



To: Provost and Vice Chancellor Elisha Baker,
University of Alaska Anchorage

Fr: Kimberly Swiantek,
UAA Governance Office

Re: Academic Assessment Handbook

On February 1, 2013 the Faculty Senate approved the following motion brought forward by the Academic Assessment Committee:

Motion: The Academic Assessment committee recommends the Faculty Senate adopt this revised Academic Assessment Handbook. It is a living document and will be reviewed and updated yearly as necessary.

Please see the attached document for more information.

If I may be of further assistance, please let me know.

Provost

Approved Disapproved

Comments:

06/02/2013

Elisha Baker, Provost and Vice Chancellor

Date

Chancellor

Approved Disapproved

Comments:

7 Feb 13

Tom Case, Chancellor

Date



Academic Assessment Handbook

This document is created and maintained by the
Academic Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate.

January 2013 Revision

Peer Leadership in Program Improvement

For electronic version of this handbook and the assessment schedule for your program, go to
http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/governance/academic_assessment_committee/handbook.cfm

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L INTRODUCTION

The purpose of academic assessment is improvement of learning. The Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) of the Faculty Senate was created to provide peer leadership, support, and review of academic assessment to ensure that assessment can produce the intended benefit to students. Faculty are best suited to plan, implement, and act upon the academic assessment of student learning outcomes. Moreover, academic assessment is a mandate of Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU) and the University of Alaska, Board of Regents (BOR) Policy.

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 Policy & Procedure document is maintained by the AAC to describe the University of Alaska Anchorage's process for reviewing all academic program assessments. This policy and procedures document governs the conduct of the AAC as well as communicating the rationale thereof. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with 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 processes to be followed for the review of new programs, major revisions to existing programs, and ongoing academic assessment.
- Faculty and staff are properly informed about the goals of and criteria for appropriate academic assessment.
- Faculty and staff are properly informed about how to access support for improving their academic assessment plans and reports.

Peer Support

The AAC seeks to support faculty work in academic assessment through shared agreements, guidance, feedback, and recognition. 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.

Review of Academic Assessment

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 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 programs’ 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 and maintain UAA Academic Assessment Handbook;
- Implement the current UAA Academic Assessment Handbook with the primary focus of program improvement;
- Recommend academic assessment-related actions to the appropriate bodies;
- Direct the collection and analysis of academic assessment documents;
- Field and respond to requests for information on UAA academic assessment results and achievement of 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 Support

The OAA provides administrative support for the AAC. All assessment related documents are to be submitted to the OAA for distribution to the AAC. Documents should be forwarded to ayaac@uaa.alaska.edu.

II. ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

Programs are required to conduct continuous assessment based on a formal assessment plan. The internal use of assessment may be modifications, as suggested by the review of the results of the assessment. Changes subsequently made to the curriculum and the assessment methods can then be based on valid reasoning. The external use of data and interpretation, generated by the assessment process, is submitted to external accrediting bodies for the program and to the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) for their use by various bodies affecting the university as a whole.

The academic assessment plan is a living document that describes the program's student learning outcomes along with instruments that will be used to measure the outcomes. The plan drives assessment activities to be conducted yearly that measure some or all of the program outcomes. All outcomes need not be measured annually, but must be measured within a reasonable review cycle.

Annual data collected from the assessment instruments should be discussed and analyzed among department faculty and recommendations made to improve the program and/or the assessment plan for the following year. The intervening years provide a time frame to demonstrate 'proof of concept' expected from the changes to the program or assessment methodology. If the assessment process and results for the program meet the goals of both internal and external assessment, that program should not be disrupted by formal meetings for review with the AAC. The AAC stands available to act as a mentor in the preparation, implementation, and modification of the assessment plans from any program. However, assessment coordinators for each program must complete the annual Assessment Survey based on the program's assessment activities completed each year.

III. ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT REVIEW PROCESS

NWCCU and the BOR require all academic programs to document their assessment activities. The AAC recognizes that academic programs can be at differing points in their evolution, which affects their assessment (i.e. new programs, ongoing programs, suspended or discontinued programs). Academic assessment is also impacted by the number of students in a

program, how many graduates are produced in a given reporting period and significant unforeseen events that limit a program's ability to carry out their academic assessment plans.

The process and reporting of assessment activity can vary greatly. Table 1 summarizes the variation in situation and reporting requirements. All documents should be submitted to the OAA for distribution to the AAC.

Table 1. Assessment Reporting Requirements

Status	Academic assessment Documents Required	Submission Date to OAA
New Program	Assessment Plan	As required by curriculum review process
Major Revision of Existing Program	Assessment Plan	As required by curriculum review process
Revision of Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLO's)	Assessment Plan, Memo, Catalog Copy, PSLO Tracking Form	As required by curriculum review process
Existing Program (yearly)	Annual Assessment Survey	June 15
Suspended Program	Memo	October 15

A. New Program or Major Revision of an Existing Program

Proposals for new programs or major revisions to existing programs must include an assessment plan (see The UAA Curriculum Handbook, 2.1.4.F). Faculty planning new programs or major revisions to existing programs should review both the UAA Curriculum Handbook and their college-level curriculum review guidelines for further information about when a review of their academic assessment plan by the AAC must be complete. The AAC welcomes academic assessment plans at any point in the curriculum review process but strongly encourages submitting draft plans as early as possible. The AAC can be helpful in the early stages of formulation as well as in finalization of academic assessment plans.

Faculty should submit their plans to OAA in accordance with curriculum review deadlines. AAC will place review of new programs or major revisions of existing programs first on their agenda. For the review to occur, faculty initiators or a qualified faculty representative for the program proposal must be present at the AAC meeting. Proposals

without such representation will be tabled. Programs will receive a written summary of the committee's face-to-face review within six weeks, and copies will be sent to the school or college and OAA. Academic assessment plans requiring longer discussion and/or consideration will be invited to additional AAC meetings until the review is complete.

B. Revision of Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLO's)

Programs revising their Program Student Learning Outcomes should first go through their regular curriculum process up through the college/school level and then go directly to the AAC. For the PSLO review to occur programs should submit a cover memo describing the actions taken, an updated Assessment Plan with the revised PSLO's integrated into the plan, a word document with just the PSLO's as they should appear in the UAA catalog, and a PSLO tracking form. Faculty initiators or a qualified faculty representative for the program proposal must be present at the AAC meeting. Reviews without complete documentation or program representation will be tabled. PSLO's and academic assessment plans requiring longer discussion and/or consideration will be invited to additional AAC meetings until the review is complete. Upon peer review by the AAC an informational memo will be sent to governance to be included in the Faculty Senate agenda.

C. Annual Assessment Survey

All active (not suspended) programs must submit an annual Assessment Survey (see section IV-C) on their data collection and any changes to their assessment plans to OAA by June 15. Individual surveys are not reviewed by AAC unless the department requests a special review or assistance with a specific assessment plan and/or result beyond the Annual Assessment Survey.

IV. DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

In preparing assessment documents, it is important to keep in mind the overall purpose of assessment. By assessing student learning outcomes, faculty should aspire to the following:

- Define the specific knowledge, abilities, values, and/or attitudes students in their respective programs should be able to demonstrate,
- Track, evaluate and analyze student performance on these outcomes, and
- Discuss, reflect on and take action in maintaining, reinforcing, and improving student achievement through active faculty engagement in the teaching process.

Program-level discussion of assessment documents should occur before a review by AAC. All assessment plans and PSLO's must be approved by the program faculty and the appropriate college/school assessment/curriculum review process prior to submission to the OAA for distribution to the AAC.

A. Assessment Plan Documents

Refer to the assessment plan template in Appendix C and posted on the AAC website (located at http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/governance/academic_assessment_committee/handbook.cfm). This template document includes instructions for crafting an assessment plan and further information on assessment plan elements can be found in Section V. of this handbook.

B. Revision of Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLO's) Documents

After approval by the program's college/school curriculum review process the program should send directly to the AAC:

- a cover memo describing the actions taken
- an updated Assessment Plan with the revised PSLO's integrated into the plan
- a word document with just the PSLO's as they should appear in the UAA catalog
- the PSLO tracking form available from the OAA or in the appendix of this document

C. Annual Assessment Survey Documents

Annual Assessment Surveys enable the AAC to report on the status of assessment activities at UAA for institutional, accreditation and BOR needs and purposes. Annual assessment work helps programs keep abreast of their graduate's attainment of program outcomes. Annual Assessment Surveys address some of the following items:

1. Is a current plan on file (either the UAA template or that of an approved external accreditation)? Will there be any revisions to the current plan this year?
2. Was assessment conducted according to the plan? What challenges were experienced?
3. What actions have or will be taken by the program as a result of this assessment, e.g. changes in course design and delivery, changes in assignments, changes in learning outcomes, changes in assessment measures, and/or changes in program curriculum?
4. What assessment activities are planned for the academic year following the year being assessed? Would you like any assistance from the AAC?

In aggregate, Assessment Surveys help the AAC analyze assessment across the institution and respond to requests from OAA and the Accreditation Team. This analysis is used to respond to Statewide, BOR, legislative, and NWCCU requests for information on student achievement of learning outcomes.

V. TERMS, DEFINITIONS & GUIDANCE

The following tables explain in more detail the purpose of each element within academic assessment documents. These are offered as guidance for faculty preparing academic assessment plans and five-year summaries and to facilitate conversation between program faculty and the AAC. More detailed discussions of methodology, issues, and examples can be found on the AAC website: http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/governance/academic_assessment_committee/handbook.cfm

These are the definitions that the AAC uses to give feedback on academic assessment plans. See the Academic Assessment Plan template for further instructions.

Plan Element	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.
Student Learning Outcomes: 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.

Continues below




Plan Element	Characteristic	Description
Student Learning Outcomes <i>Continued from above</i>	Achievable	Students can be reasonably expected to attain the outcomes.
	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.
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.	Description of measure	The description of each measure should be clear and complete to an outside observer. These descriptions are to be included in the appendix for each measure.
	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. At least one direct measure of each outcome is necessary. Having both direct and indirect data on an outcome gives programs a broader perspective on their students' performance.
	Indirect measures	"Indirect measures gather perceptions of learning, opinions about learning, or reflections on learning rather than direct demonstrations of the results of learning" ¹ 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.

Continues below

¹ http://www.engin.umich.edu/teaching/assess_and_improve/handbook/indirect.html

Plan Element	Characteristic	Description
<p>Measures</p> <p><i>Continued from above</i></p>	<p>Connection to outcomes</p>	<p>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 to 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 program outcome.</p>
	<p>Influences on data collection</p>	<p>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. This discussion should be found in the appendix describing each measure.</p>
<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>	<p>Faculty involvement in the assessment process</p>	<p>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.</p>
	<p>Timeline</p>	<p>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. The schedule of data collection should be clearly articulated in the plan.</p>
	<p>Currency</p>	<p>The plan is reviewed and/or revised regularly by the program's faculty.</p>
	<p>Responsible parties</p>	<p>The faculty responsible for coordination and implementation should be identified and supported in their assessment duties.</p>

VI. APPENDICES

Appendix	Item	Link / Embedded Document
A	BOR Policy – Academic Program Review	http://www.alaska.edu/bor/policy-regulations/ (see Chapter 10.06)
B	Academic Assessment Plan Template	 Acad. Assessment Plan Template.doc
C	Annual Academic Assessment Survey	 Annual Assessment Survey.doc
D	Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLO) Tracking Form	 PSLO Form_1-22-13.pdf