2	Desired results are specified for each SLO (e.g., our students will score above a specific faculty-determined standard) and at least some results can be compared with external benchmarks.	17	21	42	
1	Desired results are stated with no specificity (e.g., student growth, comparison to previous year's results, comparison to faculty standards). Results cannot be benchmarked to external standards.	35	39	27	
0	No criteria for determining mastery have been identified.	40	30	18	

Reporting Results		Percent of Programs			
		2015	2016	2017	
3	Report provides a comprehensive analysis of assessment data presented in summary formats. The data collection process is clearly explained and is appropriate to the specification of desired results (e.g., representative sampling, adequate motivation, pre-post designs, instrument quality). Results from previous years are included for comparison.	5	5	9	57% meet expectations
2	Report provides analysis of assessment data presented in summary formats. Enough information is provided to understand the data collection process, such as descriptions of who was assessed, testing protocols, testing conditions, and student motivation.	34	35	48	
1	Report includes qualitative or quantitative analysis of data, but the analysis is vague or questionably related to the results. Limited info is provided about data collection, such as how and how many took the assessment, but not enough to judge the veracity of the process (e.g., 35 seniors tested). Only current year results are provided.	22	29	27	
0	Report does not analyze or summarize data. Raw data is reported.	40	32	18	

## Appendix B: 2017 State of Assessment Report (continued)

Interpretation of Results		Percent of Programs			
		2015	2016	2017	
3	Interpretation of results seems to be reasonable given the outcome, desired results, and methodology. Multiple faculty interpreted results (not just one person).	6	6	16	50% meet expectations
2	Interpretations of results seem reasonable, given the outcome, desired results, and methodology.	32	39	34	
1	Interpretation attempted, but the interpretation does not refer back to the outcome or desired results. The interpretations are not clearly supported by the methodology or results.	11	12	19	
0	No interpretation is attempted.	51	42	30	

Planned Use of Assessment		Percent of Programs			
		2015	2016	2017	
3	The program provides a coherent and viable plan to improve student learning by redesigning curriculum, pedagogy, or student support services. The plan includes a rationale for how these modifications should improve student learning.	6	8	7	44% meet expectations
2	Ideas for improving student learning are provided, but the plan is lacking in coherence or viability. Rationale for connecting recommendations to student learning are weak or missing.	25	29	37	
1	Ideas for improvement are provided, but no plan is presented. Lacks rationale for connecting recommendations to student learning. Recommendations deal with improving assessment rather than improving student learning.	12	14	16	
0	Recommendations are missing or not based on assessment results.	57	50	39	

### Other Evaluation of Assessment Activities

Programs going through the program review process receive an additional two sets of scores:

- (1) Program Review Evidence, consisting of:
  - a) Coverage (how well did the program fulfill its assessment plan since the previous program review?)
  - b) Communication (did the program provide evidence that results are shared with faculty and other stakeholders?)
  - c) Learning improvements (did assessment lead to improvements in student learning?)
  - d) Assessment improvements (did the program improve its assessment process?)
- (2) A self-evaluation completed by the program director or department chair, consisting of:
  - a) Faculty attitudes towards assessment
  - b) Faculty awareness of program assessment activities and outcomes
  - c) Faculty collaboration on assessment
  - d) Priority of assessment within the program
  - e) Usefulness of assessment process for program improvements

### Overall Ratings of Academic Assessment

The following plot displays the total assessment score (Ignoring program review and self-evaluation scores) for each academic program as of July 20, 2017. Scores can range from 0-39 (with scores of 26+ typically representing programs meeting all expectations):

