



UNIVERSITY *of* ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Academic Assessment Handbook

This document is created and maintained by the
Academic Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate
in collaboration with UAA's administration.

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Peer Leadership in Program Improvement

For the electronic version of this handbook and your program's most recent Academic Assessment Plan, go to the Academic Assessment Repository <https://ir-reports.uaa.alaska.edu/Assessment/Pages/Default.aspx>.

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I INTRODUCTION

The Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) of the Faculty Senate was created to provide peer leadership, support, and review of the academic assessment processes at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), with the goal of improving student learning. The AAC recognizes it is the faculty, who are best suited to plan, implement, and act upon the academic assessment of student learning outcomes. For this reason, the Committee serves a review and consultative role, supporting the faculty in their efforts to review and improve their programs. Academic assessment is a mandate of the University of Alaska Board of Regents (BOR) and the Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU).

Peer Leadership

As a Faculty Senate committee, the AAC is an elected, representative faculty group. The AAC constitutes the faculty arm of the shared governance of academic assessment for UAA.

The Academic Assessment Handbook is maintained by the AAC to describe UAA's process for reviewing all academic program assessments. This Handbook governs the conduct of the AAC as well as communicating the rationale thereof. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with college and departmental requirements as appropriate. The procedures and the accompanying templates have been designed to ensure the following:

- Faculty and staff are properly informed about the academic assessment processes to be followed when submitting new programs, making major revisions to existing programs, and/or making major changes to their assessment process.
- Faculty and staff are properly informed about the goals of and criteria for appropriate academic assessment.

Peer Support

The AAC supports faculty through careful review of periodic submissions, timely and thoughtful feedback on those submissions, and the communication of shared expectations in academic assessment. The AAC serves as a cross-campus forum for the exchange of ideas, information and advice on methods and practices of academic assessment. It promotes systematic academic assessment university-wide with the understanding that a program's faculty are the ones best suited to plan, implement, and evaluate assessment of student learning outcomes.

In its review and feedback, the intent of the AAC is to look at the overall process of assessment discussed by each program reviewed, rather than to solely focus on the language of specific outcomes or the details of a certain tool. Are the faculty actively engaged in reviewing the intent and effectiveness of their programs? Are the faculty seeking ways to achieve programs

of excellence? Academic assessment at UAA is best served by fostering a culture that encourages broad goals and methodologies growing organically out of the teaching and assessment practices of each discipline.

Additionally, the AAC serves as a clearinghouse of academic assessment at UAA. Because of its broad perspective of academic assessment within the MAU, it is well suited to describe the “big picture” of academic assessment at UAA to external and internal constituents. The AAC is UAA’s faculty voice in responding to NWCCU, state legislature, BOR, statewide administration, and OAA questions on academic assessment.

A. AAC Charge

The AAC constitutes the faculty arm of the shared governance of academic assessment for UAA. The AAC does not act as an acceptance/rejection body when reviewing Academic Assessment Plans and Program Student Learning Outcomes, but rather serves as an advisory body, offering suggestions for improvement and commendations for achievement to those programs that approach the committee for assistance or have been directed to the committee by their Dean.

The committee is charged by the Faculty Senate to:

- Develop, maintain, and implement the current UAA Academic Assessment Handbook with the primary focus of program improvement;
- Provide professional development opportunities around best practices in assessment;
- Recommend academic assessment-related actions to the appropriate bodies;
- Provide guidance for the collection and analysis of academic assessment documents;
- Field and respond to requests for information on UAA academic assessment results and achievement of Program Student Learning Outcomes;
- Review requests to modify assessment policies and procedures;
- Refer curricular and academic issues to the appropriate Faculty Senate Boards; and
- Undertake such additional tasks or responsibilities relating to academic assessment as assigned by the Faculty Senate.

B. OAA Partnership

The Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) partners with the AAC, providing information and resources, including professional development opportunities for faculty and administrative support for the AAC.

II. ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT CYCLE

Programs are required to conduct continuous assessment based on a formal Academic Assessment Plan (see section III for more information about the Academic Assessment Plan). The goal of this assessment process is to provide evidence-based information that contributes to program improvement processes. Annual data collected from the assessment instruments should be discussed and analyzed among department faculty and, as appropriate, recommendations made to improve the program and/or the Academic Assessment Plan. Programs with suspended admissions are not expected to conduct assessment, but they are expected to complete the institutional-level survey for tracking purposes.

A. Annual Academic Assessment Report (Departmental/Program/College Level)

Programs report the details of their assessment and program improvement activities to the colleges, which review and use the information of these reports in their further work with the programs. Reports are due by the established fall-semester deadline, and are uploaded and archived in the Academic Assessment Repository, located on the Institutional Research SharePoint site <https://ir-reports.uaa.alaska.edu/Assessment/Pages/Default.aspx>.

B. Annual Academic Assessment Survey (Institutional-Level Reporting)

The Annual Academic Assessment Survey aggregates high-level assessment information for institutional, accreditation and BOR reporting purposes. All programs, including those with suspended admissions, must complete the survey.

The survey is open annually April 1-June 15 and can be accessed on the Academic Assessment Repository at <https://ir-reports.uaa.alaska.edu/Assessment/Pages/Default.aspx>.

III. THE ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN

All programs are required to have an Academic Assessment Plan on file. An Academic Assessment Plan identifies a program's student learning outcomes and assessment strategies. It includes the program's mission statement, Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs), measures and overall assessment process. The required categories for Academic Assessment Plans are detailed in the Appendix to this handbook. In addition, an assessment plan template is posted on the Academic Assessment Repository IR SharePoint site <https://ir->

reports.uaa.alaska.edu/Assessment/Pages/Default.aspx. Programs are not required to use the template, but they must address the required categories in the Appendix guidance.

General Education for Undergraduate Certificates: Because General Education outcomes for Undergraduate Certificates may be embedded and assessed within relevant program curriculum, undergraduate certificate programs must address General Education within their assessment plans. Individual programs shall use both formative and summative assessments to measure student achievement of each embedded outcome (see General Education Undergraduate Certificates section of the Catalog for the Student Learning Outcomes) and assessment plans shall use a curriculum map to indicate where and when outcomes are addressed and assessed in the curriculum.

New Academic Assessment Plans and revisions to Academic Assessment Plans must be submitted by the faculty initiator to the AAC for consideration through the CIM program proposal process: <https://nextcatalog.uaa.alaska.edu/programadmin/>.

Major revisions to Academic Assessment Plans include: additions, deletions, or changes that have a substantive effect on the intent, execution, or content of the Academic Assessment Plan. Most changes to Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs) are considered major.

Minor revisions to Academic Assessment Plans include non-substantive changes that do not significantly affect the intent or content of the Academic Assessment Plan.

Once they receive the submitted plan through the CIM workflow, the AAC Chair(s) determines if the change is major or minor. If the AAC Chair(s) determines that the plan needs to go to the committee for review, the faculty initiator will be contacted and the review will be scheduled.

For the review to occur, faculty initiators or a qualified faculty representative for the program proposal must be present at, or phone or link in to, the AAC meeting. Proposals without such representation will be scheduled for a later meeting.

After the review, the AAC will send an informational item to the Faculty Senate and post the Academic Assessment Plan to the Academic Assessment Repository website: <https://ir-reports.uaa.alaska.edu/Assessment/Pages/Default.aspx>.

The AAC stands available to act as a mentor in the preparation, implementation, and modification of the Academic Assessment Plans from any program. Programs seeking guidance on their Academic Assessment Plans can contact the AAC at uaa.aac@alaska.edu or contact the Chair(s) of the AAC.

Questions about submitting Academic Assessment Plans through the CIM program proposal process may be emailed to OAA at uaa.aac@alaska.edu.

IV. ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT REPOSITORY AND RESOURCES

- The Academic Assessment Repository incorporates current templates and information about Annual Academic Assessment Reports, Annual Academic Assessment Survey, and Academic Assessment Plans at: <https://ir-reports.uaa.alaska.edu/Assessment/Pages/Default.aspx>.
- The AAC can be contacted at uaa.aac@alaska.edu or by contacting the Chair(s) of the AAC, whose contact information can be found on the AAC website.

APPENDIX: UAA ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN GUIDANCE

The Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) does not require programs to follow a specific template for the format of their Academic Assessment Plan. Certain categories, however, must be included in every Academic Assessment Plan. The table below gives more detailed guidance on the required categories of an Academic Assessment Plan.

The AAC is willing to assist you in the development and/or revision of your Academic Assessment Plan. Please feel free to contact the AAC at uaa.aac@alaska.edu if you have any questions or need any assistance.

Required Category	Characteristic	Description
Mission Statement: Broad statement of purpose defining your program's philosophy and often describing values and aspirations, and which supports the University's mission.	Clarity	The mission statement is comprehensible to a wide audience.
	Contributes to college & UAA mission	The mission statement should clearly align with the mission of the college and university. Constituents should be able to see how the program supports the missions of the college and university.
	Describes program in content-centered terms	The mission statement should identify the content that the program teaches in general terms.
	Describes program in student-centered terms	The mission statement should describe in broad terms what the student should be able to do or know on completion of the program.
Program Student Learning Outcomes: Program Student Learning Outcomes define what specific knowledge, abilities, values, and/or attitudes students in our respective programs should be able to demonstrate.	Performance-based	The outcomes must be written in terms of what students can demonstrate.
	Completeness	The outcomes should be sufficient to describe specific knowledge, abilities, values and/or attitudes of students in the program.
	Relevant	The set of outcomes should cover the intent of the program as articulated in the mission statement.
	Achievable	Students can be reasonably expected to attain the outcomes.

Required Category	Characteristic	Description
	Measurability	The outcome must be stated in a way that it is observable/measurable. In other words, data can be collected on which to form conclusions regarding the level of student attainment.
<p>Measures: Assessment measures are the tools faculty will use to accumulate data concerning student attainment of outcomes on which to base their programmatic decisions. A wide variety of tools can be devised to measure student performance. Measures are normally classified as being direct or indirect. Having both direct and indirect data on an outcome gives programs a broader perspective on their students' performance.</p>	Description of measure	The description of each measure should be clear and complete to an outside observer.
	Direct measures	Direct measures involve looking at student work to examine what learning has taken place. For example, comprehensive exams, research papers or projects, portfolios, performances, and standardized tests are often used as direct measures of student learning.
	Indirect measures	“Indirect measures gather perceptions of learning, opinions about learning, or reflections on learning rather than direct demonstrations of the results of learning.” For example, surveys, interviews, course evaluations, focus groups, and graduation rates are often used as indirect measures of student learning. Programs are not required to use indirect measures.
	Multiple measures	Multiple measures are recommended for each outcome. Multiple measures of an outcome produce more reliable results. Measures can occur at differing intervals as appropriate for the specific outcome.
	Connection to outcomes	The measure should clearly show student performance relative to one or more outcomes. The data collected needs to be such that its interpretation is clear regarding student performance relative to the outcome. For example, an assignment evaluation should be able to isolate a specific result for each outcome it is being used to measure. Course grades are difficult to use as an assessment tool because course grades are influenced by too many factors to isolate out performance relative to a <i>program</i> outcome.

Required Category	Characteristic	Description
	Influences on data collection	The program should indicate the factors that influence the data and the interpretation of the results. This is where the program considers the reliability of the tool and the data collected.
<p>Process: The process describes the person(s)/ group(s) responsible for applying the measures, collecting and collating data, determining the meaning of the assessment results and making recommendations for action.</p>	Faculty involvement in the assessment process	The plan identifies the role of faculty in all aspects of the assessment process. Faculty must be involved in the development of assessment plans, the implementation of the measures, the analysis of data, the formulation of recommendations, and the actions taken on those recommendations, as well as any revisions to the assessment plan.
	Timeline	The timeline should produce information for the faculty of the program to make timely decisions. Timelines need to accommodate the assessment cycle, faculty workloads, and appropriate timing of measures. Not all outcomes need to be measured annually, but must be measured within a reasonable review cycle. The schedule of data collection should be clearly articulated in the plan.
	Currency	The plan is reviewed and/or revised regularly by the program’s faculty.
	Responsible parties	The faculty responsible for coordination and implementation should be identified and supported in their assessment duties.