



New Paltz  
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# Assessment Expectations, Practices, & Processes at New Paltz

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## Introduction

### Purpose of Presentation

Participants will:

1. Review New Paltz's Mission Statement
2. Examine New Paltz's organizational structure for assessment and institutional effectiveness
3. Discuss the rationale for student learning outcomes & program assessment
4. Identify strategies to foster assessment planning
5. Review uses of assessment information for improving teaching and learning

## What is New Paltz's Assessment Mission Statement?

Our assessment mission is to develop and practice an organized process for achieving desired performance levels in student learning outcomes, departmental, unit, and institutional operation.

This continual process consists of the following steps:

1. Defining (or re-defining) desired performance levels
2. Collecting meaningful data to assess the actual performance levels
3. Taking corrective actions based on the assessed data
4. Verifying that these corrective actions close the gap between desired and actual performance levels



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What is New Paltz's Organizational Structure for Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness?



## Why assess?

- To find out what students know and are able to do when they complete our courses of study
- To help make programmatic decisions about student learning, curricula, policies, resources, & pedagogy
- To improve student learning
  - It's the action taken that improves student learning, not the assessment per se
  - A child's growth comes from feeding her, not from weighing her.
- The bottom line: We assess to take action

## How Can We Gather & Use Assessment Information?

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Every course must have SLOs
- Tailor class assignments, activities, presentations, projects, and examinations to SLOs
- Not all SLOs need to be assessed every year
- Assess students' achievement of highly important SLOs using multiple measures (will discuss more later)



2. Curriculum Mapping is useful to identify where in the curriculum the SLOs are addressed
3. How well are students achieving the SLOs & what factors are influencing student learning?
4. Action-How are you using the information to improve student learning?





- Apply assessment to the learning the department, program, or college most values

Association of American College's & University  
LEAP's Essential Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of  
Human  
Cultures &  
the Physical  
& Natural  
World

Intellectual &  
Practical  
Skills

Personal &  
Social  
Responsibility

Integrative &  
Applied  
Learning



## What does program assessment involve?

- ❑ Examining SLOs within undergraduate & graduate programs, minors, or certificates
- ❑ Collecting direct & indirect measures of how well students are achieving the SLOs

### ➤ Direct Methods

- Certification or licensure examinations
- Assignments, research projects, capstone research projects, papers
- Portfolios
- Field experience evaluations
- Sample of GE courses (GE norming sessions is a good model of the kind of conversation that needs to occur)
  - ✓ Faculty analyze students' work to identify their strengths & weaknesses



- Indirect Methods (focus on students' perception of learning & engagement)
  - Surveys and/or focus groups of students (e.g., NSSE & SOS) and/or alums

Can ask 3-5 questions

1. How well did you achieve the following departmental learning outcomes?
2. What three things did the department do to help you with your learning & why were they helpful?
3. What might have the department done differently to help you with your learning?



Other Performance Indicators to document the health, effectiveness, & efficiency of our programs

- Document reviews
  - \* Meeting minutes, transcript analyses, emails, online discussions
- Student retention, graduation, & placement rates
- Racial/ethnic enrollment breakdowns
- Dollar value of sponsored research grants
- Faculty workload
  - \* Student/faculty ratio
  - \* Average credit enrollment per FTE faculty



- Grades YES. Grades.....
- Grades are one form of assessment
- Grades by themselves have limited use for program assessment
- Grades could signal that you need to get detailed information

Example: High proportion of Ds and Fs in an introductory General Chemistry course

Expand understanding by:

- Analyzing student performance on common Chemistry exam & students' math Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
- Conducting interviews & focus groups with students
- Examining research literature on how students most effectively learn in science



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Remember: Our assessment strategies must align with SLOs & departmental goals to be useful.



- ❑ Discuss assessment data and identify actions to improve student learning
  1. Annually review data about student learning, decide on 1-2 actions to improve student learning, & assign responsibility for follow-up
  2. Can focus on 1 – 2 degree program annually
  3. Keep minutes of the meetings
  4. Write a summary report:
    - List program, SLOs/the goals, & document progress toward accomplishing SLOs/the goals



5. Explain the changes & improvements that are being made based on the assessment results
6. Focus on the “big” news
  - Identify meaningful versus insignificant differences
  - Use faculty who are skillful in finding the stories in the reams of data
7. Include/Append samples of students’ work (e.g., exemplary, adequate, inadequate; exceeds, meets, approaches, does not meet)



## Keep assessment summaries short and simple.

- Fast and easy to read and understand
  - Use short, simple charts, graphs, and lists
  - First aggregate data, then drill down into details as needed
  - Round results
  - Sort results from highest to lowest
  - Avoid complex statistics
  - As you collect results over time, show trends





## Assessment Pitfalls

Common pitfalls of assessment include:

- Gathering data no one will use
- Making the process too complicated
- Mere compliance with external demands



## Why assess?

- For students and yourselves, not just for compliance with accreditors & with SUNY mandates
- To use information gathered to make decisions:
  - Change curriculum, program requirements, or programmatic structure
  - Create policies
  - Develop plans that support learning
- To determine achievement of goals



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Middle States progress report – April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 due date

Most Recent Commission Action: June 23, 2011

To reaffirm accreditation and to commend the institution for the quality of its self-study process.

To request a progress report documenting (1) further implementation of a comprehensive, organized and sustained process for the assessment of student learning outcomes, including evidence that all course syllabi include identified student learning outcomes, that assessment has been implemented in all academic units, and that assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning (Standards 11 and 14)