



RHODES
COLLEGE

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Administrative Unit Assessment Handbook

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

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OVERVIEW

What is Assessment?

Assessment is an ongoing process that allows an institution to evaluate and – where necessary – to improve its programs, services and operations. Assessment is a systematic approach to demonstrate continuous improvement in programs, services and operations. It is a key part of ensuring the **effectiveness of an institution**.

Assessment is expected to:

1. Be an ongoing process that serves as a formative means of assessing a unit's strategic vision.
2. Involve a systematic gathering, analysis and interpretation of evidence to determine how well each unit is meeting its own goals.
3. Use the assessment results to evaluate and improve programs, services or operations.

Why is Assessment Important?

We engage in assessment activities for four main reasons:

- **Improve** programs and services through assessment results that identify areas for change.
- **Support** decision-making processes, planning, program reviews and accountability.
- **Demonstrate** that a program or service is accomplishing what it claims it is accomplishing or that students are learning what it is intended that they learn.
- **Inform** students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders of the state of student learning or of a program or service and its impact.

How is Administrative Assessment related to SACS?

SACSCOC's *Principles of Accreditation* address the need for and purpose of administrative unit assessment in several key standards:

7.1 The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission. (Institutional Planning)

7.3 The institution identifies expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved. (Administrative effectiveness)

8.2 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

- c. Academic and student services that support student success. (Student outcomes: academic and student services)

12.1 The institution provides appropriate academic and student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission.

Information Services Governance Committee

As part of its charge, the Information Services Governance Committee reviews the assessment work of each administrative unit on campus with a view to facilitating assessment practices for administrative units of the college by identifying assessment tools, reviewing institutional data, and evaluating assessment plans and reports. The goal is to make sure that administrative units:

- have administrative goals, student learning outcomes – when applicable;
- maintain assessment records;
- and
- provide training in institutional effectiveness as needed.

The team reports annually to the officers of the college on the climate for assessment and the quality of assessment activities.

The Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs for Institutional Effectiveness co-chairs the IS Governance Committee along with the Chief Information Office of the institution, and each division of the college has a divisional liaison on the team. In addition, the Director of Assessment and the Director of Institutional Research are part of the team as well as representatives from key institutional constituencies (e.g., Data Services, the Registrar's Office, Student Academic Support Services etc.).

2018-2019 Membership

Committee Co-Chairs:

- Michelle Mattson (Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs for Institutional Effectiveness)
- José Rodriguez (CIO, Information Services)

• Committee Members:

- DeAnna Adams (College Registrar)
- Brian Braskich (Dir. of Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness)
- Darlene Brooks (Dir. of the Barret Library and IS Help Desk)
- Melissa Campbell (Student Life)
- Kathleen Cates (Assoc. Comptroller, Finance)
- Dawn Clement (Dir. of Institutional Research, Institutional Effectiveness)
- Kerry Connors (Sr. Director of Annual Giving, Alumni and Development)
- Gary Lindquister (Associate Provost, Academic Affairs)
- Kenny Morrell (Associate Professor of Greek and Roman Studies, Faculty Technology and Academic Space Committee)
- Justin McGregor (Dir. of Communication for Digital Services)
- Jeff Norris (Director of Admissions)
- Stacy Pennington (Dir. Infrastructure, Information Services)
- Leigh Powell (Business Systems Analyst, Human Resources)
- Harold Robinson (Dir. of Data Services)
- Klare Savka (Security Engineer, Information Services)
- Richie Trenthem (Dir. of Acad. Technologies, Information Services)

UNIT MISSION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The mission and goals of any administrative unit form the foundation for its assessment activities. Well-written and pragmatic statements of mission and goals are keys to good assessment.

Mission

Mission is a general statement succinctly outlining the overall purpose and function of the unit. A mission describes what the unit does and for whom. A mission should be aligned with the [College's vision statement](#). It should not change except in the event of fundamental changes to the role or purpose of the unit.

A mission statement should address:

- What is your department's purpose?
- What needs does it fulfill?
- Who does it exist to serve?
- How does it help the college fulfill its mission?
- What activities and functions does it perform?
- What sets it apart from other departments?

Goals or Objectives

Goals are statements about how each unit attempts to achieve its desired ends, i.e., how the unit will fulfill its mission. Goals are more specific than the mission and should connect directly to the unit's mission statement. They should be measurable objectives.

There are three types of objectives typically used for administrative units: providing and monitoring processes; fulfilling service obligations; and – in some administrative units – specific types of student learning.

| Type | Focus | Examples of Measurable Outcomes and Performance Benchmarks |
|--|---|---|
| Process | Focused on desired quality of key functions and services (i.e., timeliness, accuracy, efficiency, volume, responsiveness, compliance, etc.) | 1. Accounting Office will reduce vendor statement processing time from 7 to 4 hours. 2. Registrar's Office will shorten response time for transcript requests from 7 to 4 days. |
| Learning Outcome (Note: this is often not relevant for administrative units) | Focused on how services or educational support have impacted/changed a student (or faculty or staff member) in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude or values | 1. 80% of graduates seeking employment will have the ability to write an acceptable career résumé. 2. 75% of students seeking summer internships will be able to access and use on-line experiential learning search tool. |
| Satisfaction | Focused on levels of overall satisfaction with the services provided | 1. Increase student satisfaction with the overall on-line registration process from 70% to 80% by academic year 2017. 2. 80% of graduates using the Office of Career Development will be satisfied with their job advisement services. |

These examples of objectives are well written as they provide specific criteria for success.

Objectives (a.k.a. intended goals) should be **SMART**:

Each objective should be **Specific** to the unit.

- The objective should be associated with key processes and services provided to students, parents, employers, faculty members, etc.
- The objective should be distinctive to the unit that is conducting assessment.

The outcome should be **Measurable** and results-oriented.

- The objective should include quantifiable statements that can be used to determine progress toward the overall goal.
- The collection of accurate and reliable data should be feasible for the unit. In other words, no administrative unit can assess everything that it does. It is wise to focus on principle objectives and outcomes and assess those.
- The objective should produce results that can be used for program, service or operational improvements.

The objective should be **Attainable** and realistic.

- Consideration should be given to the available resources (e.g., staff, technology, assessment support, institutional-level surveys, etc.) in determining whether the desired outcomes are attainable and the collection of data for each objective is a realistic expectation.
- There should be a realistic level of improvement expected.
- Careful consideration should also be given to the timeframe established to achieve the expected unit outcomes.

The objective should be **Related** and **Relevant** to the unit's mission.

- The objective should focus on intentions that are critical to the unit and its mission.
- The objective should aid in identifying where program, service or operational improvements are needed.

The outcome should be **Timebound**.

- The objective should describe where the unit would like to be within a specified time period and when the assessment should be complete. In other words, whenever possible, an administrative unit should have performance benchmarks that demonstrate whether a particular objective or goal is being met.

EXAMPLES: 10% increase in funding within one year
 90% satisfaction rating for next year
 10% improvement in student performance within 12 months

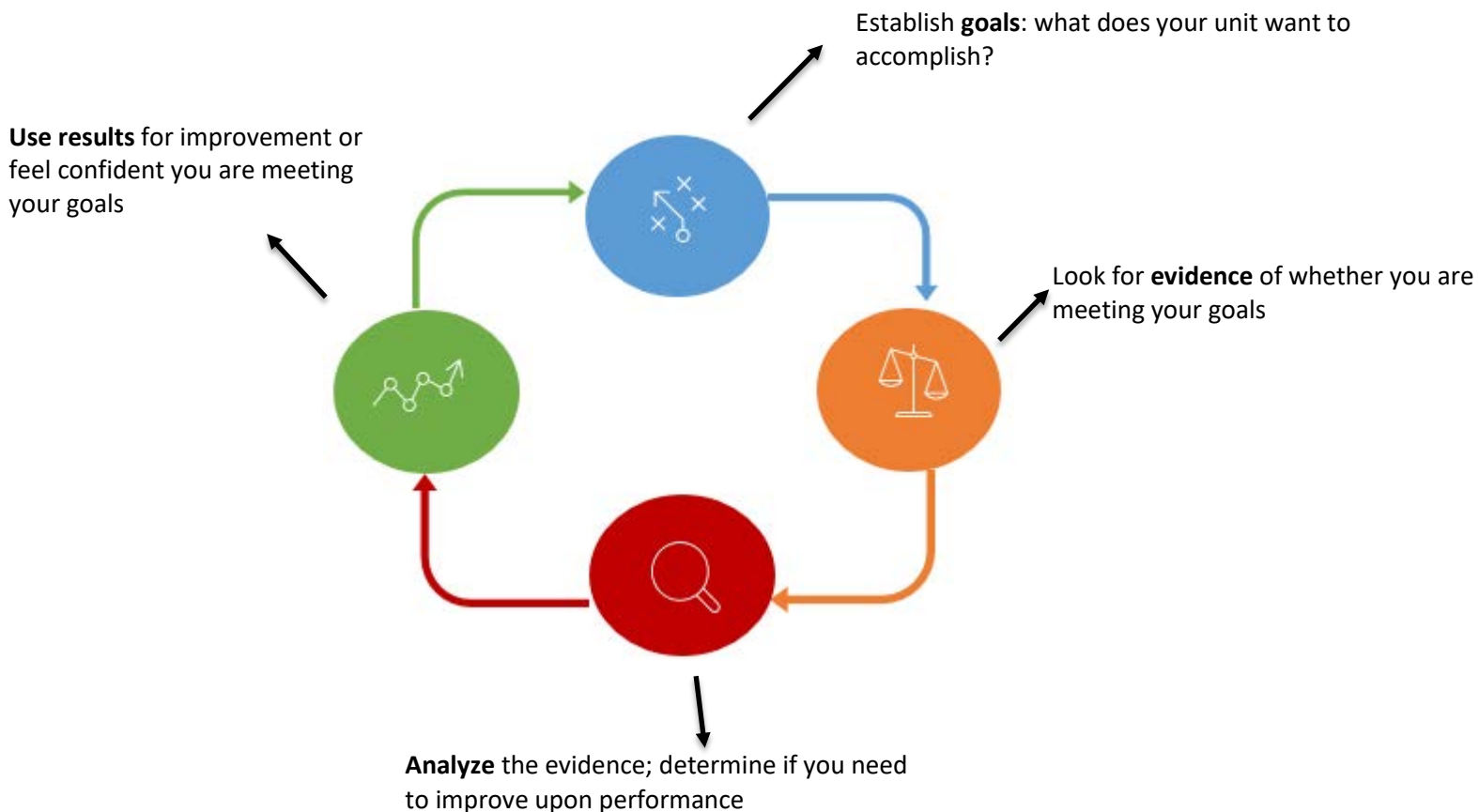
Outcomes may be for a single assessment cycle (e.g., *Reduce vendor statement processing time from 7 to 4 hours by May 2019*) or may continue for more than one cycle (e.g., *Increase student satisfaction with the overall online registration process from 70% to 80% by academic year 2017.*)

It may be helpful to consider SACSCOC requirements and expectations while creating objectives. (See

the SACSCOC *Resource Manual* for documentation requirements and questions for consideration.)

THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE

Assessment should be understood as a loop (or spiral) —a connected series of annual cycles—leading to continuous improvement in programs, services or operations.



The key elements of the annual assessment cycle are:

1. Identification of an **intended outcome** (related to objectives/goals)
2. Determination of the **means of assessment** (measures, methods and tools, required evidence)
3. Determination of **criteria for success** (targets, thresholds, benchmarks)
4. Collection and analysis of **data** (assessment findings and results)
5. Determination of ways to **use the findings** to improve programs, services or operations (modifications)
6. Implementation of **modifications** (changes based on assessment findings)
7. Identification of the **intended outcome** of the modification and the cycle continues....

ASSESSMENT PLANS

While assessment plans should be reviewed annually for relevance, they will likely not change considerably each year. They are a basic assessment plan. Unless the mission of a particular office

changes, there will likely be no need for any changes.

Assessment plans must be measurable, meaningful and manageable. In any given year units should assess the number of objectives that seems reasonable and appropriate for the unit considering the level of operations and staffing. It is important to remember that not every objective must be assessed every year.

A standard template is provided for assessment plans (see the IE website). The template is designed to accommodate three goals; however, units may adjust these Microsoft Word documents to fit their number of goals.

The components of the assessment plan are:

| Vision | Office Objectives/ Goals | Measurements/Evidence | Responsible Party/ies | Date/Frequency of Analysis |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Portion of the Rhodes College Vision supported* | Specific goals | Means of assessing | Who will insure the collection/analysis of measurements | When analysis will happen |

*Student access, student learning, student engagement, student inspiration

MEANS OF ASSESSMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

Good assessment uses multiple means of assessment for a given objective. **Direct** assessment is based on an analysis of data collected (for example, web analytics). **Indirect** assessment is based on an analysis of reported perceptions about goals (for example, satisfaction survey results). Direct assessment is preferable to indirect; therefore, it is suggested that each objective have at least one direct method of assessment.

It is helpful to determine a schedule for data collection at the time the assessment plan is created. **What** data will be collected; **where** the data will be collected; **when** the data will be collected; and **who** is responsible for collecting the data. Data can be collected as soon as it becomes available even if the analysis of the data will take place later in the year. If the same data are being collected in multiple years, collect the data at the same time each year to ensure its integrity and validity.

Only collect data that is useful and will provide information that can help to improve the program or service. Do not collect unnecessary data.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

The criteria for success should have a specific target number that indicates the level of accomplishment. This can include a number or percentage of people, activities or items, a level of proficiency or a combination of the two. State the criteria in terms of reasonable percentages, percentiles, averages or other quantitative measures. For example,

- Student wait time for registration will **decrease 20%**
- At least **75% of the students** living in the residence halls will report a level of satisfaction with the overall experience at a **3 (satisfactory)** or above on a 5 point scale

TIPS FOR COMPLETING ASSESSMENT PLANS

Some helpful tips for completing assessment plans:

- Be realistic, not overly ambitious, in outlining your assessment plan.
- Involve all members of your staff in designing, implementing and carrying out the assessment process. Staff participation and ownership are key to the success of an administrative assessment plan.
- Avoid words such as “improve” or “enhance” in your goals and objectives unless you have a clear baseline and target for the change.
- Be sure that your goals and objectives are not tasks. It is very difficult to assess a task. Why is it important to you to complete a certain task? That is likely your objective!
- Be specific, e.g., what assessment data will you collect? How?
- Provide at least one direct measure for each objective being assessed.
- Write clearly and concisely. Do not use jargon or professional terms that someone outside your area of expertise will not understand.
- If you cannot specifically describe how the findings from your assessment activities can be used to improve your program, services or operations, you should reconsider your proposed means of assessment.
- Close the loop! If you collected baseline data in the previous year or otherwise did not bring your assessment activities to conclusion, i.e., showing the results of any modifications made, be sure to include this objective again in your plan.

Occasionally, an assessment plan may need to change mid-year due to changing circumstances. This notation and the rationale should be made clear in the assessment report submitted at the end of the year

ASSESSMENT TRACKING REPORTS (available on the IE website)

Assessment tracking reports are submitted just before the beginning of the academic year. The assessment report provides the results of the unit’s assessment activities during the previous year and the ways the results are being used to improve the programs, services or operations of the unit.

In their assessment reports units provide what they learned by conducting assessment activities for whichever goals/objectives were scheduled to be assessed in a given year and how they will use this information for improvement. Specifically, units are expected to provide a summary of the results of their assessment activities, to analyze and draw conclusions from these results, to outline specific ways the results will be used for improvement, to specify modifications that are being made based on these results and the intended outcome of these modifications, along with any budget or resource implications for the modification.

The basic information requested in an assessment activity tracking form includes the following:

Administrative Goals: (please include only one goal per tracking form)

Types of Measures/Tools (indicate whether direct or indirect measure):

Desired Results/Benchmarks:

Describe the data/evidence collection process:

Note: In the assessment tracking report, provide a summary or highlights of the data collected. Provide the complete results in the appendices in a format that facilitates its use. Be sure to indicate in the report where in the appendices the supporting data may be found. Graphs, tables and charts may be helpful in presenting results.

Results:

Note: Clearly state whether the program objectives (intended outcomes) were achieved at the established performance level.

In analyzing the data, consider questions such as:

- Are there patterns in the data?
- Were the targets met?
- Are the results of sufficient quantity?
- Could the results be improved?

Comparison with past results:

How were results shared and with whom:

Improvement Plan:

How results were used for improvements regarding the administrative goals of your office, including improvement of the assessment tools and/or process if necessary:

Note: The results of the assessment should be used to develop an action plan to improve the program or service provided or to facilitate the achievement of the objective **if** the criteria for success were not met. What change or modification can be made to positively impact the outcome? Changes do not have to be extreme or on a large scale. Changes may reflect changes to the program or service, changes to processes or changes to the assessment plan. Changes must be tied to the assessment results.

If changes have already been implemented, what was the outcome? If changes will be implemented in the following year, be sure to include this objective in next year's assessment plan.

TIPS FOR COMPLETING ASSESSMENT REPORTS

Some helpful tips for completing assessment reports:

- Set up an annual assessment calendar for your unit.
- Take time to complete a realistic and measurable assessment plan.
- Follow your plan and collect data throughout the year. Assessment cannot be conducted as you write your report.
- Be specific, e.g., what assessment data did you collect? Provide the data in the appendices in a format that is easily understandable and clearly linked to the objective.
- Summarize the data in the narrative section of the report and cite the location of the data in the appendices.
- Ways of showing include providing frequencies, percentages and graphs.
- If the data is qualitative (focus groups, interviews, open-ended questions), count positive versus negative responses or count the number of times a subject was mentioned or give a representative

quote.

- Don't be afraid to admit that you didn't make your target, or to adjust it in the light of new information. Assessment is about continuous improvement not institutional judgment or critique.
- Write clearly and concisely. Do not provide extraneous information. Do not use jargon or professional terms that someone outside your area of expertise will not understand.
- As you write your report begin to think about how your proposed modifications will inform your objectives for next year. Remember, assessment is a spiral and you are just completing one ring in the spiral.

RESOURCES

Professional Associations and Organizations

NACUBO (Business) www.nacubo.org/

CUPA (Human Resources) www.cupahr.org/

ALA (Libraries) www.ala.org/

Oberlin Group (Libraries) www.oberlingroup.org/

CASE (Advancement) www.case.org/

NASFAA (Financial Aid) www.nasfaa.org/

Assessment Commons

<http://assessmentcommons.org/assessing-administrative-support-units/>

BENCHMARKING GROUPS

Council for the Advancement of Standards www.cas.edu/

Consortium for Higher Education Benchmarking Analysis www.cheba.com/

Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) www.hedsconsortium.org/

Appendix A – Peer Institutions

Appendix B – Units Completing Assessment Plans

Appendix A

Institutions for Comparative Information

Peer Institutions

[Beloit College](#)

[Centre College](#)

[Earlham College](#)

[Occidental College](#)

[Randolph College](#)

[Rhodes College](#)

[Scripps College](#)

[Sewanee: The University of the South](#)

[Whitman College](#)

Regional Peer Institutions

[Birmingham Southern College](#)

[Centenary College of Louisiana](#)

[Centre College](#)

[Davidson College](#)

[Furman University](#)

[Hendrix College](#)

[Millsaps College](#)

[Morehouse College](#)

[Rhodes College](#)

[Rollins College](#)

[Spelman College](#)

[Southwestern University](#)

[Trinity University](#)

[University of Richmond](#)

[Sewanee: The University of the South](#)

[Washington and Lee University](#)

High Aspiration Comparative Institutions

[Bowdoin College](#)

[Grinnell College](#)

[Haverford College](#)

[Macalester College](#)

[Reed College](#)

[Smith College](#)

Appendix B
Units Completing Assessment Plans by Division

Office of Academic Affairs

- The Buckman Center for International Education
- The Curb Institute
- The Office of Fellowships and Undergraduate Research
- Information Services
 - Barret Library
 - Instructional Technology
- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- The Math Resource Room
- The Turley Memphis Center
- Mock Trial
- The Office of the Registrar
- The Writing Center

Office of Development (one report)

Office of Finance

- The Finance Office
- Human Resources
- Physical Plant

Office of Student Life

- Athletics
- Moore Moore Health Center
- Chaplain
- Counseling Center
- Career Services
- Student Accessibility Services
- Student Counseling Services
- Residence Life
- Student Activities
- Bonner Center
- New Student Programs & Leadership
- Greek Life
- Community Standards
- Campus Safety

Office of Enrollment and Communications

- The Office of Admission
- The Office of Communications
- Data Services
- The Financial Aid Office