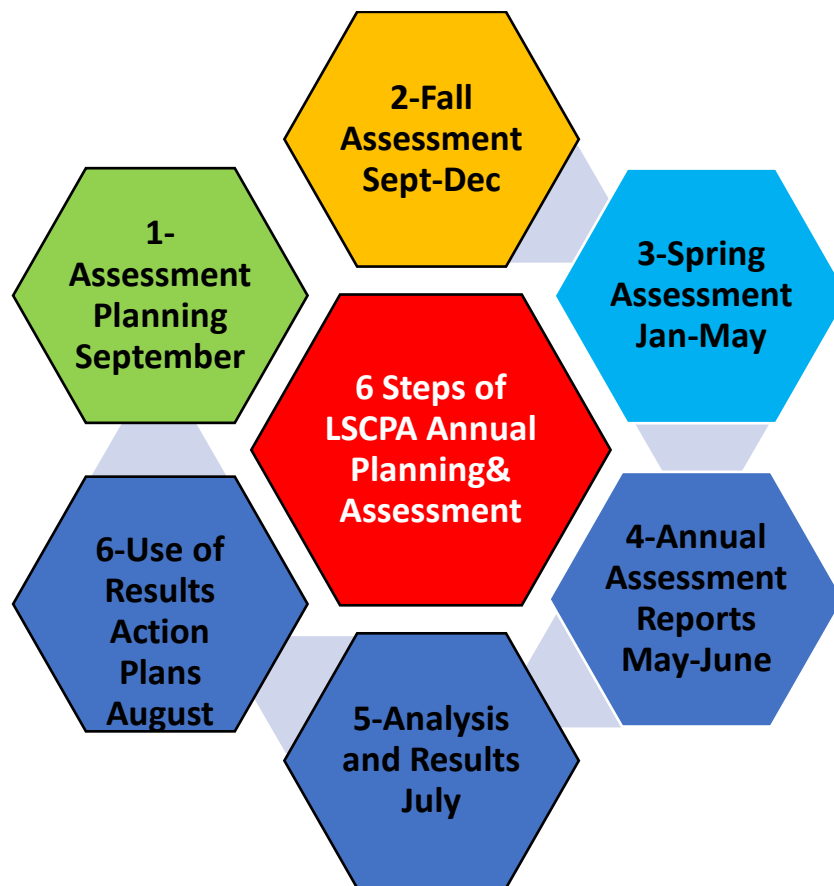


A Guideline to Planning  
and Implementing  
Program and Course  
Assessment

## Assessment Guideline



### Six Steps of LSCPA Annual Planning & Assessment

This Assessment & Planning cycle appears to start in September of each year, but as a continuously flowing ongoing process, there isn't a beginning-end date.

**Step 1 Assessment Planning:** In Sept of each academic year, each department chair and program/course faculty align the related degree plan(s) and the designated student learning outcomes with the related courses (the scheduled fall term and anticipated spring term of the academic year). The plan should reflect the expansive nature of the assessment process where all student learning outcomes are assessed in all modes of delivery and in all locations.

**Step 2 Fall Assessment:** The Assessment Plan is implemented in the fall term, with artifacts collected and submitted by mid-December.

**Step 3 Spring Assessment:** The Annual Assessment Plan continues in the spring term, with artifacts collected and submitted by mid-May.

**Step 4 Annual Assessment Reports:** The Office of Institutional Research collects and analyzes all artifacts to create the Annual Assessment Report for each program-course.

**Step 5 Analysis and Results:** The OIE distributes the completed Annual Assessment Reports, with Results detailed at course & program levels, with outcomes measured against institutional benchmarks and goals.

**Step 6 Use of Results Action Plans:** Dept Chairs and Program-Course faculty review Results, and develop action plans that reflect the continuous efforts of improvement (curriculum, delivery actions that relate to specific learning outcomes).

## **Background**

1) **Purpose of assessment?** As Linda Suskie writes in Assessing Student Learning, “there are at least three purposes of assessment. Its fundamental purpose is giving students the best possible education. Assessment accomplishes this by giving faculty and staff feedback on what is and isn’t working and insight into changes that might help students learn and succeed even more effectively.

“The second purpose of assessment is stewardship. All colleges run on other people’s money, including tuition and fees paid by students and their families, government funds paid by taxpayers, and scholarships paid by donors. All these people deserve assurance that your college will be a wise steward of their resources, spending those resources prudently, effectively, and judiciously. Stewardship includes using good-quality evidence of student learning to help inform decisions on how those resources are spent, including how everyone spends their time. Does service learning really help develop students’ commitment to a life of service? Does the gen ed curriculum really help improve students’ critical thinking skills? Does the math requirement really help students analyze data? And are the improvements big enough to warrant the time and effort faculty and staff put into developing and delivering these learning experiences?

“The third purpose of assessment is accountability: assuring your stakeholders of the effectiveness of your college, program, service, or initiative. Stakeholders include current and prospective students and their families, employers, government policy makers, alumni, taxpayers, governing board members...and, yes, accreditors.” SACSCOC and state agencies like the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) requires this accountability, which includes sharing both successes and steps being taken to make appropriate, evidence-based improvements.”

2) **What is a Learning Outcome? Program, Student and Course Learning Outcome?** Program Learning Outcomes are the program goals that describe what a student will gain from the learning experience. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) describe the specific, measurable knowledge, values, and skills that students will be able to demonstrate upon completing the academic/technical program using precise language focused on the student. Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) are content-knowledge focused skills that students have achieved upon successful completion of a course.

3) **Where are these learning outcomes located?** General Education Course Outcomes are found in the Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM), and Workforce Course Outcomes are found in

the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM). Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLO) for General Education are referred to as the THECB's Texas Common Core (TCC) Objectives: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork Skills, Social Responsibility Skills, and Personal Responsibility Skills. PSLOs for each workforce program are developed by the institution, with faculty and advisory committee input.

- 4) **How are courses connected to the program learning outcomes?** Each general education course is clustered into one of eight foundational component areas: Communication; Mathematics; Life & Physical Sciences; Language, Philosophy, and Culture; Creative Arts; American History; Government/Political Science; Social and Behavioral Sciences. Each foundational component area is aligned with three or more Core Objectives. Workforce PSLOs are clustered by program content and aligned to each course in the program.

### **Course Assessment**

- 1) **How are instructors informed of assessment responsibilities each semester?** Department chairs notify program managers & instructors with the schedule of the course(s) and PSLO(s) that are to be assessed in the semester.
- 2) **How are assessment assignments created that accurately measure each specific PSLO?** Instructors work with other instructors in the discipline/program to create a shared common assignment, or work independently to create the assignment. The assessment assignment may focus on one or more PSLOs, or may be an embedded section of an existing assignment.
- 3) **When to administer the assessment assignment?** The assessment assignment can be given at any point in the semester, with some instructors using the mid-term or final exam assignment.
- 4) **What are assessment artifacts?** Artifact in the context of assessment refers to the final product of the assessment used to measure performance or competency in a set of skills (PSLOs): written papers, exams, performances, portfolios.
- 5) **How are the assignments rated?** Each discipline/program has developed a PSLO scoring rubric designed for the assessment assignment. Each rubric uses a 5-level performance model (0-4): Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Not Observed. Grades are not the same as artifact ratings.
- 6) **How are the assessment assignments submitted?** The OIE has designed the Excel workbook that contains a sample, several blank templates and links to resources for related information.
- 7) **What happens with the assessment artifacts?** After the submission form is completed, the submission form, artifacts, scoring rubrics and original assignment are submitted to the department head.
- 8) **What happens to the course assessments?** The OIE collects, analyzes and creates reports for each department/program. Results are analyzed in comparison to campus benchmarks, and prior year results. Results are scored as 1 of 3 levels: benchmarks not met, met or exceeded.
- 9) **What's the follow-up action for course assessment?** Based on the OIE assessment report, each department/program will create an action plan for each PSLO that addresses pedagogical changes that will be implemented into the related course, actions that seek continuous improvement in the related course. While this is referred to as "Closing the Loop," effective assessment is actually an ongoing process that actually arcs upwards in a continuous spiral .