

University Plan for Assessment of Student Learning and Continuous Improvement

Introduction

Assessment is the data-informed decision-making process that involves collecting, analyzing, and acting on information and evidence with the goal of improving students' learning and experiences. It is foundational to our work in higher education and is a core component of both institutional accreditation and individual program accreditation. The university engages in ongoing assessment of student learning and development across several levels: from individual program, department, and college assessment to broader general education, cocurricular, and institutional assessment.

University Strategic Plan

Assessment of student learning is a foundational component of the University of North Dakota (UND), as captured in the new Strategic Plan, [UND LEADS](#), adopted in 2023. The first core value of UND LEADS is [Learning](#), which seeks to “*Encourage a lifelong sense of wonder by providing educational experiences essential for living intellectually curious, personally fulfilling, and socially responsible lives.*” UND is committed to providing curricular, cocurricular, and experiential learning opportunities where students can practice and refine essential skills needed for successful careers and engaged lives as global citizens. The variety of learning opportunities at UND fulfills the mission and vision of the University, as described below.

University Mission

To provide exceptional educational experiences that enrich the lives of North Dakotans and the global community through excellence in teaching, innovative research, and meaningful engagement.

University Vision

To inspire a sense of wonder, a love of discovery, and a commitment to serve.

Institutional Accreditation

UND is required to maintain accreditation by an institutional accrediting organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation ([ND SBHE Policy 420](#)). UND has maintained accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) since 1913. Systematic assessment is a requirement for [institutional accreditation](#) by the HLC.

Assessment of student learning is specifically addressed in the following criteria and assumed practices.

Higher Learning Commission Criteria for Accreditation

Criterion 3. Teaching and Learning for Student Success

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

3.A. Educational Programs

The institution maintains learning goals and outcomes that reflect a level of rigor commensurate with college-level work, including by program level and the content of each of its educational programs.

3.E. Assessment of Student Learning

The institution improves the quality of educational programs based on its assessment of student learning.

3.F. Program Review

The institution improves its curriculum based on periodic program review.

Assumed Practices

B. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

1. Programs, Courses, and Credits

- h. If the institution makes any claims for student learning related to its cocurricular programs, it assesses such student learning and makes improvements.

2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications

b. Faculty participate substantially in:

- iv. Analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion.

C. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

- 5. Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.

Assessment of Student Learning

Divisional Goals or Departmental Outcomes

All academic departments are required to create and measure learning outcomes. These outcomes are unique to each discipline area, and specific to the knowledge and skills students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of their degree program.

Any student learning related entities such as divisions or individual support offices should develop and use broad learning goals or outcomes and shall be considered part of the cocurricular domain of assessment.

Learning Outcomes Assessment

Assessment of student learning and reporting is done at the program level (academic degrees, academic certificates and cocurricular experiences). All programs are expected to identify program level outcomes that align with their mission statement, discipline, applicable external accrediting bodies, and the university's mission.

Submissions include identification of the outcomes that were assessed during the reporting timeframe, articulation of the specific assessment methods that align to each outcome, identification of targets for success for each assessment method, reporting and analysis of the results, and identification of specific strategies (based on the results) for continuous improvement of student learning (HLC 3.A and 3.E).

In order to facilitate assessment at UND, the following policies and recommendations shall guide assessment practice at the institution.

Policies:

1. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation (OIEA) and the University Assessment Committee (UAC) have administrative responsibility to oversee the assessment process at UND.
2. Assessment reports are due by October 1st for the previous academic year. Throughout the year programs are expected to act on the identified strategies.
3. Each year, all bachelor's degree programs are expected to submit an annual assessment of student learning findings and action plan report.
4. Every two years, undergraduate certificates, graduate certificates, and graduate programs are expected to submit an assessment report that includes two years of data. These programs will report on a rotating schedule agreed upon by each department and the OIEA.
5. Graduate programs may request a three-year reporting cycle. Each request will be discussed and approved on a case-by case basis by the UAC. This policy item only applies to graduate credentials, but excludes graduate certificates.
6. All degree programs must assess all learning outcomes within a three-year timeframe. If enrollment is low or zero during the year of assessment, the outcome must still be included in the report with a notation explaining the lack of data due to enrollment.
7. All degrees should assess at least three unique program-level outcomes. All certificates should assess at least one outcome.
8. Programs with external accrediting bodies must create a separate assessment report(s) for any specialization or emphasis areas and follow the above procedures for annual assessment reporting. For example, if a degree has separate accreditation due to factors such as modality, each degree offered must be assessed separately based on the presence or lack of accreditation.
9. In the rare event of unanticipated circumstances (e.g., sudden retirement, attrition, medical issues, death, or other unforeseen situations), departments can apply for a hardship deferral for one academic year. Approval of the deferral can only be granted by a vote by the UAC. If the deferral is granted, departments must report data for the period of deferral in the next assessment reporting cycle.
10. Feedback provided by the OIEA and UAC is considered formative and not intended for use beyond the institution and may not be appealed in any form by academic programs. If a program chooses to submit a rejoinder explaining why they disagree with the feedback, they may do so. A rejoinder will

not change the original feedback document, but will be attached to the original document. Programs have two weeks (14 days) to submit a rejoinder from the date of the feedback meeting.

Recommendations:

1. Academic programs are encouraged to map their curriculum to the program outcomes, identifying in which course the program's learning outcomes are both addressed and assessed.
2. If targets for success are determined to be reasonable (e.g., industry or institutional standard, external accreditor standard, etc.) and students have been achieving or exceeding the established targets, programs may elect to maintain their current assessment strategy, however, if this is the case, programs should provide a detailed analysis that justifies the continuation.
3. Departments and/or programs are recommended to have at least one designee responsible for assessment reporting. Additionally, best practices suggest that having an individual or team in place for multiple years allows for continuity of assessment reporting and data analysis.

Essential Studies Assessment

[Assessment of the Essential Studies](#) goals is conducted on a rotating basis at the course level. The program engages in a two-stage assessment process that allows for consideration of both formative and summative assessment of the Essential Studies (ES) program.

Each semester, assessment results for the identified learning goal(s) are collected for each course, using predetermined measures such as student materials, or artifacts that faculty have identified to measure that assessment goal. These assessment measures are evaluated using the validated [AAC&U Value Rubrics](#). Aggregate student data is collected from faculty at the conclusion of the semester and compiled and analyzed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation.

The data provided across the various ES courses assist the ES Director and Committee members in understanding how students are doing regarding each ES goal. Aggregate data from all reports are collected and reported for each rubric aspect, separated by delivery mode, level of course, and academic college.

The results are shared with ES course faculty to prompt discussions related to how they may be able to improve the ES goal within their own courses. Additional development sessions are offered to all interested faculty to further discuss the specific ES goal.

Essential Studies Goals

In addition to the above requirements related to assessment, the University has identified six learning goals for the Essential Studies (ES) program, the undergraduate general education program at UND.

Critical Inquiry and Analysis

Inquiry is a systematic process of exploring issues, objects or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments. Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them.

Quantitative Reasoning

Quantitative Reasoning is competency and comfort in working with numerical data, using it to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations, and to create and clearly communicate sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence, such as by using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate.

Written Communication

Written Communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing text, data, and images.

Oral Communication

Oral communication involves a purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Information Literacy

Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.

Intercultural Knowledge & Skills

Intercultural knowledge and skills foster the capacity to meaningfully engage with the perspectives of people whose cultures and identities are different from one's own. To meaningfully engage with others' perspectives, one must be aware of how those perspectives are shaped by larger social structures, by issues of contemporary importance, and by issues that arise in global society.

Comprehensive Program Evaluation

Academic Program Review

[Academic Program Reviews](#) (APRs) demonstrate the university's commitment to the quality and continuous improvement of the educational programs, how student learning and success is promoted, and provides insight to how curriculum, scholarly activity, and service advance the university's mission to serve the state and global community.

The APR process includes a comprehensive self-study by program faculty, a review by 1-2 external reviewers to the university, a review by colleagues within the college, feedback from the Dean, a meeting with either the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies or the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies (depending on the program level) to discuss the review with the department chair and/or dean, a written statement from the Office of the Provost of the evaluation's findings, including a written action plan describing the follow-up activities. At UND, the APR process is administered by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Student Success and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies for their respective academic levels/credentials.

The APR prompts for the self-study include questions regarding enrollment and graduation trends (including applicable certificates), recent successes of the program, significant curricular actions and changes that have occurred since the previous review (HLC 3.F), alignment of the program goals with the curriculum, continuous improvement related to assessing student learning, recruitment and retention strategies, program resources, and identifying future priorities.

Where applicable, the schedule for Academic Program Reviews will coincide with external accreditation cycles.

External Accreditation (if applicable)

Many academic programs are also accredited by external accrediting [bodies](#). Each program is responsible for completing the various requirements set by their agency. These requirements may include creating an internal accreditation team, conducting a self-study, collecting evidence, compiling data, preparing an accreditation

report, and hosting a site visit. Program accreditations are led and managed within the respective program or college with assistance from the OIEA as needed.

Many external accreditations include components of assessing student learning outcomes and participation in continuous self-assessment that promotes program effectiveness and needed improvements within their standards. Programs are encouraged to use components from their external accreditation self-study as part of the APR submission process to avoid duplicative efforts. Programs with external accreditors must create a separate assessment report for any specialization or emphasis areas and follow the above procedures for annual assessment reporting.

Assessment Leadership, Support and Responsibilities

Aside from the responsibilities already articulated throughout this document, the following individuals or groups provide additional campus-wide leadership and support for assessment of student learning:

Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation (OIEA) aligned under the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, provides administrative oversight and support to all areas of assessment across the institution. OIEA champions and promotes a culture of continuous improvement through a collaborative process of assessment that enhances student learning and the student experience. This is done by providing professional development opportunities and ongoing support to programs to encourage the use of effective processes (HLC 3.A) and methods identified by best-practices (HLC 3.E) with the goal of using results to improve student learning (HLC 3.F). OIEA works closely with the UAC to provide support to all curricular and cocurricular experiences.

OIEA is responsible for communicating university-wide assessment requirements to all programs and monitoring successful completion of the requirements and reporting back to the respective Deans and the Provost.

OIEA oversees the assessment management system used to collect annual assessment submissions and Academic Program Reviews, reports aggregate data regarding the assessment processes used across the institution, and develops resources based on the topic areas where faculty may need additional support. OIEA staff meet annually with departments in the spring semester to discuss their program assessment reports, provide feedback, and offer support to help programs achieve their assessment goals. If a program is undergoing program review during the reporting year, the program will not be required to meet with OIEA.

University Assessment Committee

The University Assessment Committee (UAC) collaborates with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation to assist with championing the assessment of student learning at UND. Committee members serve as the liaison between their respective college and UAC regarding the assessment of student learning, provide assessment-related expertise and support (as needed), review assigned academic and cocurricular assessment submissions and provide feedback and suggestions for improvement, identify and facilitate development and trainings on key issues in assessment practice, review and discuss results of assessment administered by the OIEA, and serve as an advisory group to OIEA. Feedback and suggestions by the UAC are communicated to the curricular and cocurricular units via the OIEA team.

Essential Studies Committee

The Essential Studies Committee provides faculty guidance and oversight of the University's undergraduate general education program, Essential Studies. This committee offers guidance and advice to the University Assessment Committee regarding the assessment of the Essential Studies program.

Teaching Transformation and Development Academy (TTaDA)

TTaDA collaborates with OIEA in leading professional development activities based on assessment best practices. In addition, TTaDA instructional designers can assist faculty with course design, curriculum review, assignment charettes, and provide recommendations for student engagement and assessment.

Office of University Analytics & Planning (UAP)

The Office of University Analytics & Planning administers several surveys, which provide indirect evidence relating to the achievement of institutional goals. Data from those surveys are analyzed and reported by UAP. UAP also builds and distributes the dashboards that are used in the Academic Program Review process and oversees the SELFI course evaluation process.

Department Chairs, Program Leads, or Designees

Departments are responsible for completing all university-wide assessment requirements (i.e. annual assessment submissions, Academic Program Reviews, Essential Studies Assessments, as requested). Support for these processes is provided by OIEA, the Essential Studies Director, and other applicable staff. Each program is responsible for identifying actions items and strategies for improving student learning, and executing these strategies with the intention of ongoing, continuous improvement.

Approval History: Original approval by the University Assessment Committee [UAC] on February 7, 2025; First revision approved by the UAC April 7, 2026; Second revision approved by the UAC April 30, 2026.

Program Name: _____ Year of Review: _____

Purpose of Peer Review:

- Determine how effectively programs document assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals (HLC Criteria 3.A).
- Acknowledge a program’s assessment strengths and opportunities for growth.
- Assist programs in using assessment results to create continuous improvement plans to enhance student learning (HLC Criteria 3.E).
- Improve the curriculum for each degree program based on period program reviews (HLC Criteria 3.F).

Assessment Rubric				
	0 Beginning	1 Developing	2 Accomplished	3 Exemplary
<p>Outcomes</p> <p><i>Answers what the program is trying to accomplish.</i></p> <p><i>Learning Outcomes: statements describing the specific knowledge, skills and abilities participants completing an educational program should achieve.</i></p> <p><i>Success Outcomes: describe what the program, process, or service will achieve; not focused on learning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes are missing, unclear, or challenging to measure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes are double-barreled or do not begin with an action verb that denotes what is being measured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes begin with an action verb that denotes what the instructor can observe/measure. • Outcomes are measurable. • Outcomes are specific/single-barreled. • Outcomes align with the mission and vision of the program. 	<p>Outcomes meet the Accomplished criteria and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are appropriate to the level of learning upon graduation. (e.g., higher order of Bloom’s Taxonomy). • Outcomes are specific to the academic discipline.
<p>Measures</p> <p><i>A procedure describing how students will demonstrate they meet the specific outcomes. Usually is embedded into a course as a class assignment.</i></p> <p><i>Provides details about exact sources of direct assessment data to collect.</i></p> <p><i>Method = category for the measure (assignment, exam, presentation, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures, descriptions, and/or data collection methods are missing for one or all outcomes • Measures associated with outcomes do not align. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure descriptions and data collection methods are present but vague or unclear. • No direct assessment methods are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures and data sources are clearly described. • All outcomes have an associated assessment measure and data source identified. • Measures clearly align with the outcome(s). • A single assessment method predominates (e.g., only uses exams). • Most outcomes are evaluated using at least one <i>direct</i> assessment method. 	<p>Measures meet the Accomplished criteria and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses used are 300/400-level (undergraduate programs) from the required curriculum. • Multiple assessment methods are used (e.g., papers, exams, projects, presentations, etc.) • All outcomes have at least one direct assessment method AND some use multiple methods for assessment.
<p>Targets</p> <p><i>Specification of desired results for objectives.</i></p> <p><i>Cutoff criteria are evident.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets are not provided or unclear for each method. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets identified are present but vague or low. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets clearly identified for each method and outcome. • Targets are set at a level that allows the program to engage in meaningful assessment. • <i>This rating should be given for “Gathering baseline data”</i> 	<p>Targets meet the Accomplished criteria and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on past data and/or external data source (e.g. industry standard, licensure requirement, accreditation criteria).

Assessment Rubric				
	0 Beginning	1 Developing	2 Accomplished	3 Exemplary
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Collect the data, gather evidence, and aggregate the results.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear how results relate to student learning outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited data presented and/or vague summary of results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results reported and summarized for most measures. Results clearly align with the student learning outcomes. <i>This rating will be given if the report indicates no students are enrolled in educational program</i> 	<p>Results meet the Accomplished criteria and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results reported and clearly described for all outcomes and measures. Clearly align with the student learning outcomes. Results are presented alongside past data.
<p>Findings (Analysis)</p> <p><i>The interpretation of the data -make meaning and draw conclusions from results.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis is not provided, or it is unclear how conclusions relate to student learning outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of results provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulates whether a target was met or unmet at the measure OR outcome level. Conclusions were provided at the measure OR outcome level. Conclusions clearly align with student learning outcomes. <i>This rating will be given if the report indicates no students are enrolled in educational program.</i> 	<p>Analysis meets the Accomplished criteria and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes comparisons to previous assessment data.
<p>Action Plan</p> <p><i>Identify strategies for continuous improvement of student learning. Includes purposeful reflection and discussion by involved faculty and staff.</i></p> <p><i>Demonstrates a focus on data-informed decision making.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for future assessment are not noted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan and strategies are identified but broadly stated. Action plan not clearly linked to assessment results and interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan and strategies are identified and specific. Action Plan is based on assessment results and interpretation. Action Plan addresses at least one student learning outcome and/or improvements to the assessment process. This rating should be given for "maintain current practices". 	<p>Action plan meets Accomplished criteria and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes description of how results and action plan are discussed with key stakeholders.
<p>General Comments/ Feedback to Program:</p>				

Resources:

[Quality of Assessment Rubric](#), version 2. Auburn University.
[Assessment Progress Template \(APT\)](#). James Madison University.
 Suskie, L. *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. (2018) 3rd Ed.

[Assessment Plan Feedback Rubric](#), George Mason University.
[How to Write Learning Outcomes Worksheet](#), Campus Labs.
 Assessment Skills Framework, NILOA.