# Assessment Guidelines
## For Programs, Majors, and Minors

### Organization

**Coordinator/Coordinating**
The chair or departmental executive committee should appoint a member of the faculty to be responsible for coordinating departmental assessments. A small group consisting of coordinators for specific programs, multi-section courses, and/or capstones might also be assembled; participants might be called upon to administer assessments in their classes or the courses they coordinate.

**Learning Goals**
Goals should be established or, if already in place, reviewed for all programs. Learning goals should clearly articulate expected outcomes of student learning upon completion of a program (e.g. major, minor, graduate degree). These outcomes should be **directly** measurable (i.e., student assignments), although indirect measures are also useful (i.e., student surveys, feedback from student focus groups).

Learning goals should follow the model that the college has adopted for learning goals associated with courses: "By the time that students have completed [the program/major/minor], they will be able to…"

- See: http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/facultyhandbook/LearningGoals.htm

For each goal, use verbs that make clear to students (and instructors) what students will be able to do upon the completion of the program. (The emphasis is on the student and not the faculty member.) Use verbs such as those contained in typical discussions of "Bloom's taxonomy." In writing student learning goals use active verbs. Examples might include "[…students will be able to…] list, explain, summarize, interpret, compare/contrast, design, evaluate, analyze, etc." Student learning goals should be appropriate to the level of each course or program. (See Appendix A).

**Curriculum Mapping**.
Delineate the course(s) in which each program goal is addressed. If a particular goal is not addressed in any of the program's courses, re-evaluate the goals and the scope of the required courses. Either or both can be changed (or proposals can be drafted to begin that process) in order to bring the program's goals and curriculum into alignment. (See Appendix B).

### Assessment Plan

The components delineated below should be part of the assessment process and report within all college assessments. Once learning goals have been established and a coordinator selected or a committee formed, it is important to have a clearly defined assessment plan.

- Design an assessment plan/schedule that identifies which learning goals will be assessed and when.
- Create an assessment; decide what are the specific, measurable characteristics or changes that represent achievement of a learning goal. This can be done using both direct and indirect measures. This evidence demonstrates that *actual learning* has occurred relating to a specific content or skill. Indirect methods, such as grades, reveal characteristics associated with learning, but they only imply that learning has occurred. (See Appendix C).

- Some assessment instruments can obtain information on multiple goals at one time. This should be planned and decided upon before beginning an assessment.
- Create specific grading criteria for the assessment. Clearly explain the method used to measure student learning relative to a given outcome. One example of developing such criteria can be based on a rubric. A rubric is a scoring tool that lays out specific expectations for an assignment. For many disciplines, rubrics can be found on the web. They can employ a three- or four-point scale, but should be as specific as possible about what the characteristics of a grade are. (See Appendix D).
- Determine where the assessment is to be administered: if the program includes a capstone course, that often will be the logical place. Again, the assessment can be a required or extra-credit assignment, but it should be as organic as possible to the course and the program. That said, the assessment should engage as many students as possible; for that reason required assignments work best.
    - There is no fixed upward or lower limit of the number of students who need to be assessed: small programs will assess fewer students than large programs.
    - We recommend that programs establish a minimum proportion of students they expect to meet or exceed the learning-outcome expectations.
    - Assessments can be qualitative, quantitative, or both.

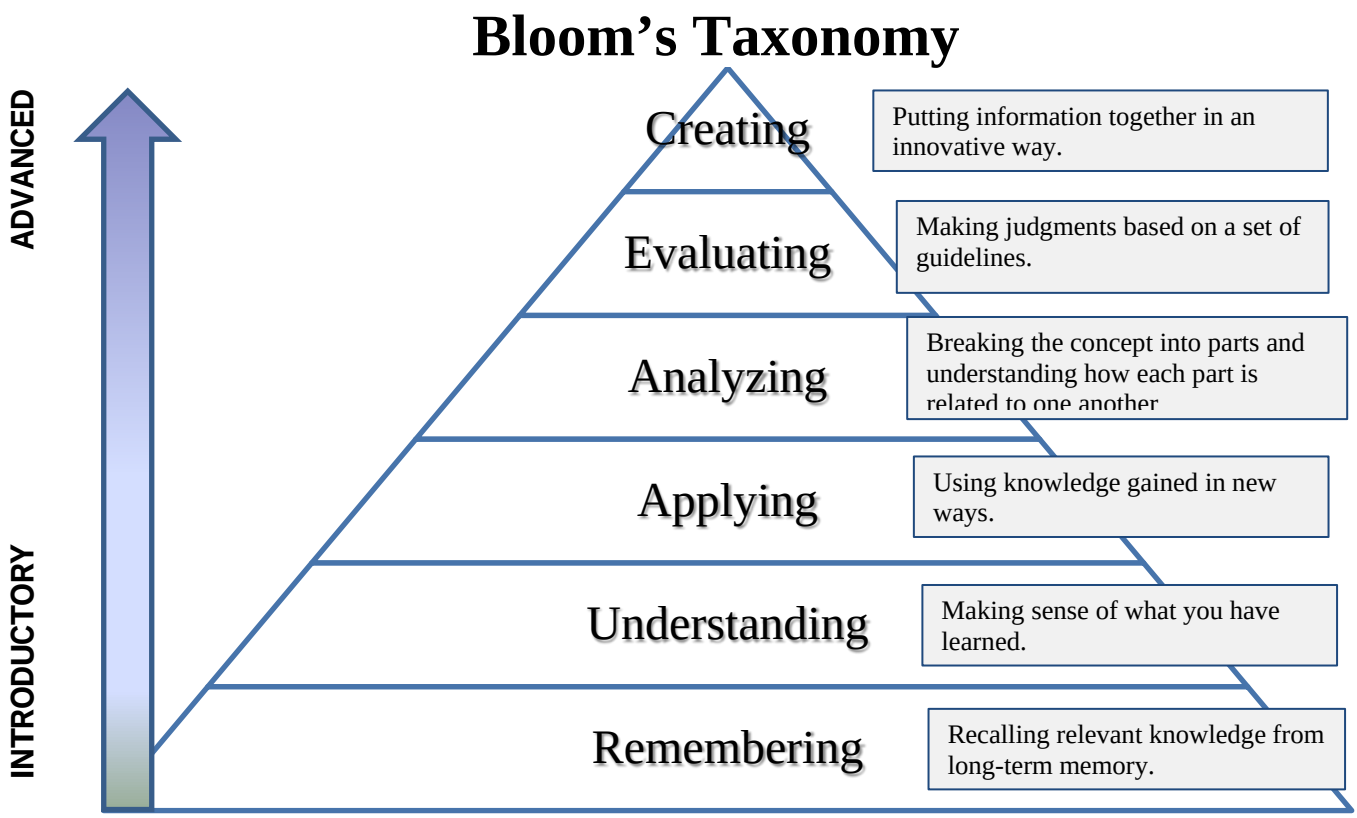
## "Closing the Loop" – Assessment Feedback

As results from assessments are collected and analyzed, they should be used to determine how well students are learning and how this learning can be improved at both the program and course level. This assessment process provides feedback for continuous improvement and modification of courses and programs. Results of assessment should be shared within a department and discussions should be had about how to foster better learning and to help students meet learning goals. Those discussions can fall into the following categories (or some combination of the five):

- Changes in *what* content is taught: Should a course include specific material, or emphasize that material more (or less)?
- Changes in *where* content is taught (mapping): Should specific topics be offered in individual specialized courses or across several courses in a program?
- Changes in *how* content is taught: Should students take core courses early in their program and in progression or should they have greater flexibility?
- Changes to the learning outcomes: Adding, modifying, or removing goals may be necessary and is a natural part of the assessment process.
- Changes to the criteria for success: What kind of assessment results would cause faculty who teach in your program to consider the program successful?

Results should be shared, discussed, and acted upon within each department. Finally, a report should be submitted to the Director of Academic Assessment. (See Appendix E).

**Appendix A – Bloom's Taxonomy**




## Verbs Useful for Stating Learning Outcomes

| Remembering | Understanding | Applying | Analyzing | | Evaluating | Creating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Define | Translate | Interpret | Distinguish | Inspect | Judge | Combine |
| Describe | Restate | Apply | Analyze | Debate | Appraise | Compose |
| List | Discuss | Employ | Differentiate | Inventory | Evaluate | Construct |
| Name | Describe | Use | Calculate | Question | Rate | Design |
| Recall | Recognize | Demonstrate | Experiment | Relate | Compare | Develop |
| Record | Explain | Dramatize | Test | Solve | Value | Formulate |
| Relate | Express | Practice | Compare | Examine | Revise | Invent |
| Repeat | Identify | Illustrate | Criticize | Categorize | Score | Make |
| Underline | Locate | Operate | Diagram | | Select | Originate |
| | Report | Schedule | | | Choose | Organize |
| | Review | Shop | | | Assess | Produce |
| | Tell | Sketch | | | Estimate | Tell |
| | | | | | Measure | Compile |
| | | | | | | Devise |
| | | | | | | Generate |
| | | | | | | Propose |

**Appendix B – Sample Curriculum Map**

| Program Learning Goals | Required Core Course | | | | | | | | ELECTIVES | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Course # | | | | | | | | Course # | | | | | | |
| **Learning Goal 1** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Learning Goal 2** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Legend
I = Introduced
R = Reinforced
M = Mastery
A = Assessed
RA = Reinforced/Assessed
MA = Mastery/ Assessed
Blank boxes indicate content is not specifically addressed in a particular course

**Appendix C – Direct and Indirect Measures in Assessment adapted from Middle States Commission on Higher Education *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources***

| | Direct Measures | Indirect Measures |
|---|---|---|
| **Course Level** | *Course and homework assignments<br>*Examinations and quizzes<br>*Standardized tests<br>*Term papers and reports<br>*Observations of field work, internship performance, service learning, or clinical experiences<br>*Research projects<br>*Class discussion participation<br>*Case study analysis<br>*Rubric (a criterion-based rating scale) scores for writing, oral presentations, and performances<br>*Artistic performances and products<br>*Grades that are based on explicit criteria related to clear learning goals | *Course evaluations<br>*Test blueprints (outlines of the concepts and skills covered on tests)<br>*Percent of class time spent in active learning<br>*Number of student hours spent on service learning<br>*Number of student hours spent on homework<br>*Number of student hours spent at intellectual or cultural activities related to the course<br>*Grades that are not based on explicit criteria related to clear learning goals |
| **Program Level** | *Capstone projects, senior theses, exhibits, or performances<br>*Pass rates or scores on licensure, certification, or subject area tests<br>*Student publications or conference presentations<br>*Employer and internship supervisor ratings of students' performance | *Focus group interviews with students, faculty members, or employers<br>*Registration or course enrollment information<br>*Department or program review data<br>*Job placement<br>*Employer or alumni surveys<br>*Student perception surveys<br>*Proportion of upper-level courses compared to the same program at other institutions<br>*Graduate school placement rates |
| **Institutional Level** | *Performance on tests of writing, critical thinking, or general knowledge<br>*Rubric (criterion-based rating scale) scores for class assignments in General Education, interdisciplinary core courses, or other courses required of all students<br>*Performance on achievement tests<br>*Explicit self-reflections on what students have learned related to institutional programs such as service learning (e.g., asking students to name the three most important things they have learned in a program). | *Locally-developed, commercial, or national surveys of student perceptions or self-report of activities (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement)<br>*Transcript studies that examine patterns and trends of course selection and grading<br>*Annual reports including institutional benchmarks, such as graduation and retention rates, grade point averages of graduates, etc. |

**Appendix D – Sample Presentation Grading Rubric adapted from Rcampus**
**http://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?code=Y4834&sp=yes**

| **Presentation Rubric** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Poor**<br>**1 pts** | **Fair**<br>**2 pts** | **Good**<br>**3 pts** | **Excellent**<br>**4 pts** |
| **Organization** | Poor<br><br>Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information. | Fair<br><br>Audience has difficulty following presentation because student jumps around. | Good<br><br>Student presents information in logical sequence which audience can follow. | Excellent<br><br>Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow. |
| **Subject Knowledge** | Poor<br><br>Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject. | Fair<br><br>Student is uncomfortable with information and is able to answer only rudimentary questions. | Good<br><br>Student is at ease with expected answers to all questions, but fails to elaborate. | Excellent<br><br>Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required) by answering all class questions with explanations and elaboration. |
| **Graphics** | Poor<br><br>Student uses superfluous graphics or no graphics | Fair<br><br>Student occasionally uses graphics that rarely support text and presentation. | Good<br><br>Student's graphics relate to text and presentation. | Excellent<br><br>Student's graphics explain and reinforce screen text and presentation. |
| **Mechanics** | Poor<br><br>Student's presentation has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors. | Fair<br><br>Presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors. | Good<br><br>Presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors. | Excellent<br><br>Presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors. |
| **Eye Contact** | Poor<br><br>Student reads all of report with no eye contact. | Fair<br><br>Student occasionally uses eye contact, but still reads most of report. | Good<br><br>Student maintains eye contact most of the time but frequently returns to notes. | Excellent<br><br>Student maintains eye contact with audience, seldom returning to notes. |
| **Elocution** | Poor<br><br>Student mumbles, incorrectly pronounces terms, and speaks too quietly for students in the back of class to hear. | Fair<br><br>Student's voice is low. Student incorrectly pronounces terms. Audience members have difficulty hearing presentation. | Good<br><br>Student's voice is clear. Student pronounces most words correctly. Most audience members can hear presentation. | Excellent<br><br>Student uses a clear voice and correct, precise pronunciation of terms so that all audience members can hear presentation. |

**Appendix E – Sample Assessment Report Guideline Questions**
**Adapted from California State University, Sacramento**

Please answer the following questions and make sure the answers to each question are written in a way that is easy for the general public and for the students, faculty, staff, and administrators to understand and to use. To ensure that these diverse readers have enough information to evaluate all parts of the report -- the learning outcomes, the methods/data, the criteria/standards of performance, the interpretations, and the conclusions -- please make sure you have provided enough information about them and how you have selected your sample (e.g. students or their work) and how you have analyzed and interpreted the data. There is no specific length expectation.

1. As a result of last year's assessment effort, have you implemented any changes for your assessment including learning outcomes, assessment plan, assessment tools (methods, rubrics, curriculum map, or key assignment etc.), and/or the university baccalaureate learning goals?
a. If so, what are those changes? How did you implement those changes?
b. How do you know if these changes have achieved the desired results?
c. If no, why not?

2. As a result of last year's assessment effort, have you implemented any other changes at the department, the college or the university, including advising, co-curriculum, budgeting and planning?
a. If so, what are those changes? How did you implement those changes?
b. How do you know if these changes have achieved the desired results?
c. If no, why not?

3. What PROGRAM (not course) learning outcome(s) have you assessed this academic year?

4. What method(s)/measure(s) have you used to collect the data?

5. What are the criteria and/or standards of performance for the program learning outcome?

6. What data have you collected? What are the results and findings, including the percentage of students who meet each standard?
a. In what areas are students doing well and achieving the expectations?
b. In what areas do students need improvement?

7. As a result of this year's assessment effort, do you anticipate or propose any changes for your program (e.g. structures, content, or learning outcomes)?
a. If so, what changes do you anticipate? How do you plan to implement those changes?
b. How will you know if these changes have achieved the desired results?

8. Which program learning outcome(s) do you plan to assess next year? How?