

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

The assessment plan should be a living document that changes and grows with an office.

Assessment activities within the administrative and educational support units should be guided by the following principles:

1. A comprehensive, systematic, and ongoing assessment program is a necessary condition for continuous improvement and demonstrates a true commitment to excellence.
2. Assessment allows us to examine the relationship among our mission, actions and our outcomes.
3. Assessment should be inclusive, involving students, staff and administrators.
4. Assessment plans should involve multiple measures, assessing both outcomes and process variables, which can be linked to improvement opportunities.
5. The purpose of assessment is to offer students the best living/learning environment possible and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of all the offices that support this environment.
6. Assessment reports or information on closing the loop should be communicated.
7. An effective feedback loop ensures that assessment results are utilized in long term planning and strategic decision making.
8. We cannot assess all things at once. Therefore, program outcomes must be prioritized with an eye toward maximum improvement.
9. Assessment responsibilities should be indicated in the performance programs of a top level administrator of each unit. Assessment should become a routine part of supervisor-supervisee meetings of Vice-Presidents and direct reports.
10. The assessment process itself should be assessed regularly for refinement and enhancement.

A Brief Assessment Example

Outcome	Task (concrete activities or ways of observing goal attainment)	Measure (what can you use to measure the extent to which the goal has been met)	Targets	Results
Increase student awareness of outreach programs	Recruit 3 students from each residence hall to talk about program	Pre- and post- survey of student awareness of outreach programs	Benchmarks	Goal Met/Unmet

TAXONOMY OF ASSESSMENT CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

In order to review the assessment plans and complete reports, the important terms associated with Assessment are explained below. The reviewer is expected to read them and clarify their thoughts before meeting with their division units.

PART I

I. Define the Mission Statement (Unit/Mission/Purpose)

A mission statement is a description of what a division, unit, a department or an office does, and what philosophy and principles guide it. This statement should be succinct, but convey how the unit supports the mission of the institution. A mission statement can be rewritten if the unit experiences a significant change.

II: Annual Unit/School Outcomes

This is telling you what you want to happen for your school or unit.

Administrative outcomes are identified as the important initiatives or improvements for the assessment year, which are also referred as goals. Units do not need to use their normal operations as part of their initiatives, but focus on improvements and special projects that will enhance the unit. The intent of assessment is to keep units moving toward improvement in their operations. For Ramapo we call them "Outcomes".

Outcomes are statements of intention, describing a task to accomplish or a goal to meet. They are specific, measurable, and quantifiable statements that can be used to determine progress towards the overall mission of the unit. Outcomes can be reasonably achieved within an expected timeframe and with available resources. Outcomes must be tied to the strategic plan.

Formula

A general formula for writing an objective can be employed, although following this formula is not required: Objective = Target/subject + verb/action + object + modifiers

Example: Increase research skills of researchers by developing and conducting workshops and seminars on analyzing research.

Increase (verb) research skills (object) of Ramapo researchers (target) by developing and conducting workshops and seminars on analyzing research (modifiers).

III: Institutional Goal, Institutional Strategic Objectives, Institutional Strategic Outcomes

Refer to New Strategic Plan "Strategic Plan 2018-2021 – Fulfilling Our Promise"

<https://www.ramapo.edu/president/stratplan/>

IV. Division/Unit/School 3 Year Cumulative target

A broad target that unit has developed by the unit in collaboration with their supervisors.

PART II

II. Unit/School Annual Task/Strategies

This step explains how you will achieve the outcomes. These are the activities that are designed to help unit accomplish the outcomes. Activities designed to achieve the outcomes.

IV. Identify Measures for Each Objective, and a Target for Each Measure

A measure identifies evidence and methods you will use to determine whether you achieved expected results and provide evidence that the unit is accomplishing its objectives. Measures should be quantitative.

In collecting this evidence, the unit should learn two things: (1) whether the objective is being met, (2) where there is room for improvement toward the objective. For each objective, at least 1- 2 measures must be identified to gather this needed information, ideally one direct and one indirect. Each objective must have at least one direct measure.

Each objective must have at least one direct measure associated with it, but multiple direct measures are often used to validate evidence. For example, an office might identify “Replace trips to the Coast for meetings with conference calls” as an objective. They could use “Compare number of trips to the coast,” and “Compare number of meetings held via teleconference” as measures.

There are two types of measures, direct and indirect.

Direct measures are more powerful because they provide data that correlate exactly with the objective. Direct measure explains what specific activity will be undertaken to show the extent to which an objective has been accomplished, and to provide information that may be used to make decisions for improvements in following years.

Direct Measure Example: Count the number of flyers sent to prospective students. (To fit the objective “increase number of prospective students sent flyers.”)

Indirect measures are valid if paired with a direct measure, but they are weak in terms of evidence. Indirect measures ask for opinion or perception about an outcome that is otherwise measurable. Student surveys, alumni surveys, and focus groups are examples of indirect measures.

Indirect Measure Example: Survey customers about their satisfaction with the number of parking spaces available for visitors. (To fit the objective “increase the number of parking spaces available for visitors.”)

IV. Creating a Target

Targets should flow easily from the measures that are set. Targets have a single purpose, which is to

communicate clearly the level accomplishment for the particular measure. Targets must always indicate what is expected to be achieved in this single, current administrative year.

Often referred as Benchmarks, specific numbers targets must have specific numbers in them which indicate the level of accomplishment for the measure. Targets can indicate a number or percentage of items, people, or activities, or they can indicate a designated level of proficiency, or both.

Target example #1, the target is the percentage of members who will participate in the “Biggest Winner” campaign at the ZZZ Center: 5% of ZZZ Center members will enroll in the “Biggest Winner” campaign.

Target example #2, the level of proficiency is indicated: “The mean of students’ rating of ‘speediness of refund process’ will increase to 4.0 (mean = 3.0 last year).”

Target example #3, two targets indicate the percentage of staff members and an expected level of proficiency: 100% of staff members who attend the Requisition Entry Training will answer 7 out of 10 questions correctly on a 10-question quiz at the end of the training session.

There is no easy rule for determining what the targets should be for any objective. Generally, a unit has an idea of the current level of achievement and defines a new target from that, or they have a desired level of achievement and work toward that. The Office of Institutional Research can help you with setting benchmarks if needed.

Targets Formula:

Target = Level + subject + action + object + modifiers

Target Example: 90% (level) of first year experience students (target) will rate on a customer satisfaction survey (action) their Preview experience (object) as a 3 (satisfactory) or better on a 5-point scale (modifiers).

Definitions

It is important to note that targets must be clear not just in numbers, but in words.

“Satisfactory” and “successful” are positive, but they are not commonly understood. A better way to define these concepts is to share the rating scale. Does “satisfactory” mean 3 out of 5 points? Does successful mean fewer than 5 mistakes? Define a target so that the meaning is easily understood.

Final thoughts on measures

Measures may not tell you why objectives are or are not being met. However, they should be specific enough to answer whether or not the objective is being met. When the expected levels of achievement are not met, the measures should help lead the unit to identify problem areas and decide on actions to improve the results.

V. Record Findings

At the end of the administrative year, each unit must report the findings, action plan(s), and analysis. The first step is to collect the findings (or results) associated with each measure. Findings are merely the quantifiable data, without any analysis, that result when the measures listed in the assessment plan are completed. The data entered as Findings should indicate the results as they are phrased in the measure description.

Example 1: Student satisfaction survey showed an increase of 5% in overall satisfaction between 03-04 and 04-05. (03-04: n=25; mean = 3.82) (04-05: n=27; mean = 4.01)

Example 2: Random analysis revealed 70% of payments were issued prior to purchase order due date.

As with the targets, specific numbers are essential for findings. The actual percentage or numbers that resulted from the measures are the focus of findings. If there is a small sample or number, that number (the “n”) should be reported as well, since it provides context for the results.

VI. Closing the Loop - Use of Results

This refers to analyze findings and identifying “Action Plans” for the next academic year. Analyze the data to identify if the goals were met or unmet, i.e., (1) Could the results be improved? (2) Is the objective and/or measure useful? (3) What are the next efforts that will best contribute to growing the unit?

At this point, the unit that defined the objectives and measures for the assessment plan should reconvene to look at the data. The DEC team should determine by the raw data if the objective’s target level was met, partially met, or not met. You will also need to determine what further action is needed. This is the actual “assessment” part of the assessment process.

Action plans cannot be written unless the team who was involved in creating the assessment plan has analyzed and discussed the findings. Analysis should involve asking a few questions about the results of each measure. What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives? What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

There are other questions you should consider in reflecting on the results and thinking about your next steps. What do you now know about the stated objective and target, in terms of how they will contribute to your unit? Who/what was positively impacted and how? What part of the objective was not met? Why was the target or why wasn’t the 10 target, achieved? The most important question: how will you use this information to improve your unit? If you can answer that last question, you are ready to proceed in creating your action plan.

Action Plan

An action plan is the follow-up to the assessment just conducted. Actions must be identified for each objective, even if that action is to replace the objective with another one. Actions should

also be as specific as possible, and should show that the team has thought through the results. If you found that conducting a satisfaction survey every 6 months delivered good information and want to do more of them, identify a number or range (2-3, for example) instead of just saying “more”. If you found that surveying students did not reveal useful information, but asking faculty did, indicate that surveys will be conducted with faculty only.

Action plans also require identifying the team or person who will be responsible for the action, so take the time to think through who the appropriate person is to carry out that step.

Since assessment is cyclical, you are getting close to closing the loop. In identifying your next actions, you are essentially designing your next assessment plan.

Step VII: Write Assessment Report

A brief assessment report will be created and submitted to AAC for their review to ensure compliance with your findings, analysis, and action Plans.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. Who is required to complete an institutional effectiveness plan?

A1. All administrators are expected to complete effectiveness plans.

Q2. How do I input my IE Plan?

A2. Paper templates are available to input the information. These would be transcribed in SPOL software later.

Q3. Who will review my assessment Plan?

A3. The DEC will review the plan based on a rubric developed by AAC.

Q4. How many outcomes should I include in my IE plans?

A4. Three is recommended but should not exceed 10.

Q5. What is the criterion for developing a good outcome measure?

A5. SMART – Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Result Oriented and Time bound.

Q6. What does outcome map have to connect to?

A6. Connection needs to be made with a goal in the strategic plan, a core value, or the college’s mission.

Q7. Is there any training available for IE?

A7. Yes. For questions related to clarifying the concepts:

- Gurvinder Khaneja (ext. 7766) or Brittany Goldstein (ext. 7609);

For questions related entering information in SPOL:

- call Dorothy Echols-Tobe (ext. 7008).