

Student Learning Assessment at WCU

Glossary of Terms

*Indicates TracDat terminology

Action Plan*: An agreed-upon strategy among faculty to address the results of an assessment. The plan could include changes to pedagogical approach, increasing learning opportunities in the curriculum or courses. This could also be a plan to continue with the current strategy to follow a pattern or trend. Also see Analyzing Results. The field in TracDat called “Action” should include information on what action was decided relative to a result of an assessment.

Action Status*: This field in TracDat notates the status of an action plan relative to the result of an assessment. The status “action complete” indicates that the action noted in the Action field is complete. “Action in progress” indicates that an action step has been decided upon and is in progress. “Action pending” indicates that an action has yet to be determined, in which case the Action field may be blank. “No action required” indicates that based on the result, the faculty decided that no action is needed.

Analyzing Results: A discussion among faculty to understand the significance of assessment results, the possible reasons for those results, and possible actions to address or improve the results. Also see Action Plan.

Assessment: A general term that describes the process of using evidence to learn if we are achieving our goals for learning, institutional effectiveness, etc. See Student Learning Assessment.

Assessment Coordinators: Departmental representatives who coordinate the assessment planning and implementation for all non-accredited programs in the department. Program assessment duties may also, in some instances, be shared with the graduate coordinator and the BSED coordinator.

Assessment Instrument*: The device, tool, or medium used to collect information in the assessment. This can be an embedded course assessment such as an assignment, exam, or term paper. It can also be a portfolio, capstone project, survey, internship, or other research method. Many instruments test a range of skills. In such instruments, specific outcomes are typically measured by indicators or specific subsets of questions or items. Also see Indicators.

Assessment Method*: The process which directs how assessment will be conducted. Field in TracDat that describes how the assessment instrument is administered, to what subset of students it will be given, in what course, etc. The whole process can be viewed in TracDat in a four-column report that shows outcomes, measures, results, and actions plans. Run the “Unit Assessment Report-Four Column” in TracDat’s Reports tab.

Assessment Plan*: A plan that lays out the entire assessment process. In TracDat, this report includes department mission and goals, program outcomes, assessment methods, results, action plans. This pre-set report is available in TracDat’s Reports tab, called “Assessment Plan.”

Assessment Liaisons: Assessment consultants appointed by each college/unit in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to the University Assessment Advisory Committee. Also a resource person for the associate dean and assessment coordinators in each college/unit.

Closing the Loop: The whole assessment cycle, which includes developing an assessment method, administering the assessment, collecting and reporting the data, analyzing the results, and developing an action plan. Once the loop is completed, it is repeated to assess the impact of the action plan.

Collecting and Reporting Results of Assessment: Using the standard to evaluate the assessment, aggregate data, and present the findings or results in a succinct narrative. Use the Results field in TracDat to input this information.

Course Outcome: Knowledge or skill we want our students to demonstrate upon finishing a specific course. Course-level skills should relate to broader program outcomes.

Criteria*: Part of an assessment method. The targeted results of an assessment. For example: 75% of the students taking the assessment will meet or exceed the standard. This field in TracDat should be explicit about both the criterion and the standard of performance: 75% of students will score 80% or higher on the assessment.

Direct Measure: Provides direct evidence of learning and includes items such as completed tests, assignments, projects, portfolios, capstone projects, field

experience evaluations, and performance on licensure examinations.

Indirect measures: Such measures do not assess learning, per se, but provide related evidence such as retention, graduation, and placement rates, and surveys of student and alumni perceptions, satisfaction, etc. Indirect evidence is insufficient alone to assess student learning and must be accompanied by direct evidence.

Indicators: The specific thing you would have to observe (or read or hear) that would indicate a specific skill, attitude, or knowledge. For example, if the outcome is “effective written communication,” your measure of this outcome might be a particular assignment or assessment instrument. But what specific things about the writing on this assignment will indicate its effectiveness? The indicators are the specific characteristics of the writing we look for.

Measures*: A general term to describe how we know if students have learned what we wanted them to learn or have achieved the skills we wanted them to achieve. Field in TracDat that identifies the assessment instrument and explains the assessment method.

Program Outcome: Broad, comprehensive knowledge or skill we want all our students to demonstrate upon finishing a program.

Result Type*: This field in TracDat delineates levels of student performance with reference to established criteria as they are revealed in the result (e.g., meets criteria, does not meet criteria, inconclusive).

Schedule*: Part of the assessment method. Field in TracDat that describes the schedule of an assessment method: how and where it will take place, and when it will happen.

Standard: The level of student performance that we accept as evidence of course or program success. A specific description of how a student will demonstrate that learning has occurred.

Student Learning Assessment: Analysis and use of evidence by faculty to make judgments about collective student performance. The purpose is to assess the progress of students at course, program, and/or institution levels in relation to stated student learning outcomes.

Student Learning Outcome: Knowledge or skill we want our students to demonstrate.

TracDat: A web-based reporting and data management system purchased by PASSHE for managing, tracking, and reporting on student learning outcomes assessment.

University Assessment Advisory Committee: University-wide committee, comprised of college and other unit assessment liaisons, that supports student learning assessment across campus.

Adapted from "Terminology and Definitions." Student Learning Outcomes Guide for Faculty. Pima Community College. www.pima.edu/acad_services/slo. Accessed 13 July 2010.