THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE GUIDE TO PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Developed by the Assessment Steering Committee

October 2021

Second Edition

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In this *Guide*, you will find information about what program assessment is and why it's important at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT Knoxville).

There are basic steps in a quality assessment process, which are outlined in the following pages, from planning to reporting. Details are included that include writing student learning outcomes that can be assessed, describing various assessment methods and why program faculty might choose one over another.

Additionally, there is instruction on using the Anthology (formerly Campus Labs) Planning module for entering assessment plans and reporting results. Lastly, the meta-assessment process here at UT Knoxville is explained, as well as the connection between assessment and the institution's accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

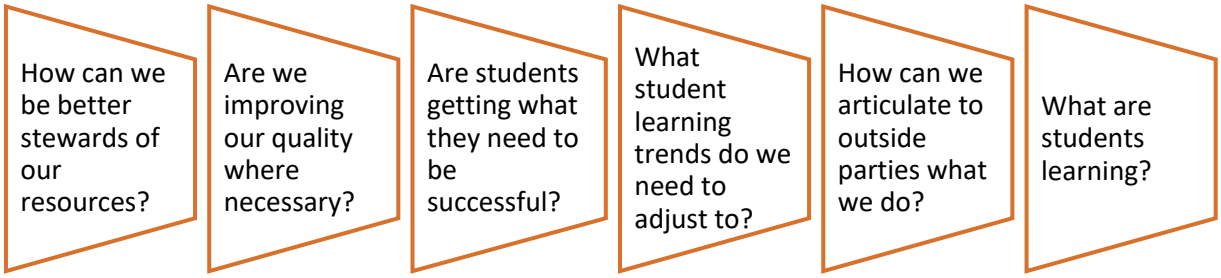
An important goal for UT Knoxville is to establish a culture of assessment throughout the institution. A "culture of assessment" is a set of pervasive actions and behaviors by staff across an organization that focus on the collection, analysis, and use of data to make decisions regarding the accountability and improvement of programs and services.

WHY DO ASSESSMENT?

Program assessment involves providing evidence of the effectiveness of courses and curriculum. While reporting this evidence may fulfill programmatic accreditation requirements, it is primarily useful for determining whether the college, department, or faculty is achieving identified student outcomes.

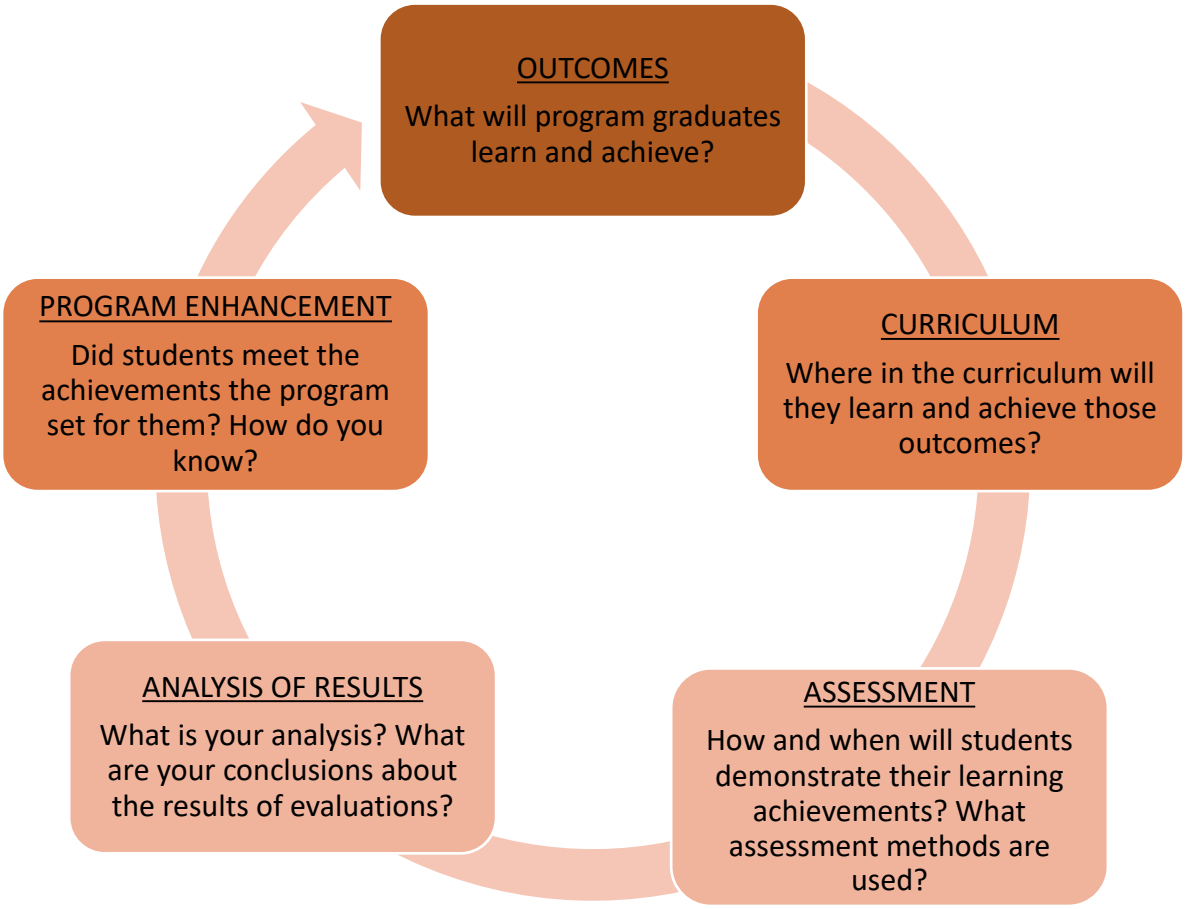
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT Knoxville) is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), yet assessment practices and the culture of assessment at the university extend beyond SACSCOC to include many other accreditation agencies. In accordance with SACSCOC requirements, student learning must be assessed each year. However, assessment is important not just to our accreditors but also for assurance of, and the continual improvement of, student learning.

Understanding what assessment is, how to do it, and providing the tools to do it, will empower you to improve personal student success efforts and those of your department. Assessment allows us to gather data surrounding the work being done at our institution. Before beginning the process of assessment, one must ask:



THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Program assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge because of their educational experiences. Assessment occurs at the course, department, college, and institution levels. Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning, using a variety of evidence to document and explain learning and performance. Assessment should focus on measuring the effectiveness of teaching strategies and curricula. It requires making expectations regarding learning explicit and public by establishing clear and measurable standards. Program assessment at UT Knoxville is outlined by five main steps in a cycle, as seen below. It's important to note that the cycle is iterative, meaning changes can be made at any step when deemed necessary by the program.



DEVELOPING AN ASSESSMENT PLAN

Program assessment plans ensure outcomes relate up to divisional and institutional goals, serving as a unifying template for the department, division, and upward. Typically, assessment plans begin with a unit's mission and goals. The mission and goals of a unit will help connect a course or section to the larger program by outlining what interventions are occurring to enhance student success.

As part of a continuous improvement process, each academic program in the University is expected to have student learning outcomes and conduct systematic assessment using direct measures of student learning. Chances are academic programs will have many outcomes; identify the outcomes faculty want to focus on by considering:

- What has the program not collected data on recently?
- What significant changes have been made to the program mission/goals/strategic plan this year?
- What changes still need to be made, but more information is needed to make a good decision?
- What data do others need from the program?
- What is your department/college focusing on?
- In which areas would faculty like to see progress in student learning?

When the unit knows what they want to measure, the next step is to determine how they will gather data to demonstrate the attainment of each outcome. When choosing methods, consider:

- How does the method match the intended outcome?
- How will the data be used?
- Should multiple methods be considered to gain different perspectives from the data?
- Has someone already collected this information? If so, can the program use the existing data?
- Is there potential for collaboration with another person, program, or department?
- Is more training needed on choosing methods?

In the end, create a template that works for the program faculty and can be used to collect information consistently and easily. Maintain connections to the bigger picture by grounding assessment in the overall framework of the university.

WRITING CLEAR STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO'S)

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are statements describing what students should be able to know, think, or do by the end of a defined experience. A good SLO describes an observable behavior that can be measured within a specific time frame (e.g., by the end of a course or by the time the student graduates). **Every degree program should be assessing at least 3 outcomes; certificate programs should have no less than 2 outcomes they are evaluating.**

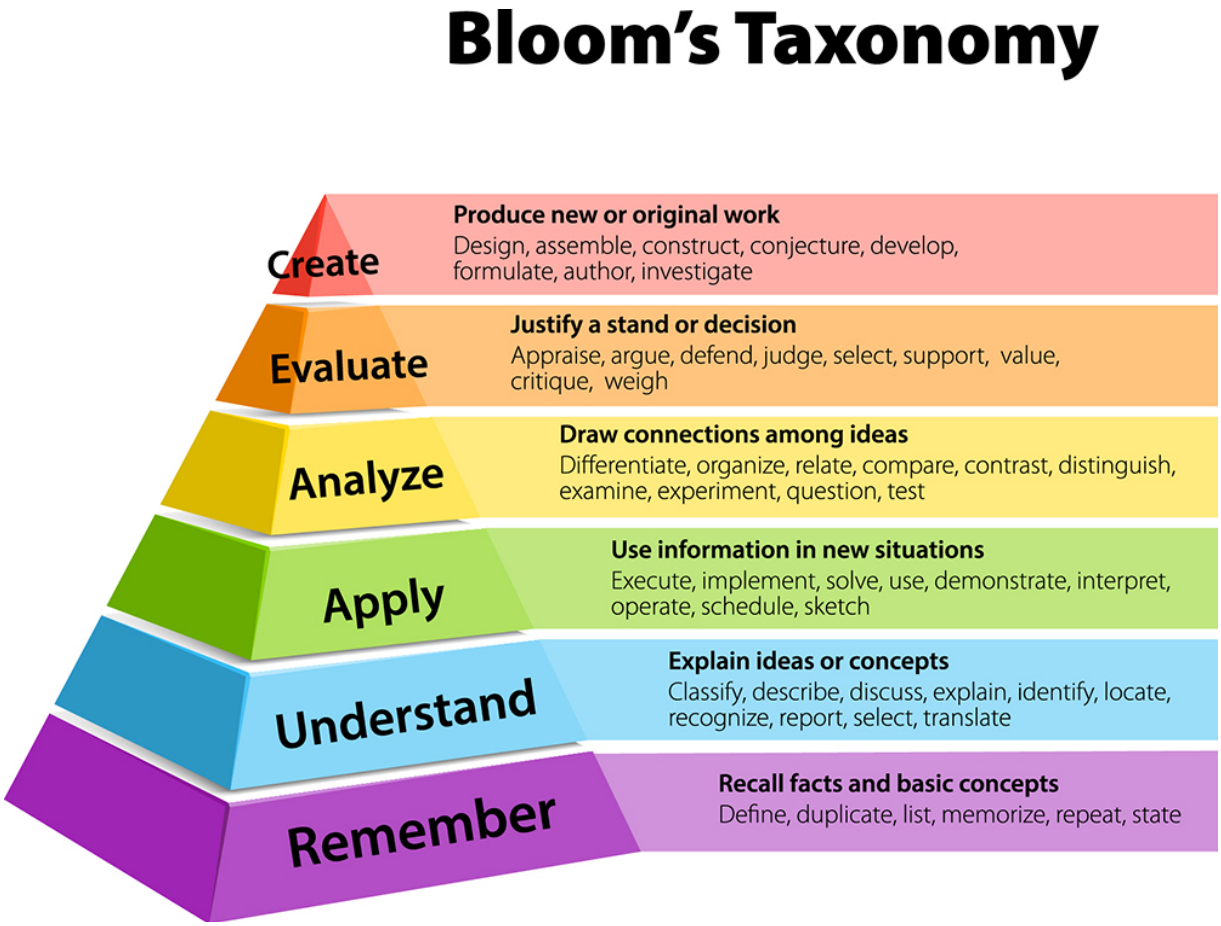
Strong student learning outcomes:

- Align with the mission and values of the program, department, division, and institution.
- Focus on learning resulting from the student doing/knowing/thinking rather than learning from the activity itself.
- Seek to enhance skills and abilities central to professional standards of excellence.
- Are general enough to capture important learning, but clear and specific enough to be measurable.

When read together, SLOs should give a comprehensive look at a unit. Ensuring outcomes relate to program and institutional goals creates a framework that allows for direct measurement of learning. Keep the following questions in mind when designing outcomes:

What are the expectations for student learning success in the course/program?	What action do you want the student to take that impacts learning?	How does the outcome support the department/college/ university mission and goals?
Is the outcome realistic and sustainable?	What resources do you need to achieve the outcome?	How will you measure the outcome?
Are learning outcomes present repeatedly in the curriculum?	Do you focus on one goal at a time?	How will you know if the outcome is achieved?

Using the revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to pick action verbs that match the desired outcome will also guide what method is used:



Beware of SLOs that are too wordy or too complex, measure multiple skills at a time, that are not specific enough, or describe what the *program* outcomes are rather than *learning* outcomes.

SELECTING EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT METHODS

Students don't always experience college in a way that makes measuring outcomes simple. Some outcomes may take months, years, or a lifetime to manifest, so how do you know where to start? If the program faculty are trying to assess overall learning, the assessment method should reflect that. Similarly, if the program is assessing the learning of a specific concept, this will need to be considered in choosing an assessment method. One way to ensure the effectiveness of a program's assessment strategy is to be SMART:

S

- **Specific**: Do the outcomes focus on particular skillsets?

M

- **Measurable**: Words such as "know," "understand," and "learn" should be avoidable; be specific!

A

- **Achievable** (and Improvable): Can these outcomes be met within a reasonable time frame? Is there room for improvement?

R

- **Relevant**: Are the outcomes measuring skillsets that give you information about student learning in the program?

T

- **Time-Framed**: When were these outcomes assessed last? When will they be assessed again?

Before you begin, identify any information that may already be collected by other processes in place. Discuss the desired outcome with program faculty to gauge if methods are already in place to measure the outcome. This ensures your time is spent efficiently gathering information that is not already being assembled elsewhere.

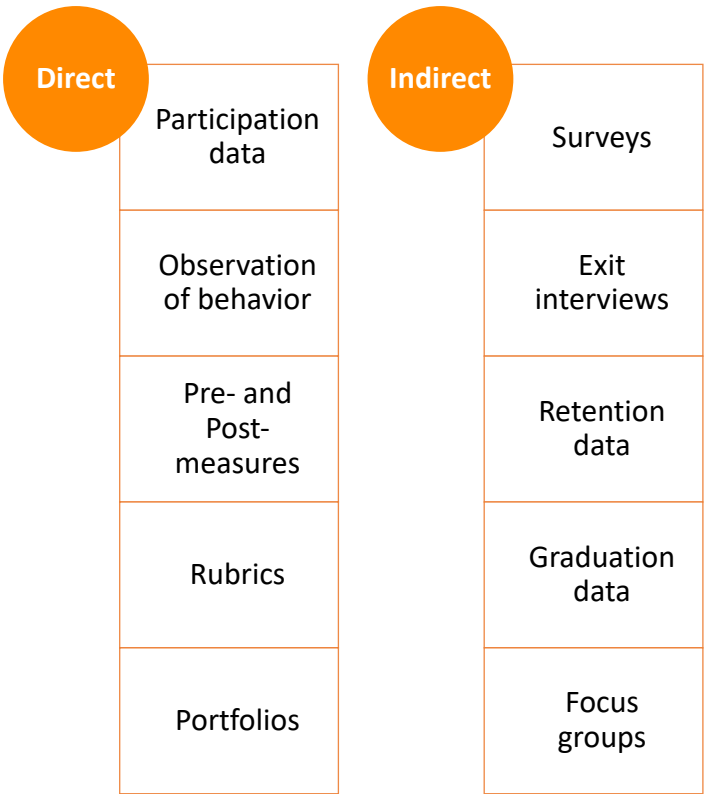
It is important that measurements are related to outcomes, however you do not want to wait until the assessment plan is "perfect" before beginning. Remember that assessment does not require complex methods or multiple methods to capture data. Once the faculty have inventoried what information has already been collected, match the outcome to an assessment method; there may be instances where multiple methods are appropriate, but it is not required to have a multitude of methods. Using SLOs as learning objectives in course syllabi so students continuously connect their learning to the bigger picture makes it less challenging to connect measurements to outcomes during reporting.

Overall, the assessment method should reflect the learning program faculty are trying to assess. Faculty members must also be sure to give students enough support and exposure to content to achieve the outcomes being set. Create assignments and assessment methods that will reflect what faculty are trying to measure. Remember, different levels of thinking require different assessment methods. The higher the level of learning, the more in-depth the assessment method will need to be.

USING DIRECT AND INDIRECT ASSESSMENT METHODS

Direct assessment is used to determine the level of student learning achieved against established learning outcomes. Activities in this category usually have a direct impact on measures of student performance (e.g., grades in a course). Some examples of direct assessment may include exams, quizzes, oral presentations, dissertations, theses, essays, and portfolios. A direct form of assessment is required for all student learning outcomes.

Indirect assessment is typically used to evaluate the quality of student learning experiences. For instance, students might be given a survey to gauge their perceptions of their growth in a skill because of a class or a study abroad experience. They might also evaluate the quality of instruction in a course or during a service-learning experience. Some examples of indirect assessments include self-efficacy surveys, end-of-course evaluations, focus groups, and questionnaires for alumni regarding program effectiveness and retention.



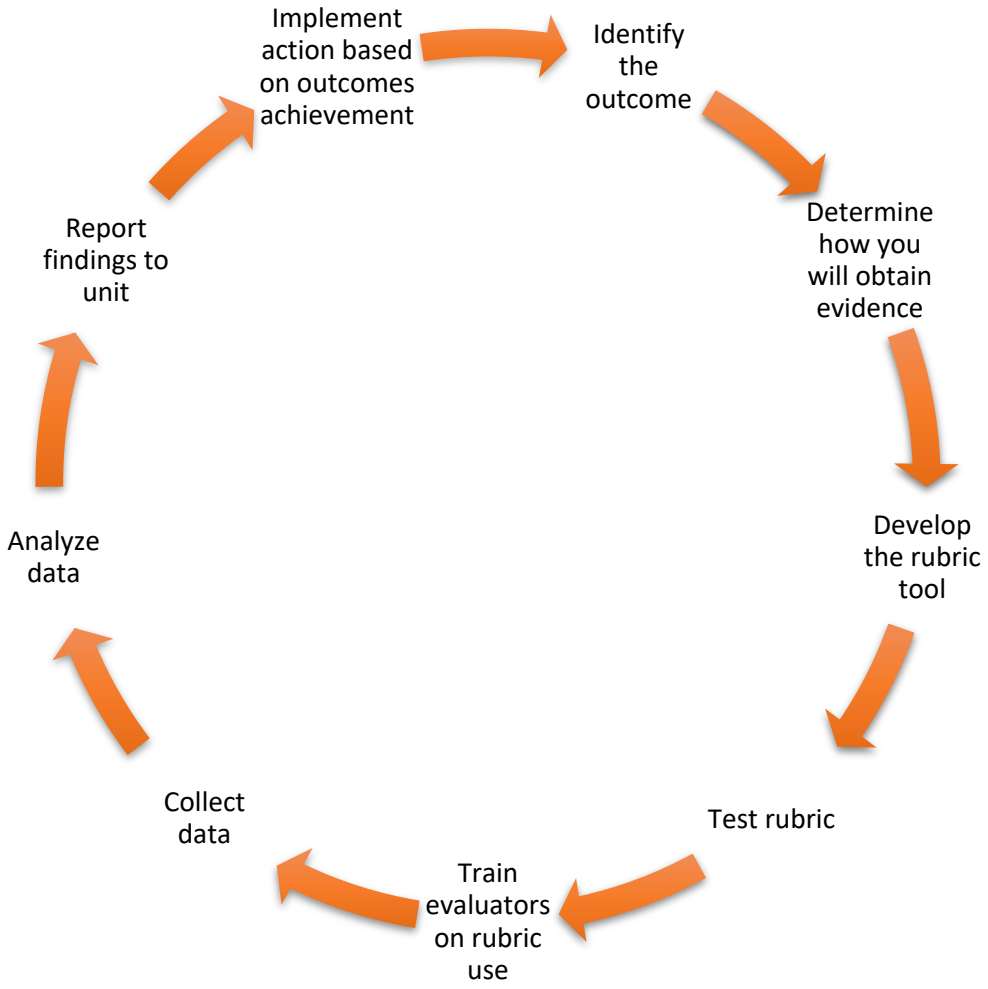
Both forms of assessment can be completed to triangulate data or measure other outcomes. It is important to note that conference papers and presentations cannot be considered a form of direct assessment because they are not requirements for all students, and they are usually not evaluated by program faculty. Such work is generally categorized as an indirect assessment of student learning because it is reflective of the quality of the student learning experience in a program. However, if program faculty decide to score or evaluate conference papers or presentations as part of a course, they can consider the student work a direct assessment.

Course grades cannot be used as an assessment method because what they measure goes beyond a single outcome (i.e., grades may also reflect attendance, quality of writing, etc.). To assess a

student learning outcome, the method must be outcome specific. A course grade provides little information about what could be enhanced to help students more effectively master the outcome. An alternative to a course grade could be a grade on an assignment whose focus is to demonstrate the outcome. Another example would be to submit a sample of student work focused on the outcome from a select group of courses, and for the assessment group to examine the artifacts using a rubric or criteria list. If the sole purpose of the test is to measure one specific student learning outcome, the grade on the test can be used as a measure. If the test measures several outcomes, sub scores for relevant questions should be used for each outcome.

USING RUBRICS

A rubric is a set of criteria specifying the assets of an outcome and the levels of achievement available for each component. Rubrics provide consistency in evaluation of behaviors and performance, allowing for direct measurement of learning. The steps for implementing a rubric are very similar to the steps for creating a learning outcome, as the outcome drives the scale and achievements outlined in the rubric.



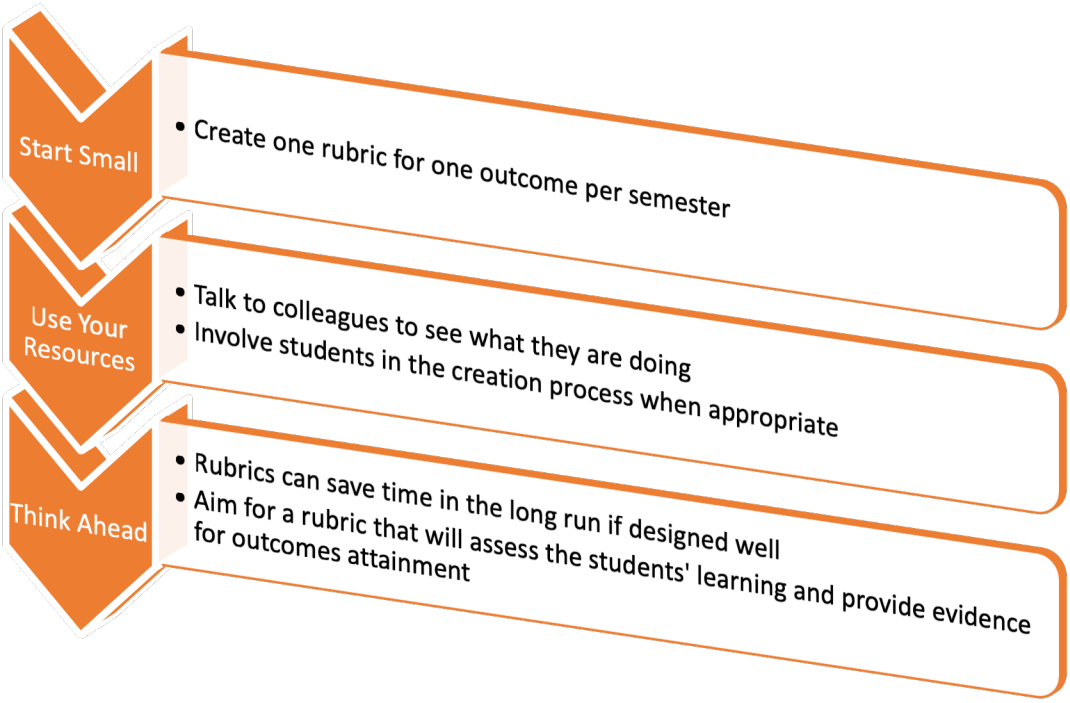
While there is no set scale for program rubrics, it is generally acceptable to have a scale of four to five levels of achievement. Three levels provide a baseline for student performance. For example, it is not uncommon for departments to use program rubrics with the levels "excellent,"

"proficient," and "beginner." In most cases, it is useful to start with a three-point scale, grade a small sampling of student work to check the validity and user-friendliness of the rubric, and then add additional levels as needed.

There are three main benefits to using a rubric or checklist:

1. Rubrics and checklists clearly communicate expectations to students to promote the engagement of learning outcomes and outcomes in the classroom.
2. Grading becomes easier and can be completed faster.
3. Using a tool that reflects learning outcomes facilitates the reporting process.

Because the requirements are explicitly included on the actual document, instructors do not have to spend as much time writing feedback when a rubric is used. Moreover, a rubric created with student learning outcomes in mind facilitates the reporting process. For example, if faculty want to assess student performance in the areas of oral presentation and writing proficiency in one assignment, they may create one rubric that measures both. However, in their report, they may discuss oral presentation and writing proficiency as two different learning outcomes. Having a rubric isolates specific data about each outcome so that reporting is easier for departments and programs while ensuring students understand what is expected of them for the program.



DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

All reports should have the following:

- Student learning outcomes
- A description of the direct and, if included, the indirect methods used to assess those learning outcomes
- An analysis and discussion of the results of the assessments and a plan for use of the results to improve student learning (that is, what the department will do, based on the assessment data, to improve the program)

Each department should have learning outcomes that describe the competencies students in the program should master by the time they graduate. The learning outcomes for the following term are usually discussed, developed, and revised in late spring. Once they have been established, the faculty in the department must decide how they will measure student performance in these areas. This is generally also decided in late spring or during the summer semester.

In the subsequent fall and spring semesters, data from the assessments chosen are collected. During the spring semester, faculty discuss the results and, if the data reflect a need for improvement, develop a plan to address what they will do as a department to improve the program. If the data reflect adequate improvement, there may not be any action taken for the following year.

Appropriate sampling size varies according to the academic program. When collecting data for assessment reporting, understand that it is not required for each student's progress within a program to be analyzed. To determine the appropriate sampling size for an assessment report, it is helpful to look at trends of student involvement in the program over time. In larger departments, it is not uncommon to have a sample size of 30 to 100 students. However, in smaller departments, it is not uncommon to have a sample size of five to 10 students. In smaller departments, any sampling size below five students may be considered too small, and it is recommended that the outcomes be put on extended cycle so that faculty can continue to collect data until the sampling size is sufficient for analysis. Generally, a good sample size is at least 20 percent of student enrollment in the program, with a minimum of five students.

EXTENDED CYCLE

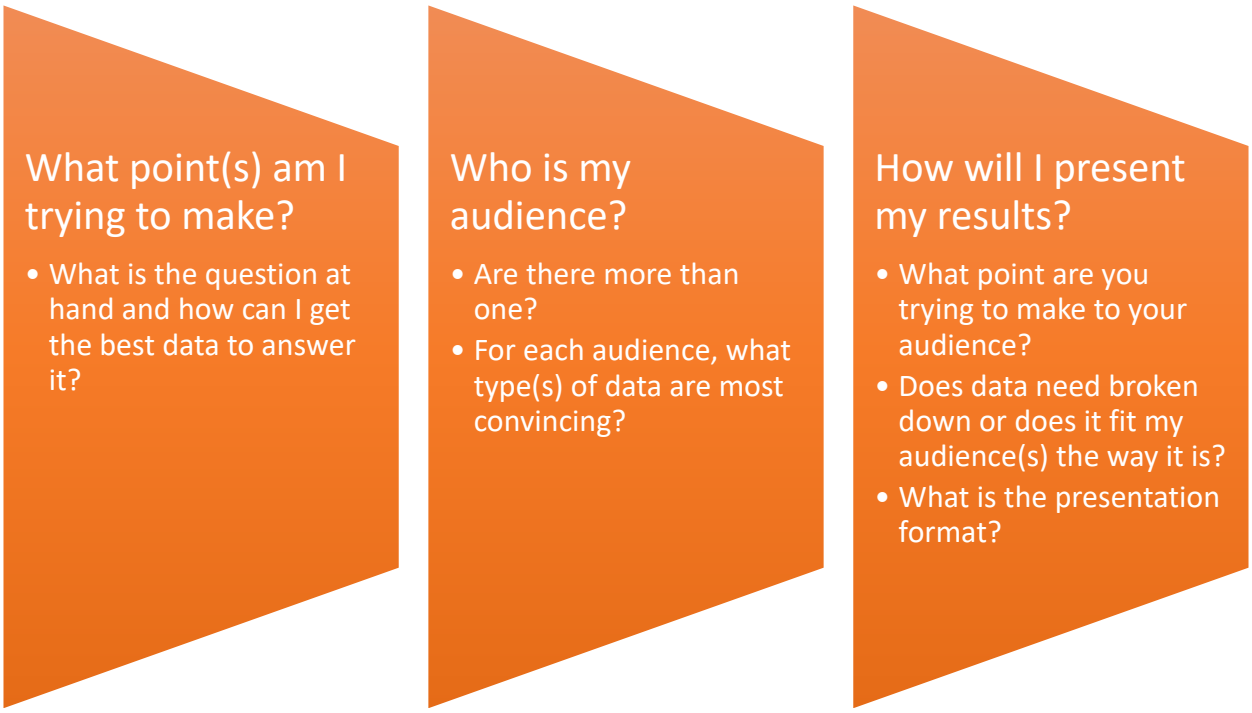
Extended cycle allows program faculty to extend the assessment beyond an annual cycle to a biennial or triennial cycle. An extended cycle for outcome assessment is an option most used:

- For programs with low enrollment, hence low sampling numbers. If placed on extended cycle, faculty may collect samples of student work over a multi-year period,
- For programs with small faculty numbers, making it difficult for them to assess multiple outcomes in one year, or
- When outcome itself or the assessment method(s) are revised, and it will be a year or two before the change may be evident in student work.

Data should be collected and documented throughout an extended cycle. The Planning module can serve as the archive for artifacts of student work that will be used for the assessment in the final year of the cycle, as opposed to being stored in a manner that might allow the artifacts to be forgotten or lost. During the final year of the cycle, the faculty analyze artifacts and data added over the multi-year period to complete the assessment report.

COLLECTING DATA

Before deciding how to collect data, faculty should consider:



These questions will guide the data program faculty collect and *how* it is collected, stored, and analyzed. Qualitative data can mostly provide us with people's perceptions, and frequently tells a story that numbers cannot. Qualitative data can be used to explore a topic before conducting quantitative assessment or can be used alone. Pairing qualitative data with quantitative methods allows faculty to think ahead to what data is needed to provide evidence of student learning.

Quantitative data can be analyzed as numbers. This type of data helps us to look below the surface and see what is going on in a more definable way. It also provides data that, for some, is more convincing.

DOCUMENTING EVIDENCE OF SEEKING IMPROVEMENT

Evidence of seeking improvement involves documenting any change from one year to the next. Even if the program experiences setbacks or stagnation, data should be reported. To determine whether there has been improvement, compare the results from the current evaluative year to the results from previous assessment cycles. For example, note the following outcome from the Mathematics BS program:

> The student will demonstrate computational skill in basic calculus and differential equations.

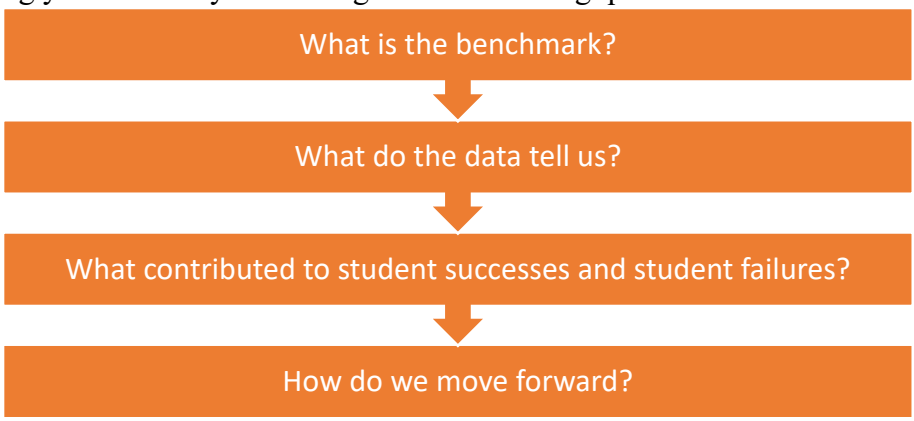
Program faculty set a benchmark that student cohorts will scores in the 80th percentile or higher on the Calculus sub-area on the ETS Major Field Test. If 55 percent of students performed at or above the benchmark in spring 2019, and 65 percent of students scored at or above the benchmark in spring 2020, there is evidence of a 10 percent improvement in learning from one year to the next. This data should be reflected and explained in the report. Let's say, though, that the outcome is changed to the following:

> 75% of students will demonstrate computational skill in basic calculus and differential equations.

Although the benchmark is not met, the previously stated data (55 percent of students in spring 2019 and 65 percent in spring 2020) would still show some evidence of improvement. This growth should be explained in the Assessment Analysis and Results section of the annual program assessment report.

HOW TO ANALYZE SLO DATA

Once the results have been collected, the next step is to critique the outcome and data. This involves asking yourself and your colleagues the following questions:



A benchmark is a quantifiable means of determining whether students have satisfied a learning outcome. Setting a benchmark allows departments to quantify the student success rate in meeting an outcome while clearly defining areas where growth is needed.

Once a benchmark has been set to determine what success looks like in terms of fulfilling the outcome, faculty can begin to organize and report their findings in the Assessment Results and Analysis portion of the report. In addition to communicating the results, faculty should also think about what might have caused the results. Was there a change in the curriculum? Were students lacking in a certain skill? Was there a change or a loss in personnel? This discussion will also go in the Assessment Results and Analysis section of the report.

Assessment is an ongoing process where the goal is improvement. Therefore, after looking at the data and hypothesizing about what worked and didn't work in terms of curricular activities, it is important to think about what should be done to enhance student learning and to improve the program curriculum.

Faculty may decide that, because students met the established learning outcome, no actions should be taken to alter the curriculum. However, if students are consistently meeting the outcomes, faculty might want to consider raising the benchmark. Conversely, if students did not meet the learning outcome, the faculty will want to explore what they can do to help students reach the benchmark they set. An effective strategy might involve a change in the curriculum or providing students with extra tutoring opportunities. Irrespective of the decision, the actions explored should be reported in the Actions Taken section of the report.

Finally, should the faculty decide to change the learning outcome, they will need to indicate this in the Actions Taken section of the report. Actions to change the student learning outcome based on results can be documented in minutes or notes from a faculty meeting where the changes were discussed.

TAKING ACTION

Once the data have been collected and analyzed, there are several actions that faculty can take to address the needs of the students in their programs. These actions must be reported in the Planning module, in the Actions Taken section of the report. The following are some examples of actions taken as derived from other reports:

Course Revision	Curriculum Revision	Faculty Development and Training
• Reflects course changes like adding a new unit, revising a required assignment, changing a required textbook, adding a practicum rotation, or adopting a common syllabus for multi-instructor course.	• Reflects curricular changes including adding a new course, modifying the sequencing of courses, changing prerequisites, and dropping a course.	• Reflects activities aimed to more effectively prepare faculty to teach or assess a learning outcome, including training of practicum supervisors, convening of norming session for faculty using a program rubric, etc.

CLOSING THE LOOP

Closing the loop simply means using data to make decisions that improve programs. It's the analysis of assessment results from one academic year, interpreted and used by faculty to make

changes to improve student learning the next year. These improvements vary (e.g., curricular changes, assessment methods replacement, benchmark or threshold adjustments, even outcome restructure or retirement.) At the end of that subsequent year, another analysis of data reveals whether the changes were impactful and what, if any, additional changes might be beneficial. Evaluation of the impact of those changes continues the assessment cycle.
Though assessment and accreditation often accompany each other, we assess academic programs to improve student learning.

META-ASSESSMENT

Meta-assessment is simply evaluating the assessment process. To evaluate the quality of academic program assessment efforts, the university's Assessment Steering Committee uses a rubric (Appendix B) to "score" all reports in the following areas: Content, Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), Assessment Methods and Data Collection, Analysis of Results, and lastly (most importantly) Use of Results.

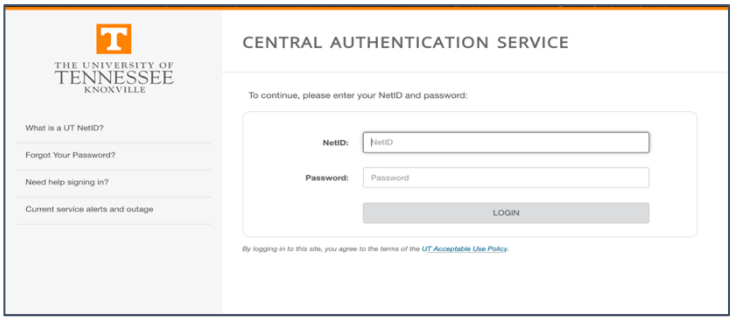
Each year by September 15th, program faculty submit an assessment report evaluating student learning in the last academic year, based on student learning outcomes established in the program's assessment plan. The report includes data collected during that year, an analysis of the results, and an indication of actions taken based on those results.

USING THE PLANNING MODULE

The university currently uses several modules offered by Anthology to collect data using assessments. Annual program assessment reports are entered into the Planning module.

LOGGING IN

The URL for the Planning module can be found at utk.campuslabs.com/planning. You may also find the URL on the OIRA and SACSCOC websites for the university.



- Log in using your UT NetID and password.
- Whenever you change your UT NetID password, you will need to use that new password to log in for Anthology.
- There may be a 20-second delay in loading due to server communication.
- It is recommended that you use Google Chrome or Firefox as the browser.

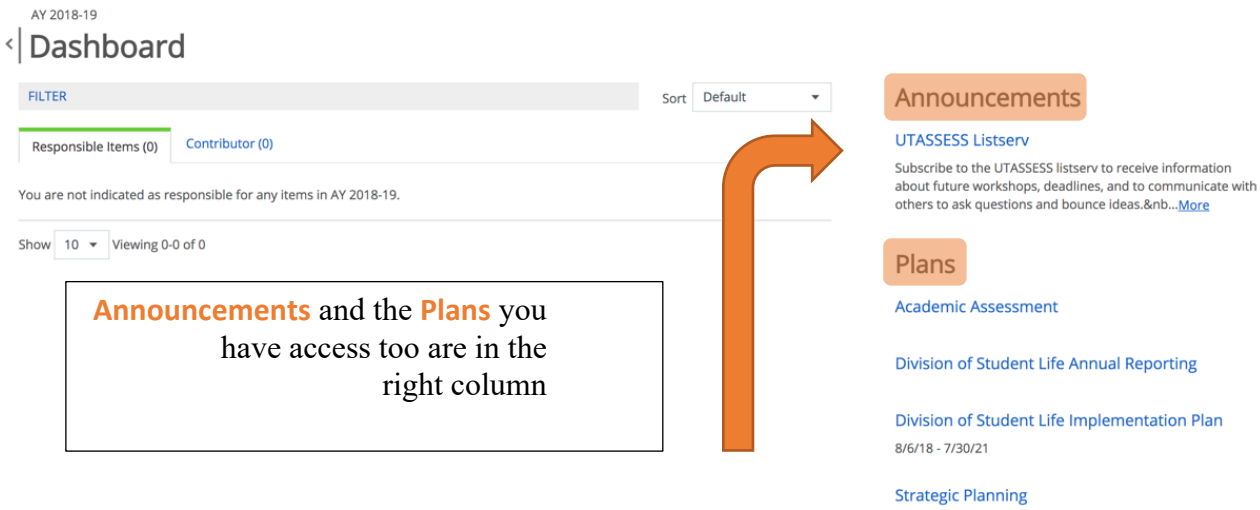
USING THE DASHBOARD

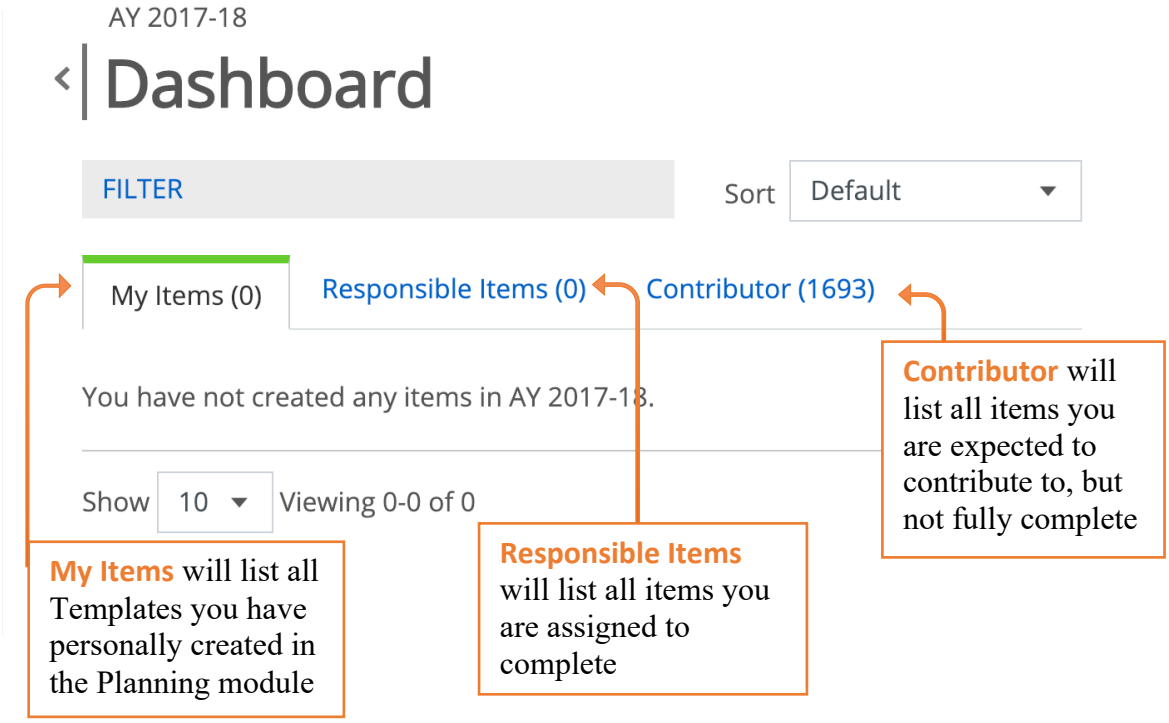
The home page *is* your **Dashboard**. Note that the **Dashboard** defaults to the current assessment cycle. The number of items you can view and edit will differ depending on your permission level.

You will see two small navigator tabs on the page:

This icon will take you to the **Dashboard**

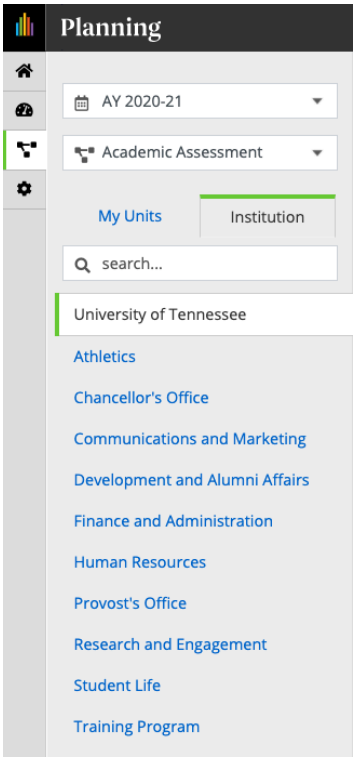
This icon will take you to **Plans**





The **Dashboard** ( )will list all items you have been assigned, as well as the **Plans** you have created and/or are working on.

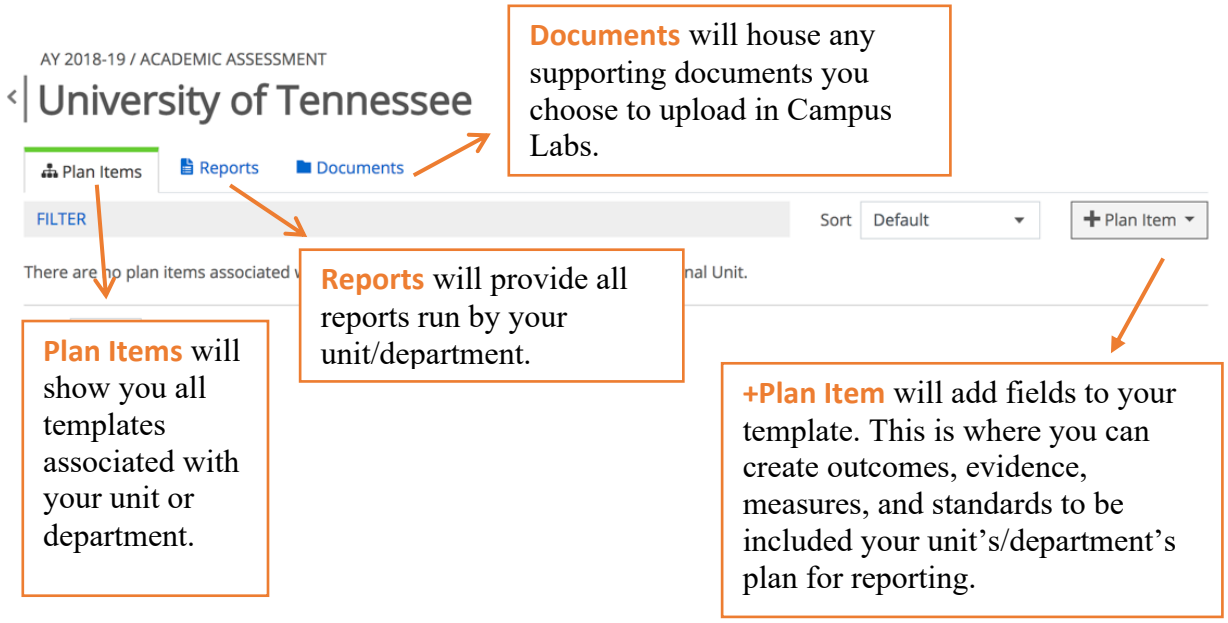
You may select the **Plan** you are modifying from here or you may visit the **Plans** page ( ).



This dropdown menu allows you to choose the academic year in which you want to work. You may view items from previous academic years here as well. Selecting "All" shows each outcome from every assessment year on one screen.

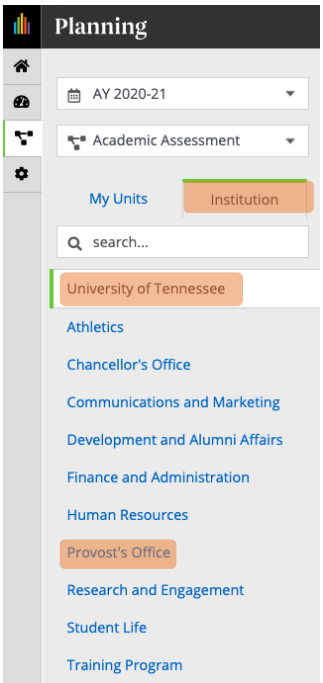
Your department will then be listed under **My Units**. Additionally, you may view other unit or department plans and reports under the **Institution** tab. Both areas have a search function to assist in finding what you need quickly.

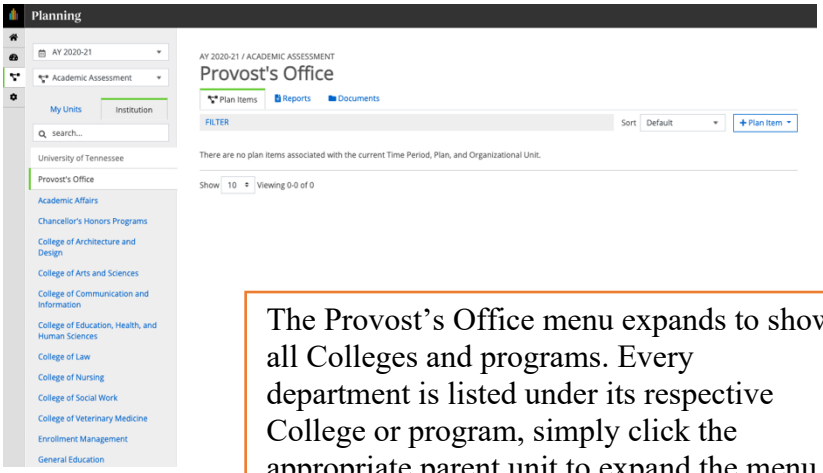
The **Plans** workspace consists of four main components: Plan Items, Reports, Documents, and the +Plan Item button. These components will all auto-save changes as you work, so there's no need for a save button!



CREATING A PROGRAM/MAJOR STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME

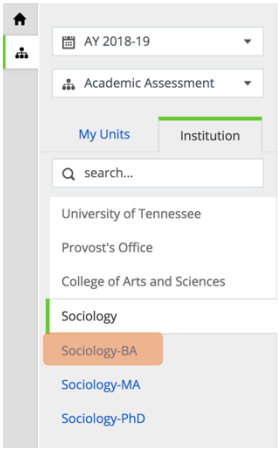
Outcomes can be edited through the **Responsible Items** tab on the Dashboard, but it does not distinguish between programs very well. To view programmatic reports, either click on Academic Assessment in the **Plans** area of your **Dashboard** page or click on the icon located in the top-left corner of the screen. Once again, what you can view depends on your permission level; you will need access to "Provost's Office" underneath the **Institution** tab to report your measurements and outcomes (Institution>University of Tennessee>Provost's Office).

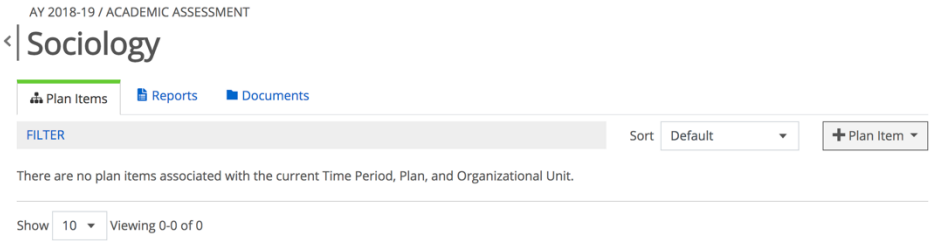




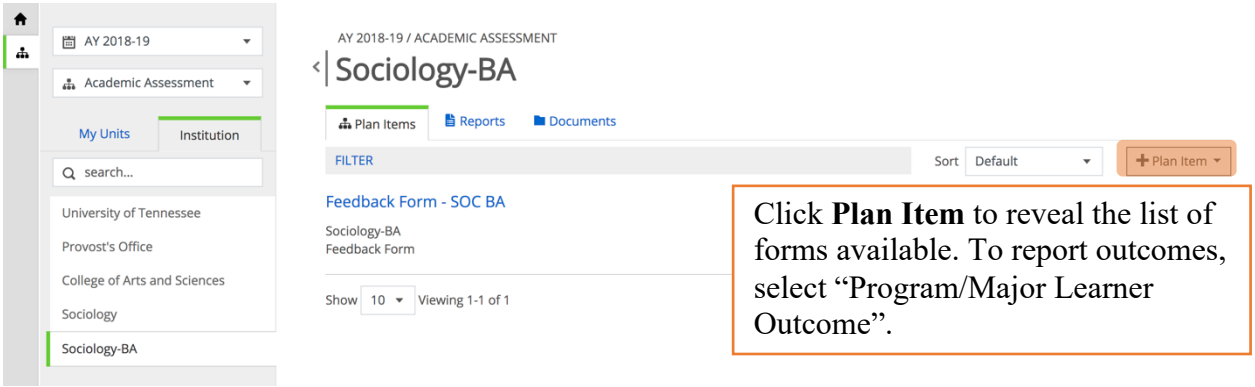
The Provost's Office menu expands to show all Colleges and programs. Every department is listed under its respective College or program, simply click the appropriate parent unit to expand the menu.

Once a department is completely expanded, all the academic majors and credentials offered by that department are listed and include the type of degree (Bachelor's, Master's, Ph.D., etc.) after the hyphen.

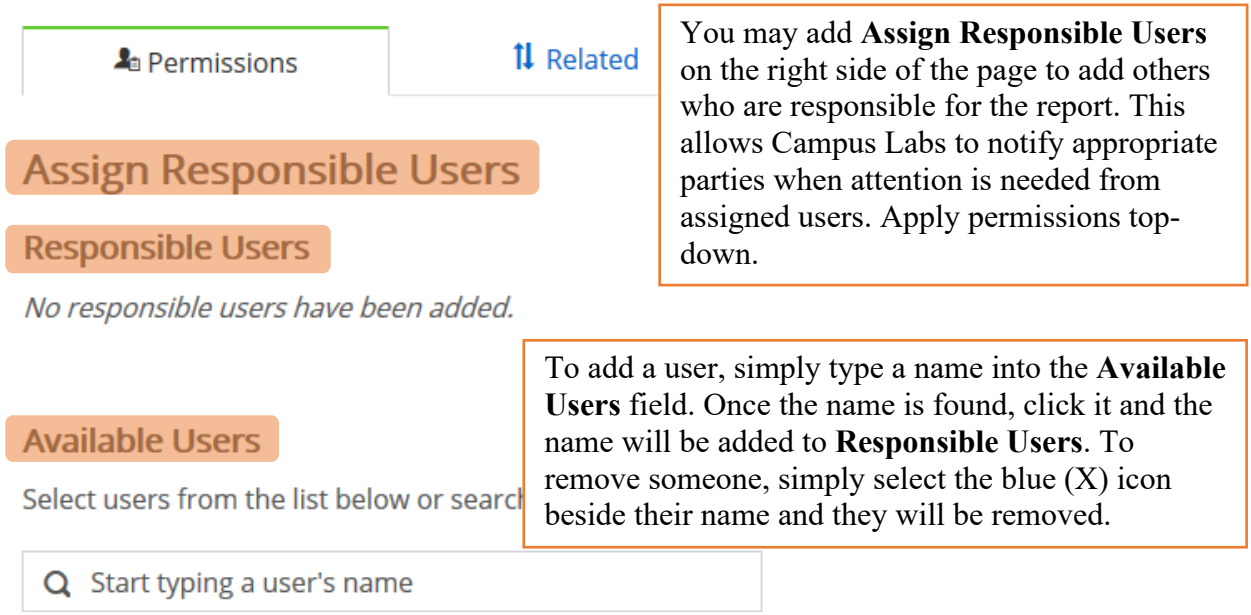


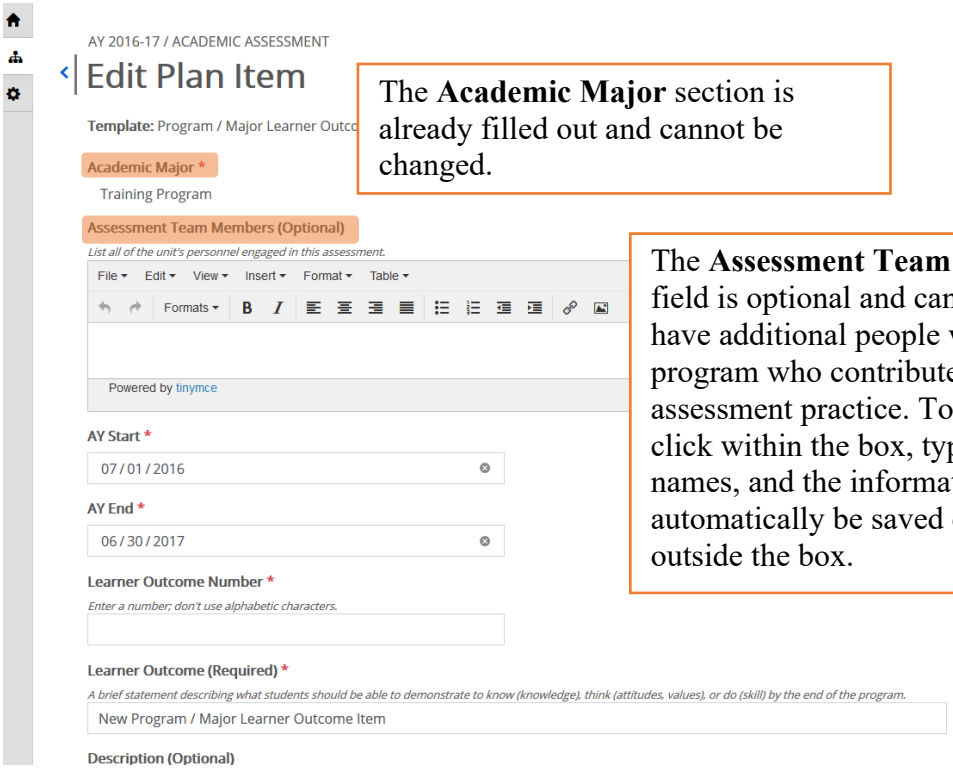


Click on the program for which you want to complete an assessment report.



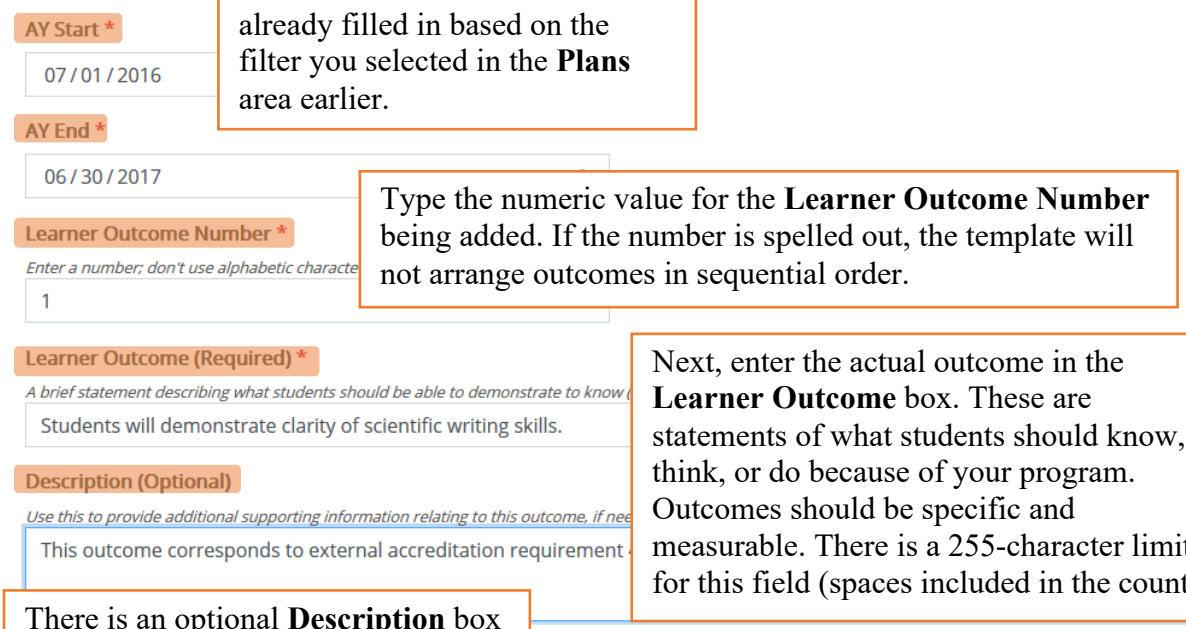
For the purposes of this example, a "Training" program will be used to illustrate how to create a major learner outcome in Anthology. Once you have clicked "Program/Major Learner Outcome", a blank template will populate.





The **Academic Major** section is already filled out and cannot be changed.

The **Assessment Team Members** field is optional and can be used if you have additional people within your program who contribute towards assessment practice. To use the field, click within the box, type out their names, and the information will automatically be saved once you click outside the box.



The **AY Start** and **AY End** are already filled in based on the filter you selected in the **Plans** area earlier.

Type the numeric value for the **Learner Outcome Number** being added. If the number is spelled out, the template will not arrange outcomes in sequential order.

Next, enter the actual outcome in the **Learner Outcome** box. These are statements of what students should know, think, or do because of your program. Outcomes should be specific and measurable. There is a 255-character limit for this field (spaces included in the count).

There is an optional **Description** box that can be used to describe the learner outcome in more depth.

Term data collected (Required)

Select the semester(s)/term when the data is collected.

- [x] Fall semester
- [ ] Spring semester
- [ ] Summer term

Course(s) or collection schedule detail (optional)

List courses used to assess this outcome or the time or frequency, s

File Edit View Insert Format Table

Formats B I

Data collected every Fall in TRP 431: Advanced Training Protocol

p Powered by tinymce

The next two boxes ask for the term the data was collected (required) and the courses in which data is collected or collection schedule detail (optional). For **Term Data Collected**, you have 3 options. Select the appropriate term(s) by clicking in the small box to the left of each applicable term. You may choose more than one.

Below the term selection is **Course(s) or Collection Schedule Detail**. Generally, it's a good idea for record-keeping purposes to include both the course number and name in this optional field.

ENTERING THE ASSESSMENT PLAN

The next four fields allow you to choose direct and indirect assessment methods and provides space to describe these methods in more detail. These fields constitute the Assessment Plan.

Direct Assessment Method(s) (Required)

Assessment tool(s) that are used to assess specific student learning outcome (you may select one or more, if appropriate); if not included in list, select Other (please describe below).

- [x] CCTST (Critical Thinking Test)
- [ ] Doctoral dissertations
- [ ] Embedded course work
- [ ] Graduate comprehensive exam
- [x] Internship/practicum/coop observation
- [ ] Laboratory reports
- [ ] Licensure exams
- [ ] Master's theses
- [ ] Oral defense
- [ ] Oral presentation
- [ ] Portfolio review
- [ ] Ready for the World Activity
- [ ] Rubric for a direct measure
- [ ] Senior theses
- [ ] Major field test (THEC, ETS, PRAXIS, etc.)
- [ ] Other (please describe below)

Click on the box beside the applicable direct and indirect method(s) listed. More than one option can be chosen.

After the direct and indirect methods have been selected, there is a text box where you may elaborate on your methods.

Direct Assessment Method(s) Description

Describe your direct assessment method(s) in more detail (at least one direct method needed for each outcome). Include supporting documentation of assessment. If "Other" is chosen from the list, please specify here.

File Edit View Insert Format Table

Formats B I

p Powered by tinymce

Plan Item Files

+ File + Folder

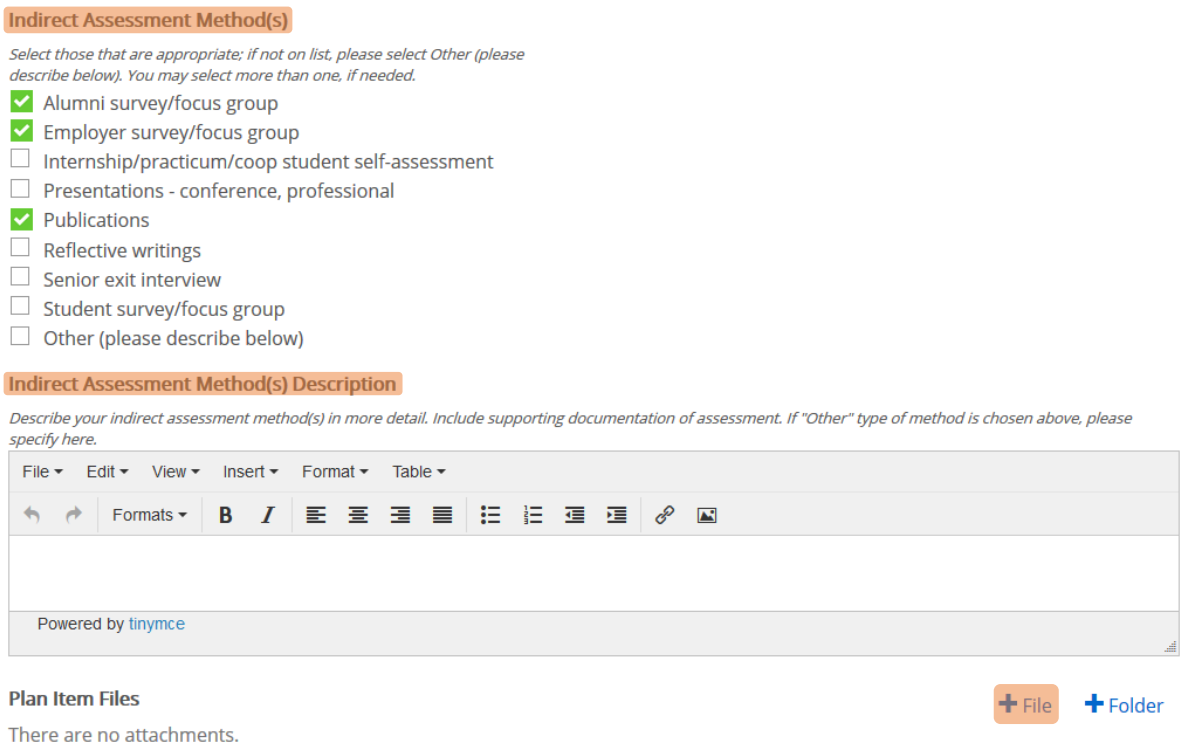
Internship Evaluation Form-Training Program.docx

Finally, there is an option to attach any supporting files (e.g., examples of test items, copies of rubrics, survey questions, etc.).

The Planning module will support only the following file types:

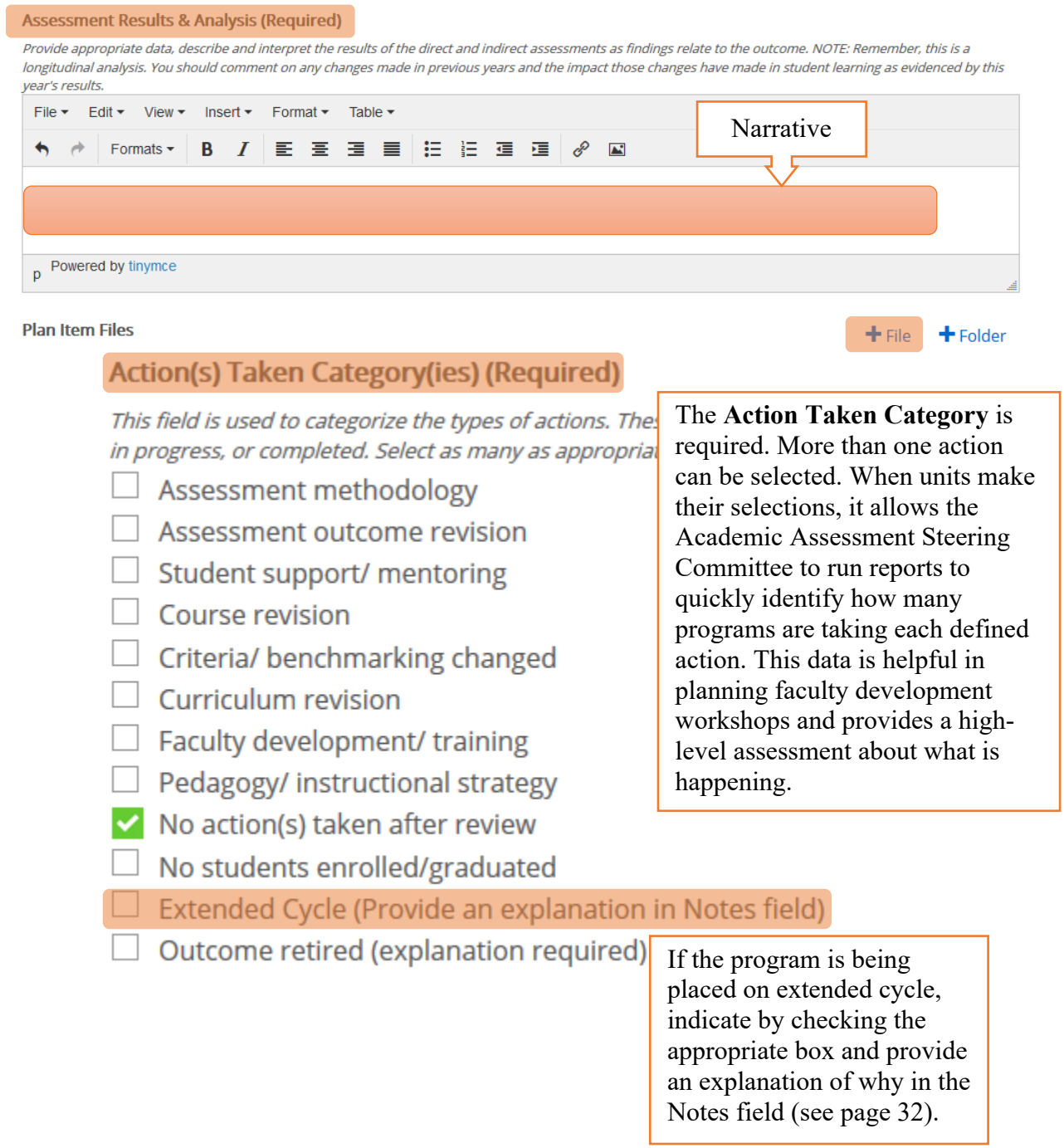
.PDF	.PPT
.DOC	.PPTX
.HTM	.XLS
.HTML	.XLSX

The fields are similar for indirect assessment methods:

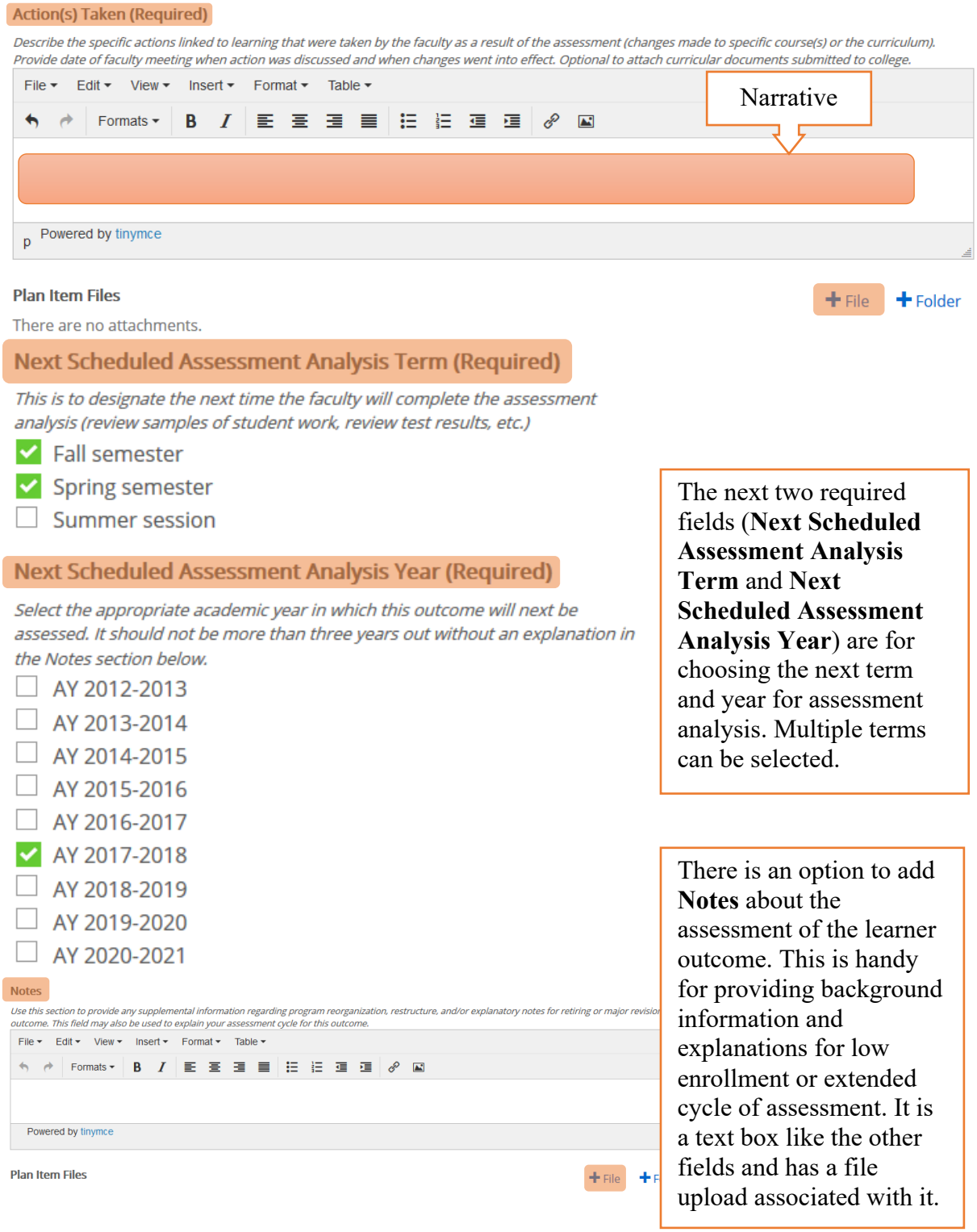


COMPLETING THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

After finishing the sections about the assessment method(s) used, the next fields ask for results, analysis, and actions. These constitute the annual assessment report. Each of the fields is similar in that there is a text box for a narrative and a "File" upload option for you to attach documentation. The **Assessment Results and Analysis** field is required; you must enter a narrative.



The next field is a text box, Action Taken, where you provide a required narrative. Fill in this field the same way as the other open-ended fields. Be as detailed as possible and note that you can also upload supporting files (e.g., minutes from a faculty meeting).



The next two required fields (**Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Term** and **Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Year**) are for choosing the next term and year for assessment analysis. Multiple terms can be selected.

There is an option to add **Notes** about the assessment of the learner outcome. This is handy for providing background information and explanations for low enrollment or extended cycle of assessment. It is a text box like the other fields and has a file upload associated with it.

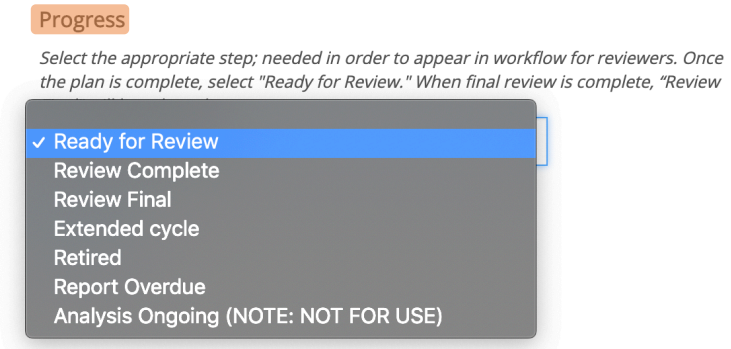
Think about how reports can be useful throughout the entire assessment cycle, not just at accreditation time. Results could be used to improve strategic planning, establish criteria for success moving forward, outline key development opportunities for faculty and staff, and

determine how effective current measures and outcomes may be. The keys to successful reporting are to begin with identifying what the faculty are trying to communicate to others, to know your audience, and to pinpoint appropriate evidence for what the program faculty have chosen to communicate.

ROUTING FOR REVIEW

Progress consists of a drop-down menu and provides a few options to choose from.

In this example, we selected "Ready for Review":

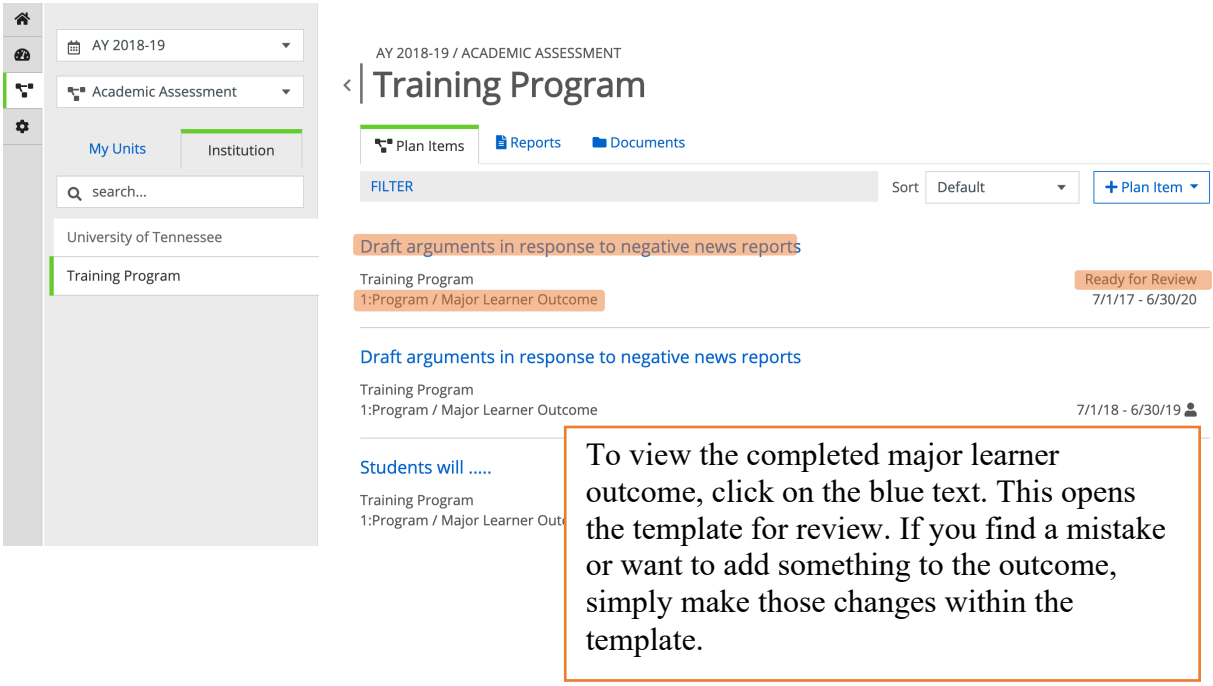


Once you complete the form, click the 

button at the bottom of the page.

After all outcomes are complete, the screen should look like the image below. Note the "Ready for Review" text on the top outcome, signifying that it is ready for institutional review

.



The report will be read by two reviewers and adjudicated. Comments and suggestions for improvement are provided via the **Feedback Report** (see p.34 for further details).

RETIRING AN OUTCOME

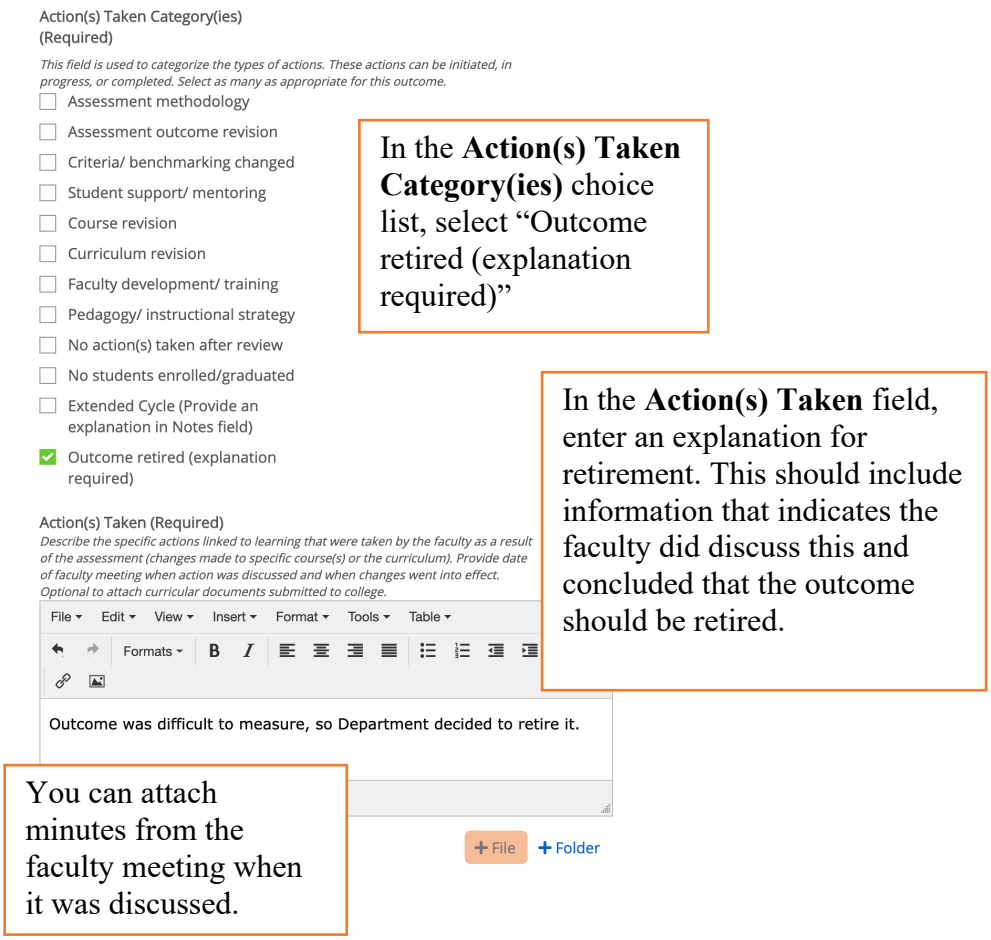
Programs will add outcomes or retire old outcomes that they feel no longer need to be monitored. This provides step-by-step instructions on how to retire one that is being replaced. There are two reasons for retiring an outcome,

1) based on assessment, students are performing and have performed consistently so the faculty decide it is time retire the outcome and replace it with another one.

2) In response to internal (e.g., review of outcomes after a few rounds of assessment) or outside forces (e.g., curriculum review conducted because of programmatic accreditation, changes in the industry/profession that hires graduates), the faculty made major revisions to the outcomes If the report writer simply wants to edit the wording without changing the meaning, you may revise the outcome.

RETIREMENT BASED ON ASSESSMENT

Step 1: Enter Assessment Report as Normal
Step 2: Enter Actions Taken with an Explanation for Retirement



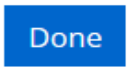
Step 3: Create New Outcome: Following established guidelines, create the new outcome in the Planning module, as is outlined on pages 17-22 above.

IMPROVING AN ASSESSMENT REPORT

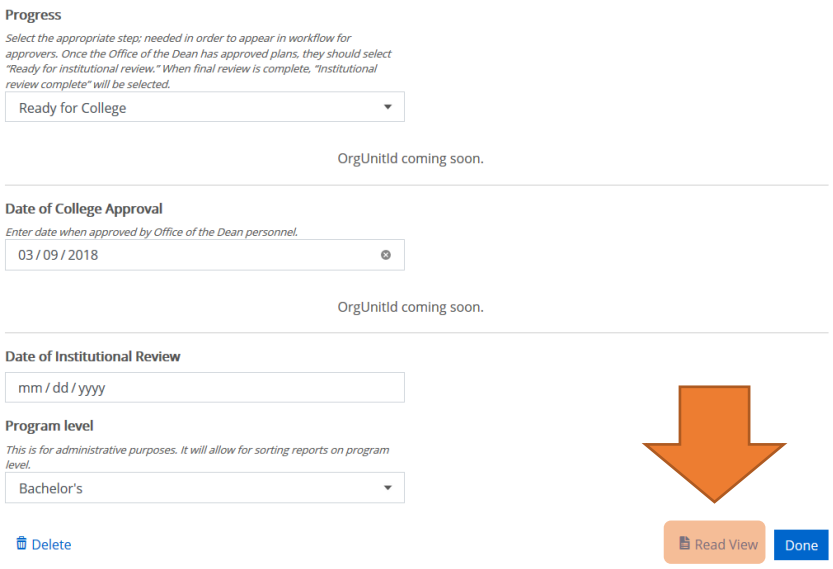
Remember to complete all required fields	Attach a copy of your assessment tool(s)	Redact names/identifiers of individual students
Provide a break down by question, rubric dimension, or scoring sheet item when submitting data	Ensure data analysis includes all data, course(s) of action for wanted outcomes, and if the course(s) of action worked	Remember to review multi-year results and analyses to make connections to current trends
Provide a complete discussion of actions taken, even if no actions were needed	Provide detailed explanations for extended cycle requests	Relate assessment methods and/or actions taken to the outcome it was supposed to measure
	Conference presentations and publications are not appropriate assessment methods because they are not directly reviewed by faculty for student achievement	

EXPORTING REPORTS TO A FILE

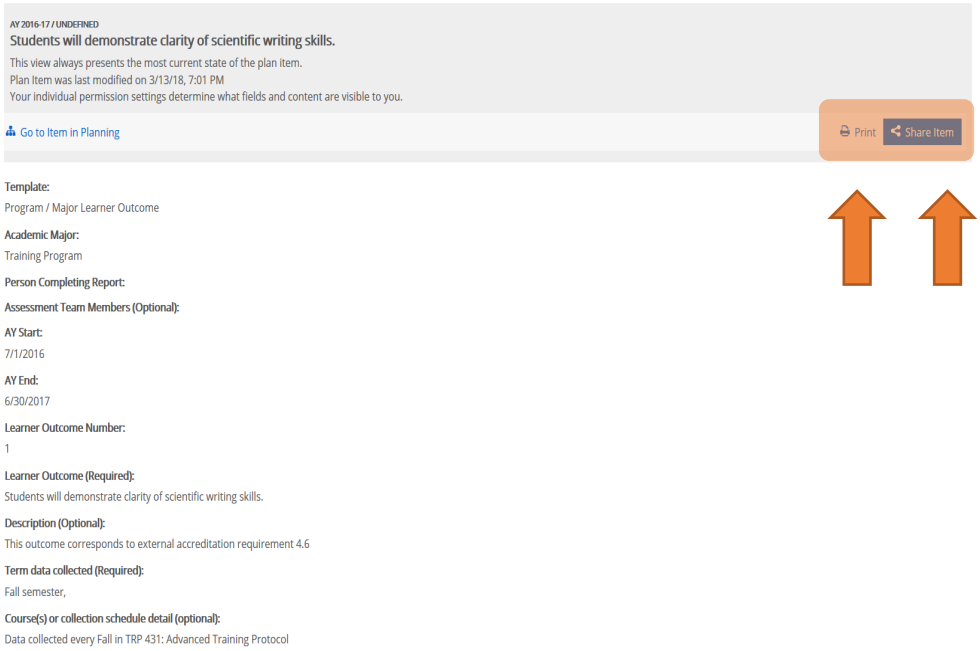
This process allows you to generate a file of this one outcome for distribution:

Notice the option at the bottom of the Program/Major Learner Outcome template that says **Read View,** located next to the 

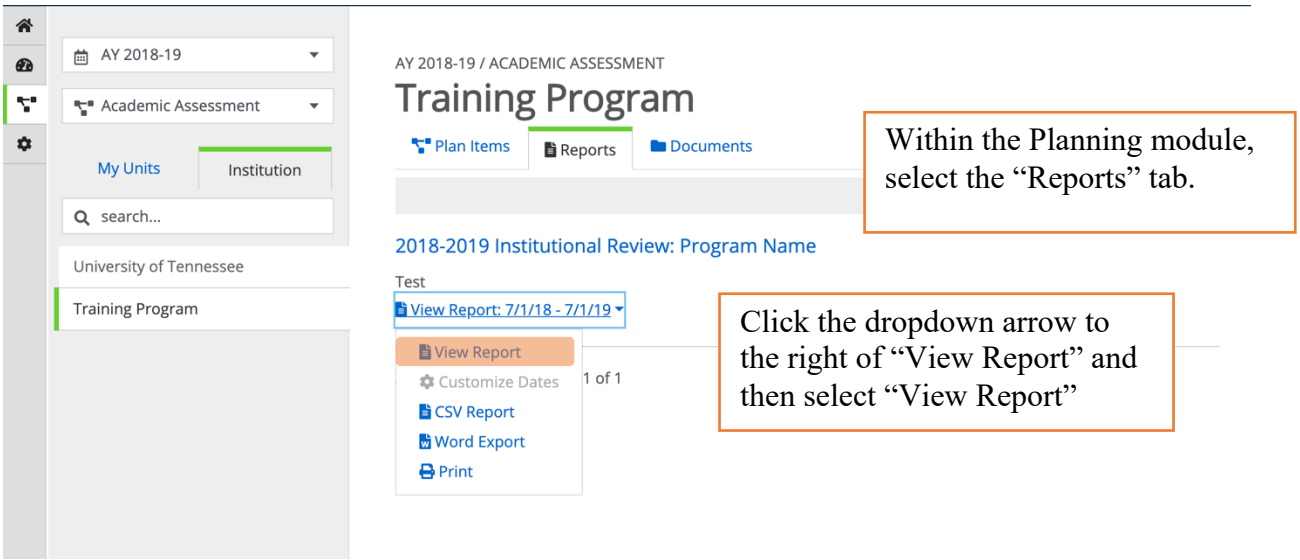
button.



This opens the outcome in a new window. From there, you may choose to **Share Item** to share the report with someone electronically or select **Print** if you wish to have a physical copy of the document.

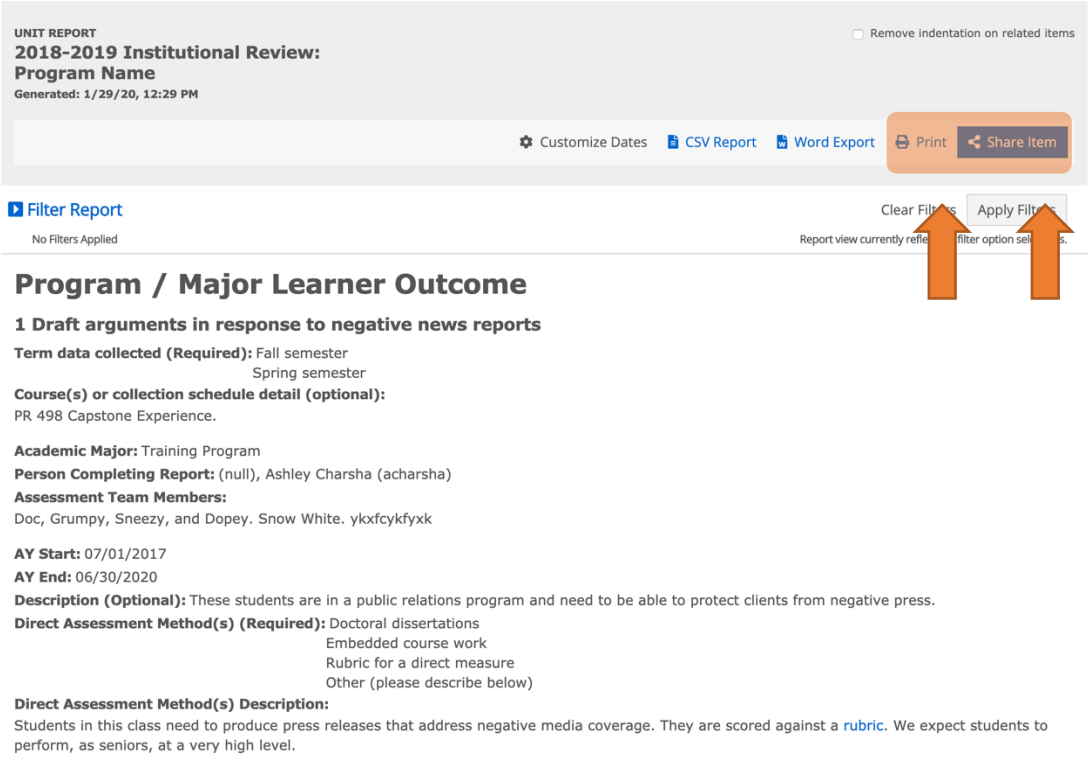


This process allows you to generate a file of <u>all</u> outcomes for distribution:



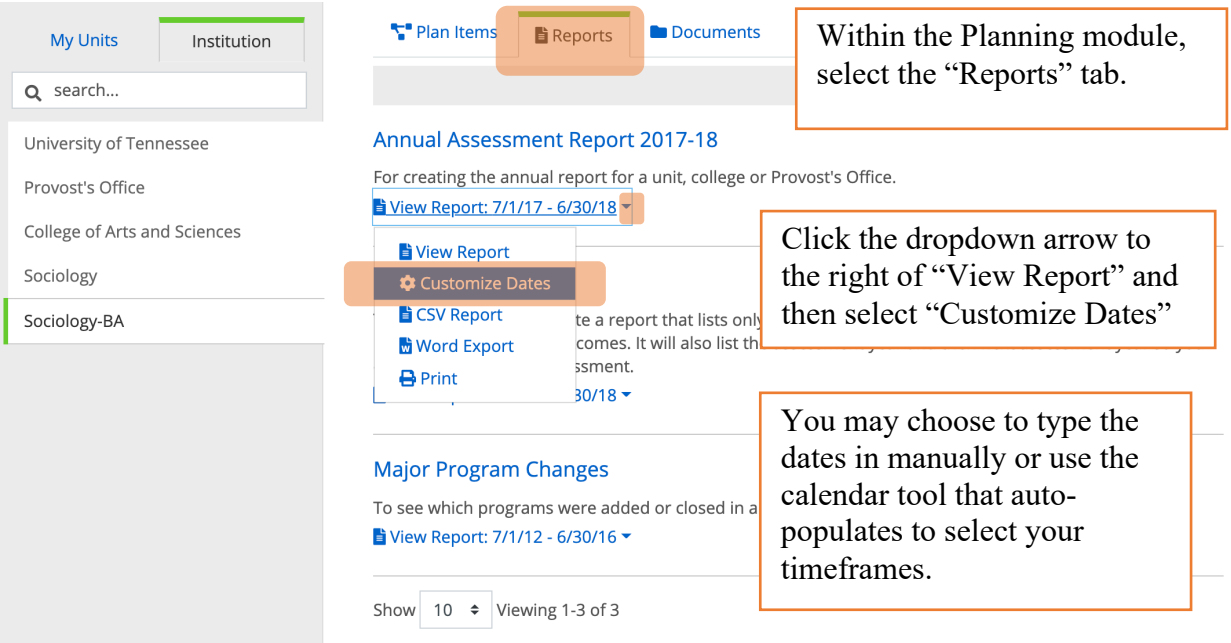
This opens the report for all program SLOs in a new window. *Please note it may take several minutes, five or more, for the report to load. Do not refresh your screen during this time*.

From here, you may choose to **Share Item** to share the report with someone electronically or select **Print** if you wish to have a physical copy of the document.

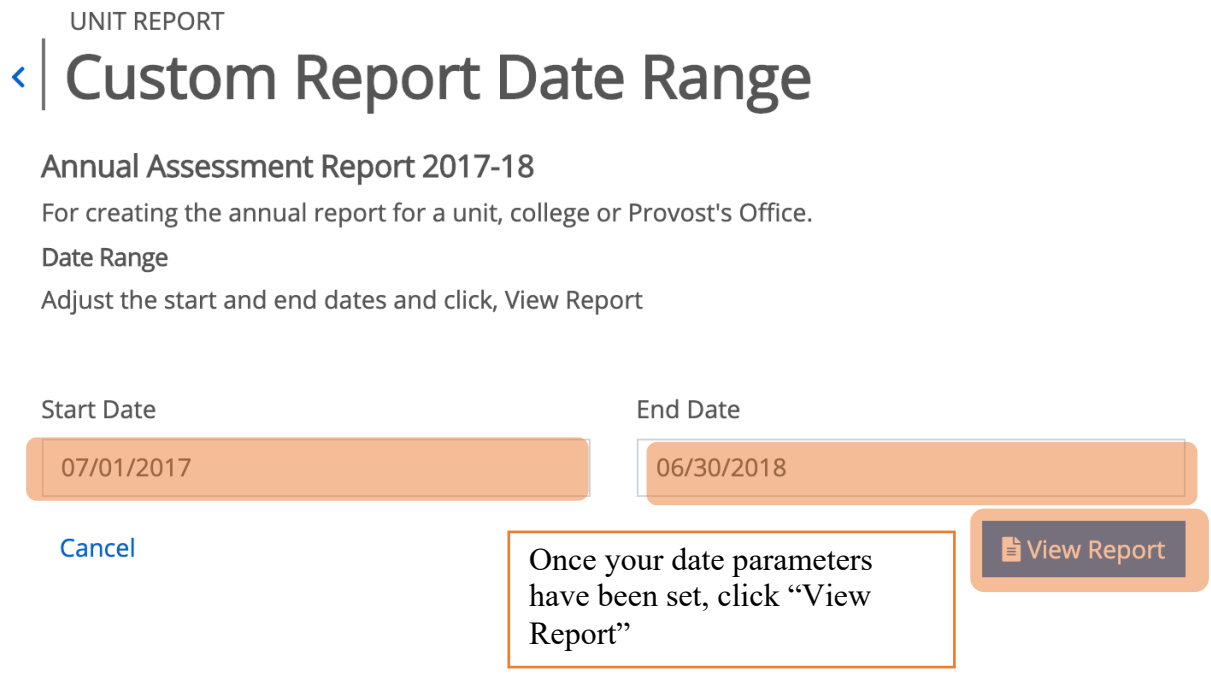


HOW TO VIEW MULTIPLE YEARS OF ASSESSMENT AND GENERATE A REPORT

Good assessment includes reviewing previous years' findings and actions, and then following up with analysis that looks at multiple years of assessing the same outcome. Therefore, it is important to have a cycle of assessment that looks at outcomes on a very regular, short cycle. Once you've completed your work in the Planning module, you may want to run a report for one or more years of assessment. Anthology allows users to look at one year at a time or to provide a listing of all outcomes across all years. It does not combine the individual years into one report on screen. However, it is possible to develop a report that allows the reader to have all assessments in one year for analysis purposes.



The next page is where you will set the parameters of your review:



REVIEWING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

The review process provides detailed feedback to program faculty in the form of a **Feedback Report** housed in the "Reports" tab within Plan Items in the Planning module.

UNIT REPORT

[redacted] 2018-2019

Feedback Report

Generated: 1/29/20, 12:42 PM

Remove indentation on related items

Customize Dates | CSV Report | Word Export | Print | Share Item

Filter Report

No Filters Applied

Clear Filters | Apply Filters

Report view currently reflects all filter option selections.

Each section reflects information from reviewers used to provide a score for each area of the rubric (Appendix B).

2018-2019 Review: [redacted]

Academic Program/Major: [redacted]

Content: 4- Advanced (All data provided that was requested)

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

4- Advanced (All have specific language, all have observable behaviors that can be measured, adequate number of SLOs)

Assessment Methods and Data Collection:

4- Advanced (All data collection reported, explanation linking method to SLO is clear, direct methods are present, if extended cycle, it is reflected)

Analysis of Results:

4- Advanced (Results are present, history of results is provided appropriately, if on extended cycle, written explanation provided)

Use of Results:

3- Satisfactory (Most actions stated are derived from assessment results, most actions address student performance deficiencies, most actions are faculty-driven with a clear timeframe for implementation, some demonstration of ongoing program improvement)

Overall Level of Report:

Advanced (19-20 points) - Clear measures, clear process, good interpretation and use of results, clearly closes the loop, focused on improvement of learning; complete report

Overall Report Feedback:

SLO 3 should also have "Extended Cycle" marked as an Action Taken Category.

The **Overall Report Feedback** field allows the reviewer to leave more detailed advice and feedback on departmental reports.

Areas of Concern:

Ways to Improve:

Progress: Review Final

Aligning with the scores and feedback above, **Areas of Concern** and **Ways to Improve** provide the reviewer an opportunity to highlight specific reasons for the ranking assigned.

Associate deans for academic programs have access at the college-level allowing them to see all departments and programs in their respective colleges. If an associate dean wishes to provide access at the college-level to a delegate or members of a college-level review team, notify the SACSCOC Liaison at SACS_Liaison@utk.edu, providing the name, NetID, and UTK email address for each person (NOTE: some people have a preferred alias for their email which differs from their NetID).

APPENDIX A: THE SACSCOC CONNECTION

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the university's regional accreditor. A condition of membership in this organization is that the institution will undergo a peer review every ten years to be reaffirmed. At the midpoint between those examinations, the institution prepares a Fifth-Year Interim Report, which touches on a subset of the SACSCOC standards that are addressed in the 10-year reaffirmation process.

Institutional effectiveness is one of the core requirements that is deemed so integral to the success of institutions of high education that it is evaluated at both reviews. In those reviews, peers look to see that the institution follows a systematic assessment process that promotes continual improvement…that we "close the loop."

*Following are excerpts from *The Principles of Accreditation* and its companion, *The Resource Manual*, which serves as a guide, assisting in the interpretation of the standards, posing pertinent questions, and suggesting ways to document compliance.

The SACSCOC standards are basic measures against which we can examine our institution and make improvements where needed. In the new *Principles of Accreditation*, Section 8: Student Achievement states:

> Student learning and student success are at the core of the mission of all institutions of higher learning. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support student learning outcomes for its educational programs. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution provides appropriate academic and student services to support student success.

The following core requirement is used to evaluate the compliance or non-compliance of member institutions:

CORE REQUIREMENT 8.1 – STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

1. The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success. **(Student achievement) [CR]**

Supporting this Core Requirement, the *Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* offers the following guidance.

> Student learning and student success are at the core of the mission of all institutions of higher learning. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support student learning outcomes for its educational programs. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution provides appropriate academic and student services to support student success.
>
> An institution needs to be able to document its success with respect to student achievement. In doing so, it may use a broad range of criteria to include, as appropriate: enrollment data; retention, graduation, or course completion; job placement rates; state licensing examinations; student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals.
>
> Note the three related obligations of the institution to meet this standard: student achievement goals (target levels of performance) must be identified; data for student achievement must be presented and evaluated (outcomes); and both the goals and the outcomes must be published. For purposes of this standard, "multiple measures" refers to several distinct outcomes, not multiple ways of measuring the same outcome. Being published means in a way accessible to the public—not published only behind an internal firewall.
>
> The standard recognizes that not every institution will utilize the same goals or establish the same targets. For example, an open-admissions institution would generally have a lower target for undergraduate graduation rates than a highly selective institution. An institution that prepares students for transfer to other institutions may use National Student Clearinghouse data for graduation rates while an institution that has little transfer activity might prefer to use IPEDS data. A seminary and an institute of technology may well define job placement "in the field of study" in very different ways. In some cases, institutions may use local data that can only be benchmarked against itself, such as a locally created alumni survey. Nonetheless, every institution has an obligation to establish goals, collect data, and publish this information.
>
> NOTES:
> In accord with federal regulations, it is expected that the institution will demonstrate its success with respect to student achievement and indicate the criteria and thresholds of acceptability used to determine that success. The criteria

are the items to be measured (and published); the thresholds of acceptability are the minimal expectations set by the institution to define its own acceptable level of achievement (i.e., a minimum target). The institution is responsible 8.1 Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement 65 for justifying both the criteria it utilizes and the thresholds of acceptability it sets. The items measured and the thresholds of acceptability should be consistent with the institution's mission and the students it serves. In their reviews, SACSCOC committees will examine and analyze (1) documentation demonstrating success with respect to student achievement, (2) the appropriateness of criteria and thresholds of acceptability used to determine student achievement, and (3) whether the data and other information to document student achievement is appropriately published.

While this standard does not ask what the institution does when it finds it falls short of its own expectations, institutions not meeting their self-identified thresholds of performance would be expected to document efforts to meet expectations. [See especially Standard 7.1 (Institutional planning), as well as Standard 7.2 (Quality Enhancement Plan), Standard 8.2.a (Student outcomes: educational programs), Standard 8.2.b (Student outcomes: general education), and Standard 8.2.c (Student outcomes: academic and student services).]

In addition to the guidance above, the *Resource Manual* offers the following "Questions to Consider."

1. How does the institution determine appropriate measurable goals and outcomes for student achievement consistent with its mission?
2. Does a state board or specialized accreditor expect certain student achievement rates that would be relevant for this standard?
3. Are data sources for this information clearly identified?
4. If the institution does not use examples of criteria mentioned above, what are the criteria used and why are they appropriate?
5. Are both criteria and thresholds of acceptability clearly identified?
6. Can the institution justify both criteria and thresholds of acceptability that would be found acceptable by a reasonable external party?
7. How does the institution publish this information for the public?

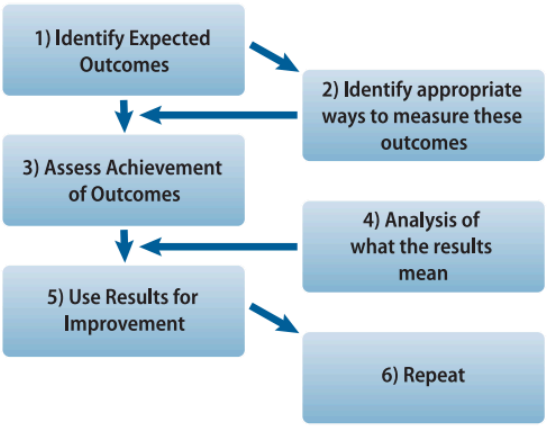
In addition to the more general core requirement (8.1), the following specific areas are highlighted in this section:

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:

- 8.2.a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs. (**Student outcomes: educational programs**)
- 8.2.b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs. (**Student outcomes: general education**)
- 8.2.c. Academic and student services that support student success. (**Student outcomes: academic and student services**)

Supporting the additional standards regarding specific outcomes, the *Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* offers the following guidance.

> Student outcomes—both within the classroom and outside of the classroom—are the heart of the higher education experience. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support appropriate student outcomes for its educational programs and related academic and student services that support student success. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution is always asking itself whether it has met those goals and how it can become even better.
>
> Even though the concept of institutional effectiveness may not be explicitly referenced in all the standards, the accreditation process assumes that all programs and services, wherever offered within the context of the institution's mission and activity, are reviewed as part of the institutional effectiveness process.
>
> When reviewing this standard, peer evaluators will look for evidence of each of the three key elements of the standard but do so as an integrated activity where the parts are linked. When reporting about the process, it might be useful to consider the process in this fashion:



While the standard emphasizes the three points on the left of the graphic, a thorough explanation of the process will also describe the processes on the right side of the graphic. The institution will not be able to show effective assessment of its outcomes if its means of assessment do not measure what it has set forth as its expected outcomes. Likewise, if the assessment findings are not somehow analyzed or evaluated, it will be hard to show the linkage between undertaking assessments and the continuous improvement of programs and services. Finally, this is a process, and the underlying expectation is that it is ongoing.

NOTES
If there are commonalities in the process by which institutions use student outcomes assessment for institutional improvement across the three elements of this standard, the institution may want to prepare a single preface that could be referenced or hyperlinked from each substandard that outlines the process (organizational structure, timetables, local resources, internal review, etc.). However, review committees will make a separate determination of compliance on each substandard. **Because components of the process may differ for each part of the standard, additional content in this Manual [is] presented separately for each substandard.**

Effective outcomes assessment can be achieved in a variety of ways, and the mentality that "one size fits all" is inappropriate and diminishes the individual missions of institutions. This is especially true regarding the use of language to describe processes; for example, "assessment," "evaluation," "goals," "outcomes," and "objectives" may have precise meaning to a reviewer, but the institution may have a meaningful effectiveness system even if it is not as precise with its language as the reviewer would like. The institution should develop and/or use methods and instruments that are uniquely suited to its circumstances

and are supported by its faculty and its academic and student support professionals.

At the time of its review, the institution is responsible for demonstrating that the full cycle outlined above has taken place, and that the current process is being used to promote continuous improvement. For institutions that do not use annual reporting, sufficient cycles of reporting should be provided to establish that the process is applied to all educational programs. At the time of its review, the institution is responsible for providing evidence of "seeking improvement." The institution should be using the data to inform changes based on evaluation of its findings. Plans to make improvements do not qualify as seeking improvement, but efforts to improve a program that may not have been entirely successful certainly do.

NOTE ON SAMPLING

There is an expectation that an institution can demonstrate institutional effectiveness for all its educational programs and related academic and student services. The volume of material represented by this activity can be quite large, especially at larger institutions. To this end, an institution may provide a sampling of the effectiveness of its programs at the time of its comprehensive review. Sampling, for the purpose of accreditation, includes the following three elements:

(1) A representation that is mindful of the institution's mission.

(2) A valid cross-section of programs from every school or division (and across all levels), with every major division and level of program represented. Sampling should be inclusive of off-campus sites and distance or correspondence education offerings, as applicable; at a minimum, the institution should clarify that assessment activities are inclusive of these modes of delivery and explain that process.

(3) A compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's educational programs and its academic and student support services. Sampling does not preclude the institution from having effectiveness data/analysis available on all programs and units. It is the prerogative of a SACSCOC committee to conduct a more in-depth review of an institution's data/findings/analysis on the effectiveness of all its educational programs and its academic and student support services.

STANDARD 8.2.A – STUDENT OUTCOMES: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

For purposes of this standard, an academic program is a credential as defined by the institution. A degree with a defined major is clearly a program. On the other hand, programs in the same field but taught at different levels (e.g., a BBA and an MBA) are typically viewed as distinct programs. The Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews should be a useful guide as to how programs are defined within this standard.

The expectation is that the institution will engage in ongoing planning and assessment to ensure that for each academic program, the institution develops and assesses expected student learning outcomes. Expected student learning outcomes specify the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes students are expected to attain in courses or in a program. Methods for assessing the extent to which students achieve these outcomes are appropriate to the nature of the discipline and consistent over time to enable the institution to evaluate cohorts of students who complete courses or a program. Shared widely within and across programs, the results of this assessment can affirm the institution's success at achieving its mission and can be used to inform decisions about curricular and programmatic revisions. At appropriate intervals, program and learning outcomes and assessment methods are evaluated and revised.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is there a common process across programs at the institution, or is the means of establishing outcomes assessment processes widely dispersed? If the latter, how is information collected and evaluated?
2. What is the role of faculty, chairs, deans, oversight committees and others in the process?
3. Is the process systematic and ongoing?
4. Are expected student learning outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms for each educational program?
5. What types of assessment activities occur to determine whether learning outcomes are met?
6. How are results from periodic assessment activities analyzed?
7. How does the institution seek improvements in educational programs after conducting these analyses?
8. If programs consistently report "no improvements needed," what happens?

9. If the institution used sampling to present its process and to establish compliance with the standard, why were the sampled programs an appropriate representation of all the institution's programs?
10. Were multiple assessment methods used? If so, describe.
11. How has the institution's use of assessment results improved educational programs?

Sample Documentation:

- Lists of program-specific expected student learning outcomes for educational programs (usually embedded into individual program or unit reports).
- Descriptions of the assessment measures used to collect information on student learning.
- Details on the assessment and analysis of results from these assessments.
- Specific examples where the findings from analysis of results have led to efforts to make program improvements.
- If sampling is used, (1) how the sampling is representative of the institution's mission, (2) documentation of a valid cross-section of programs, and (3) make a case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's programs.

STANDARD 8.2.B – STUDENT OUTCOMES: GENERAL EDUCATION

General education is a critical element of undergraduate degree programs, yet the delivery of courses related to general education is often dispersed across multiple academic departments. As a result, there is a tendency for this extremely important part of the undergraduate degree experience to be assessed, revised, and discussed in a haphazard fashion. This standard ensures that general education competencies are specifically addressed by establishing expected learning outcomes, assessing these outcomes, and providing evidence of seeking improvements based on the findings.

The standard does not mandate a specific approach to this outcomes assessment process. The approach is up to the institution, consistent with principles of good practice, the role general education plays in that institution's curricula, and the organizational structure of the institution.

The institution is responsible for identifying measures of expected student learning outcomes to determine the extent to which students have attained appropriate college-level competencies.

NOTES
See the Standard 8.2 discussion as well as this substandard for full coverage of this standard within the Resource Manual. **Note that "Sampling" does not apply to general education assessment due to the limited number of competencies involved.**

This standard only applies to undergraduate degree programs. The term "collegiate-level" implies that assessment of general education competencies within developmental courses generally is not appropriate. This standard does not apply to noncredit programs.

It is acceptable to implement a schedule of assessment in which only a subset of competencies is evaluated each year. It is expected, however, that all competencies would be evaluated within the multiple-year cycle, and that the institution provides evidence of assessment findings and of actions seeking improvement across the full cycle. It is unusual for a multiple-year cycle to exceed three years.

Different institutions use widely different approaches to determine expected general education outcomes for their students, and they may also use very different means to deliver general education. Some institutions have a very prescriptive set of courses, while others offer a smorgasbord of courses. Some institutions augment basic core courses with additional general education outcomes within the major (e.g., writing across the curriculum or discipline-specific critical learning skills). Some institutions collect the bulk of their assessment data regarding general education early in the student's studies, while others rely on assessments closer to the time of graduation. Larger institutions may have multiple approaches across different colleges and schools. Community colleges may have different general education expectations for students earning technical degrees than for those seeking transfer degrees. Some institutions will utilize embedded assignments within broad general education core courses as part of its set of assessments, others will utilize upper-level courses or external evaluations to capture these outcomes, and still others will turn to their alumni for some of their assessments. Because of these variations, reviewers must be even more mindful of the dangers of a "one size fits all" approach for general education than for student learning outcomes within defined majors. Conversely, due to the

variability in the ways that institutions establish, teach toward, and assess general education competencies, it is essential that institutions carefully describe their concepts and results for this integral component of undergraduate programs.

As an institutional improvement standard, the expectation is not that the institution be required to certify the competency of each student. The institution undertakes that process when it issues a diploma. The intent of the standard is for the institution to make continuous improvements by assessing itself through its assessment of students.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the organizational structure that allows the institution to gain a sense of consistency in its expectations regarding general education outcomes?
2. What expected learning outcomes capture the intended college-level general education competencies the institution envisions for its undergraduate students?
3. Where and when are these expected learning outcomes best assessed? Within the course where they are taught? Within other courses that utilize the material taught earlier in the college experience? By external instruments that can be benchmarked to peers?
4. How will the institution maintain consistency in its measurements across different programs of study?
5. How (and by whom) are the findings analyzed to take possible action on the findings?
6. If weaknesses are found, what process is there to seek improvements in the delivery of general education learning experiences?
7. How does this standard relate to the rationale underlying the general education component of the curriculum? [See Standard 9.2 (General education requirements).]
8. How are off-campus, distance education, and transfer students included in this process? Sample Documentation
9. Identification of student learning outcomes from the institution's expected competencies of graduates.
10. If different units of the institution use different approaches, a discussion and rationale for each.
11. Justification that all measures are intended to capture college-level learning.

12. Descriptions of the assessment measures used to collect information on student learning.
13. Details on the assessment and analysis of results from these assessments.
14. Specific examples where the findings from analysis of results have led to efforts to improve the general education component of undergraduate degree programs.
15. Specific attention to the way off-campus, distance education, and transfer students are part of this process.

STANDARD 8.2.C – STUDENT OUTCOMES: ACADEMIC AND STUDENT SERVICES

Academic and student support services that support student success normally include such activities as library and learning/information resources, faculty resource centers, tutoring, writing centers, academic computer centers, student disability support centers, financial aid, residence life, student activities, dean of students' office, and so on. Most institutions would also include admissions offices within this category. These units provide direct support to faculty and students as related to their educational programs, indirect support for student learning, or a specific co-curricular mission that supports the college experience. It would be common to find that some of these units have expected student outcomes very similar to those of educational programs. Examples might be a library unit tasked with providing information literacy instruction to students, or wellness programming aimed at influencing student behaviors. Regarding library and other learning/information resources, see Standard 11.3 (Library and learning/information access), which specifically addresses instruction in the use of the library. In other cases, expected outcomes might not be related to a directly measurable student learning outcome but instead related to quality of service. An example might be a maximum percentage "downtime" target for levels of academic computing network availability.

As discussed in the "Rationale and Notes" for Standard 7.3 (Administrative effectiveness), it is sometimes difficult to separate assessment of outcomes of administrative goals from assessment of outcomes related to academic and student support services. Generally, these "dual function" units would be addressed in this part of the Principles. If those units are instead addressed in Standard 7.3, it is incumbent on the institution to explain how this determination follows from its mission and organizational structure; it is strongly suggested that this explanation appear in both standards of the Compliance Certification. While institutions may

organize functions differently, it is expected that all services, whether administrative or academic student support services, engage in institutional effectiveness processes.

NOTES

Often, the nature of academic and student support services differs between services for graduate students and those for undergraduate students. Similarly, some services are geared toward commuter students and others primarily target residential students. While institutions have moved more services online, making them available to residential, online, and off-campus students, this is not always the case. Institutions should take care to explicitly address how outcomes assessment activities take these (and other) student populations into effect.

Questions to Consider:

1. Has each unit developed expected outcomes in clearly defined and measurable terms?
2. For units that have direct instructional responsibilities, or that provide specific co-curricular activities, are there measurable expected student learning outcomes for these functions?
3. What types of assessment activities are undertaken by each unit?
4. How (and by whom) are the findings analyzed to take possible action on the findings?
5. If weaknesses are found, what is the process for seeking improvements in the delivery of academic and student support services? What are some of the efforts made to improve services?
6. If the institution used sampling, why were the sampling and findings an appropriate representation of the institution's academic and student support units? Sample Documentation
7. Information as to how the institution's academic and student support services units are structured for reporting purposes.
8. Specific expected outcomes for academic and student support services units, to include expected student learning outcomes as appropriate.
9. Specific evidence of the assessment of outcomes.
10. Information as to how findings are analyzed.
11. Examples of units seeking improvements based on this analysis.

12. If sampling is used, (1) how the sampling is representative of the institution's mission, (2) documentation of a valid cross-section of units, and (3) make a case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's units.
13. Discussion of how assessments address different types of student populations.

PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION, SECTION 7

Also included is Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, which states in part:

> Effective institutions demonstrate a commitment to principles of continuous improvement, based on a systematic and documented process of assessing institutional performance with respect to mission in all aspects of the institution. An institutional planning and effectiveness process involves all programs, services, and constituencies; is linked to the decision-making process at all levels; and provides a sound basis for budgetary decisions and resource allocations.

CORE REQUIREMENT 7.1 – INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING

The following Core Requirement is used to evaluate the compliance or non-compliance of member institutions:

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

Supporting this Core Requirement, the *Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* offers the following guidance.

> Effective institutions demonstrate a commitment to principles of continuous improvements, based on a systematic and documented process of assessing institutional performance with respect to mission in all aspects of the institution. An institutional planning and effectiveness process involves all programs, services, and constituencies; is linked to the decision-making process at all levels; and provides a sound basis for budgetary decisions and resource allocations.
>
> Institutions with missions that expand beyond teaching into research and public/community service set strategic expectations in all these areas.

The purpose of this Core Requirement is to assure that the institution has an appropriate broad-based approach to institution-wide effectiveness that supports its mission and serves as a framework for planning. This is followed by evaluation activities that allow the institution to discern whether it is making the progress it had anticipated in its planning efforts, and making corrections as needed. Unlike other standards that relate to assessing outcomes on a more "micro" unit-by-unit basis (see Standard 8.2 of this document), this standard emphasizes the more "macro" aspects of planning and evaluation. The two are, of course, related and should certainly not be inconsistent with each other.

These "macro" planning and evaluation activities often entail a longer time horizon than unit planning. The activities of the institution's planning and evaluation system may be scheduled at periodic intervals that make sense for the institution and its mission.

Institutional narratives—and reviewer expectations—often involve parsing the words of this standard carefully. For example, note there are two sets of processes required: planning and evaluation. Also, establishing compliance with the adjectives in the standard is generally made explicit: ongoing, comprehensive, integrated, research-based, and systematic. Each word is important and deserves attention. While the standard does not require a formal strategic plan or similarly named document, the expectations of the standard closely parallel that type of process. The key is that the institution can show its processes are undertaken seriously, with a focus on institutional improvement.

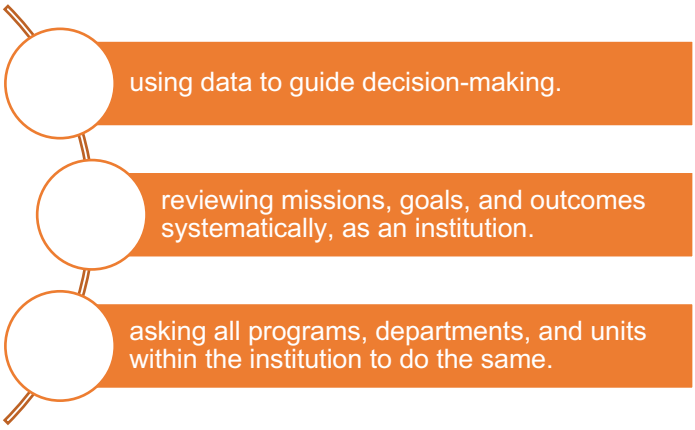
In addition to the guidance above, the *Resource Manual* offers the following

Questions to Consider:

1. Are there both planning and evaluation processes at the institutional level?
2. Is the process ongoing, and not something initiated to get through the accreditation review?
3. In what sense are the processes comprehensive? Is this more than academic planning? More than enrollment planning? More than financial planning? More than facilities planning?
4. For institutions with missions that are broader than classroom instruction, how are goals and expected outcomes set for research, public/community service, or other aspects of the mission?

5. How are the processes themselves integrated? Does evaluation arise from planning expectations? Does evaluation feed back into changes in institutional plans?
6. How is the comprehensive "macro" planning effort integrated with "micro" unit-level planning and evaluation? How does it inform resource allocation decisions?
7. In what sense are these processes research based? What types of data are collected and analyzed?
8. Are plans and evaluations of results mission consistent?
9. What evidence exists that the institution-wide planning and evaluation processes result in continuing improvements in institutional quality?
10. Is there appropriate institutional research and budgetary support for assessment programs throughout the institution?
11. Are appropriate internal and external constituents and stakeholders involved in the planning and evaluation process? Sample Documentation
12. Descriptions of the institutional planning and evaluation processes, including a timetable.
13. Documents related to the most recent applications of these processes (e.g., formal comprehensive plans, periodic updates).
14. Specific examples of how institutional research has led to continuing improvement or otherwise affected the institution.
15. Specific examples to document adherence to the adjectives: ongoing, comprehensive, integrated, research-based, systematic.
16. Minutes from board meetings, cabinet meetings, ad hoc committees, and task forces (or other similar documents) that show that planning and evaluation are taken seriously and that there is broad involvement.

In summary, this standard asks us to engage in continual improvement of institutional quality by



Meaningful assessment uses these standards of quality and others to measure how the university operates, even during periods when we are not reporting to SACSCOC to maintain accreditation. Therefore, annual reporting provides us a way to assess decision-making, missions, goals, and outcomes independent of compliance requirements.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCREDITATION

Regional accreditation is

- Vital to uphold the institution's reputation and the perceived quality of the degrees conferred.
- Necessary for the transferability of earned credit hours to other programs and institutions.
- Essential for the acceptance of students to graduate and professional schools elsewhere.
- Required for access to federal student financial aid and to some federal grants.

Since 1897, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, has been continuously accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

APPENDIX B: RUBRIC FOR META-ASSESSMENT REPORT EVALUATION

Rubric for Assessment Report Evaluation

Assessment Steering Committee, Updated 7/27/2021

OVERALL LEVEL OF REPORT	4 – ADVANCED	3 – SATISFACTORY	2 – DEVELOPING	1 – UNSATISFACTORY	NO REPORT
Content (Report contains required information)	**All data provided for the following *for each outcome*:**	**Missing 1 – 2 of the following:**	**Missing 3 or more of the following:**	**SLOs are present. No data provided for the following:**	**Program on hiatus or new program**
	Responsible Users/Assessment Team Members	Responsible Users/Assessment Team Members	Responsible Users/Assessment Team Members	Responsible Users/Assessment Team Members	No report
	Term Data Collected	Term Data Collected	Term Data Collected	Term Data Collected	
	Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Term and Year	Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Term and Year	Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Term and Year	Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Term and Year	
	Program level	Program level	Program level	Program level	
	Progress (e.g., Ready for Review)	Progress (e.g., Ready for Review)	Progress (e.g., Ready for Review)	Progress (e.g., Ready for Review)	
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) Certificate Program = minimum of 2 SLOs Degree Program = minimum of 3 SLOs (recommended 3-5)	All SLOs use specific language describing expected skill or competency	Most SLOs use specific language describing expected skill or competency (e.g. instead of using "know", "understand" describe the expected skill or competency)	Some SLOs use specific language (e.g., instead of using "know", "understand" describe the expected skill or competency)	No SLOs use specific language (e.g., instead of using "know", "understand", describe the expected skill or competency)	No report
	All SLOs describe specific observable student behaviors	Most SLOs describe specific observable student behaviors	Some SLOs describe specific observable student behaviors	No SLOs describe specific observable student behaviors	
	All SLOs are measurable (i.e., outcomes describe how students will meet standards)	Most SLOs are measurable	Some SLOs are measurable	No SLOs are measurable (may not use taxonomies for learning)	
	Adequate number of SLOs (Certificate = Minimum of 2 SLOs; Degree = Minimum of 3 SLOs; 3-5 SLOs recommended)	Adequate number of SLOs	Fewer than the minimum SLOs	Fewer than the minimum SLOs	

OVERALL LEVEL OF REPORT	4 – ADVANCED	3 – SATISFACTORY	2 – DEVELOPING	1 – UNSATISFACTORY	NO REPORT
Direct/Indirect Assessment Methods and Data Collection	All data collection (results) reported	Most data collection (results) reported	Some data collection (results) reported	No data collection (results) reported	No report
	Explanation linking all SLOs with assessments is clear	Explanation linking most SLOs with assessments is clear	Assessment methods appear to align with SLOs, but explanation is unclear or is not provided	No explanation given as to why nothing has been done	
	If using one assessment for multiple SLOs, an explanation of how the instrument assesses each is clear	If using one assessment to assess multiple SLOs, an explanation of how one instrument assesses each SLO may not be clear		If assessment methods are reported, no methods align with stated SLOs	
	All SLOs are measured using direct methods	All SLOs are measured using direct methods	Some SLOs are measured using only indirect methods		
	"Progress" selected reflects extended cycle, if applicable	"Progress" selected reflects extended cycle, if applicable	"Progress" selected does not reflects extended cycle, if applicable	"Progress" selected does not reflects extended cycle, if applicable	
Assessment Results & Analysis	Results are present, and there is reference in the analysis for all assessed SLOs	Results are present, and there is reference in the analysis to most assessed SLOs	Presentation of data is weak (i.e., results are too broad or do not provide measures of student performance on assessed SLOs)	No analysis of results is provided	No report
	History of results is provided and is used in conjunction with the current year's results to make inferences about student learning	Some history of results is mentioned, but not always connected to current results	No mention of history of results (i.e., results from previous assessment cycles), if applicable	No mention of history of results (i.e., results from previous assessment cycles), if applicable	
	Detailed explanation and discussion of results including whether or not outcome was achieved	Limited level of detail in explanation and discussion of whether or not outcome was achieved	No explanation/ discussion of results including whether or not outcome was achieved	No interpretation of results	
	If on extended cycle, written explanation is provided in "Action(s) Taken"	If on extended cycle, written explanation is provided in "Action(s) Taken"	If on extended cycle, no written explanation is provided in "Action(s) Taken"	If on extended cycle, no written explanation is provided in "Action(s) Taken"	

OVERALL LEVEL OF REPORT	4 – ADVANCED	3 – SATISFACTORY	2 – DEVELOPING	1 – UNSATISFACTORY	NO REPORT
Use of Results/Actions Taken	All actions are clearly derived from interpretation of results	Most actions are clearly derived from interpretation of results	Some actions are clearly derived from an interpretation of results	No actions are stated	No report
	All actions address specific, measurable deficiencies of student performance on specific SLOs and/or address areas for improvement of student learning	Most actions address specific, measurable deficiencies of student performance on specific SLOs and/or address areas for improvement of student learning	Some actions address specific, measurable deficiencies of student performance on specific SLOs and/or address areas for improvement of student learning	If reported, the actions • do not support results • are not faculty-driven • do not enhance student learning	
	All actions are faculty-driven and clearly defined in terms of timeframe and who is responsible for implementation	Most actions are faculty-driven and clearly defined in terms of timeframe and who is responsible for implementation	Some actions are faculty-driven and clearly defined in terms of timeframe and who is responsible for implementation		
	Clear evidence that the program is *seeking* (and experiencing) improvement, where possible, based on historical trends already identified in "Analysis of Results" (i.e., "Closing the loop")	Limited evidence that the program is *seeking* (and experiencing) improvement, where possible, based on historical trends already identified in "Analysis of Results" (i.e., "Closing the loop")	No evidence that the program is *seeking* (and experiencing) improvement, where possible, based on historical trends already identified in "Analysis of Results" (i.e., "Closing the loop")		

Definitions for Overall Level of Report

No report (0 points)	A new program; an existing program undergoing curriculum change or on hiatus.
Unsatisfactory (5 – 8 points)	A program with outcomes, methods, and no assessment completed; incomplete assessment report.
Developing (9 – 13 points)	Started assessment, tweaking methods, need to provide more information about the assessment methods, weak discussion of results, hard to determine validity due to lack of explanation, perhaps no actions stated; room for improvement.
Satisfactory (14 – 18 points)	Sufficient report; has a few areas needing clarification and/or enhancement. On the way to becoming advanced. Data is collected, but not analyzed due to program being on extended cycle.
Advanced (19 – 20 points)	Clear measures, clear process, good interpretation and use of results, clearly closes the loop, provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of results; complete report.

APPENDIX C: EXPLANATIONS OF FIELDS IN THE PROGRAM/MAJOR LEARNER OUTCOME FORM OF THE ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN

Field	Explanation
Academic Major	Pre-populated by the system.
Person Completing Report	Units enter the names of those who have access and work in the preparation and posting of the report. The unit updates this field annually after the roll-over from the previous year. Entering names allows the College and Institutional Reviewers know who to contact if there are any questions.
Assessment Team Members (Optional)	List all the unit's personnel engaged in this assessment. This is different from Person Completing Report (field above) in that Assessment Team Members may include all instructors engaged in the assessment of the specific learning outcome.
AY Start	Pre-populated by the system.
AY End	Pre-populated by the system.
Learner Outcome Number	Enter the number (Arabic numeral) of the learner outcome.
Learner Outcome (Required)	A brief statement describing what students should be able to demonstrate to know.
Description (Optional)	Use this to provide additional supporting information relating to this outcome, if needed. Examples of information are a more detailed outcome statement or a reason why this outcome is important. Those programs that undergo programmatic accreditation may use this to explain how the outcome relates to the standards of their programmatic accreditation.
Term data collected (Required)	Predetermined selections. Can select more than one: Fall Semester, Spring Semester, Summer Term.
Course(s) or collection schedule detail (Optional)	List courses used to assess this outcome or the time or frequency, such as each fall semester.
Direct Assessment Method(s) (Required) NOTE: Added for the 2013-2014 academic year and thereafter	Select those that are appropriate; if not on list, please select "**Other (please describe below)**." You may select one or more of the following: CCTST (Critical Thinking Test), Doctoral dissertations, embedded course work, Graduate comprehensive exam, Internship/practicum/coop observation, laboratory reports, licensure exams, Master's theses, Oral defense, oral presentation, portfolio review, rubric for a direct measure, senior theses, Major field test (THEC, ETS, PRAXIS, ETC.).

Direct Assessment Method(s) Description	Describe your direct assessment method(s) in more detail (at least one direct method needed for each outcome). Include supporting documentation of assessment (i.e., standardized test results report; rubric used for scoring student work). If "**Other**" is chosen from the above list, a detailed explanation should be provided here.
Indirect Assessment Method(s) NOTE: Added for the 2013-2014 academic year and thereafter	Select those that are appropriate; if not on list, please select "**Other (please describe below)**." You may select one or more of the following: Alumni survey/focus group, employer survey/focus group, internship/practicum/coop student self-assessment, presentations - conferences, professional, publications, reflective writings, senior exit interviews, student survey/focus group.
Indirect Assessment Method(s) Description	Describe your indirect assessment method(s) in more detail. Include supporting documentation of assessment (i.e., actual surveys, questionnaire used in focus group or exit interviews). If "**Other**" is chosen from the above list, a detailed explanation should be provided here.
Assessment Results & Analysis (Required)	Provide appropriate data, describe, and interpret the results of the direct and indirect assessments as findings relate to the outcome.
Action(s) Taken Category(ies) (Required)[1] NOTE: Added for the 2013-2014 academic year and thereafter, used for internal tracking	This field is used to categorize the types of actions. These actions can be initiated, in progress, or completed. Select as many as appropriate for this outcome: Assessment methodology, assessment outcome revision, student support/mentoring, course revision, criteria/benchmarking changed, curriculum change, faculty development/training, pedagogy/ instructional strategy, no action(s) taken after review, no students enrolled/graduate, extended cycle (Provide an explanation in Notes field).
Action(s) Taken (Required)	Describe the specific actions linked to learning that were taken by the faculty because of the assessment (changes made to specific course(s) or the curriculum). Provide date of faculty meeting(s) when action was discussed and when changes went into effect; Can attach minutes of the meeting, curricular documents submitted to college, etc.
Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Term (Required)	Fall semester, spring semester, summer term This is to designate the next time the faculty will complete the assessment analysis (review samples of student work, review test results, etc.)

Next Scheduled Assessment Analysis Year (Required)	Select the appropriate academic year in which this outcome will next be assessed. It should not be more than three years out without an explanation in the Notes section below.
Notes	This field is a way to explain any significant changes or characteristics of the program that will impact assessment, such as 1) program reorganization/ restructure (attach any minutes from a faculty meeting or other documentation that support this action), 2) retiring or major revision to an outcome (attach any minutes from a faculty meeting or other documentation that support this action), 3) assessment cycle for this outcome, 4) discussion of program size 5) other information that will benefit the department into future assessment cycles.
Progress	Select the appropriate step. Needed to appear in workflow for approvers: Ready for Review (**selected by the report writer**), Review Complete (**selected by the report reviewer**), Review Final, Retired, Extended Cycle (**selected by the ASC reviewer**) When final review is complete, "Review Final" will be selected.
Program level	This is for administrative purposes to allow sorting by degree level. Select the appropriate level for this particular outcome: Bachelor's, Master's and EdS, Doctoral (research and professional), Graduate Certificate.

[1] If you are unsure of what option to select for the "Action(s) Taken Category(ies)" field, please contact a member of the Assessment Steering Committee for assistance.

APPENDIX D: ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION

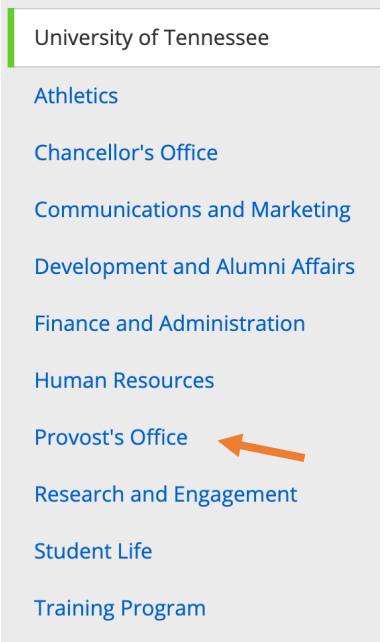
Each year, instructors of general education courses conduct assessment of the general education student learning outcomes for each of the Basic Skills and Broadened Perspectives distribution requirements. Rubrics developed by the UT General Education Committee are available at http://sacs.utk.edu/general-education-assessment/ (alternatively, go to www.sacs.utk.edu, select General Education Assessment from the navigation menu on the left-hand side of the webpage). Instructors are asked to use these rubrics and report through the Planning module. This document is a guide on how to enter the findings in the Planning module. This document is not a guide on how to conduct assessment. For assistance on how to conduct general education assessment and how to use the general education rubrics, contact the chair of the General Education Committee and the Teaching & Learning Innovation Unit.

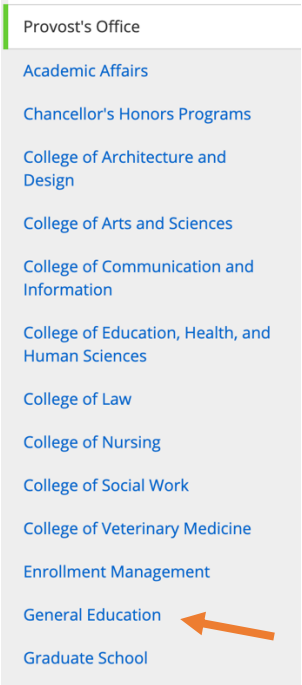
STEP #1: NAVIGATING TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM DATA ENTRY AREA

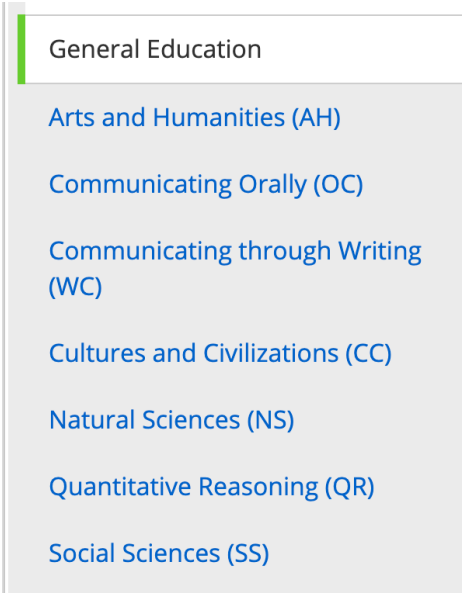
Upon logging into the Planning module, you should see three icon tabs in the upper left-hand corner of the screen. Make sure you have selected the **Plans** tab icon ( ).

If you are unable to log in to the Planning module, contact Ashley Browning to request access.

Once in the **Plans** area, use the links along the left side of the screen to navigate to the General Education Program data entry area. First, choose **Provost's Office**. Then, scroll down to choose **General Education**. Finally, select the requirement for which you are reporting (**AH, OC, WC, etc.)**

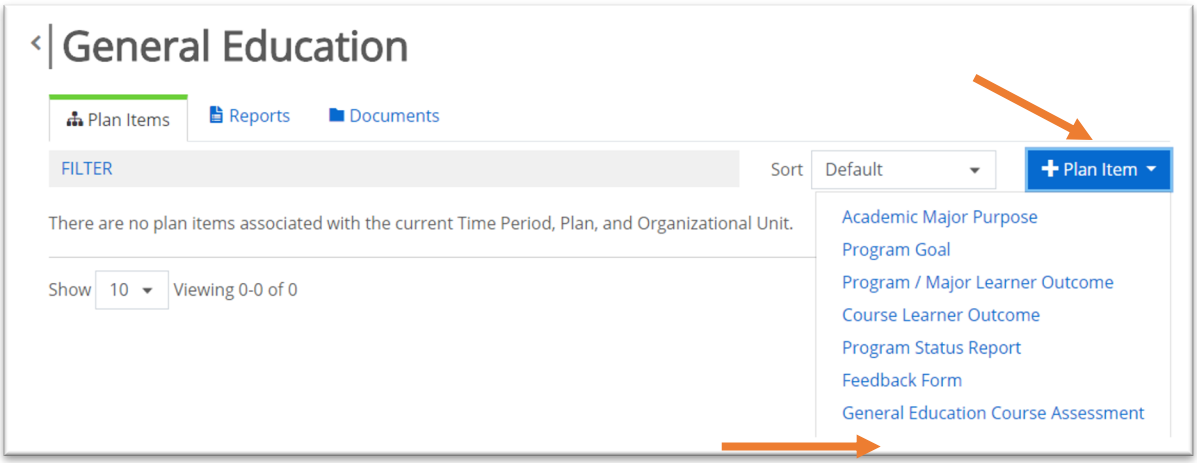






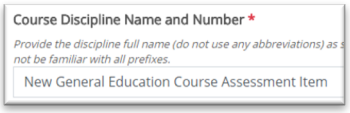
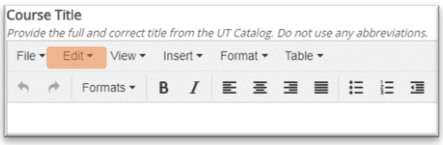
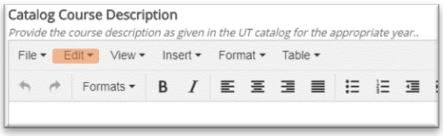
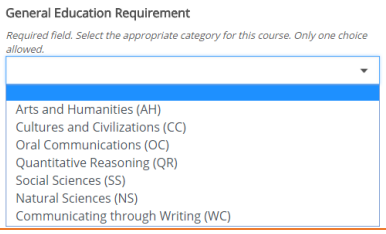
STEP #2: CREATE A NEW GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT FORM

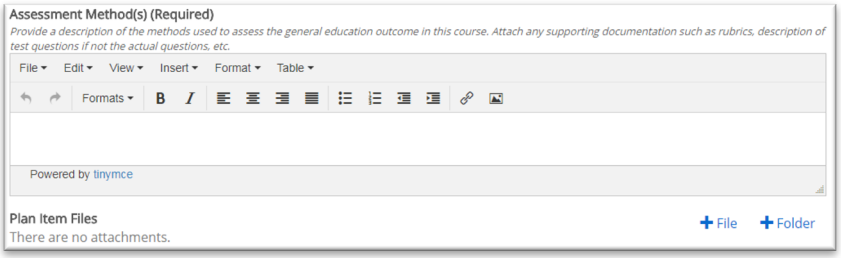
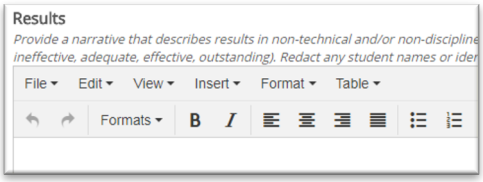
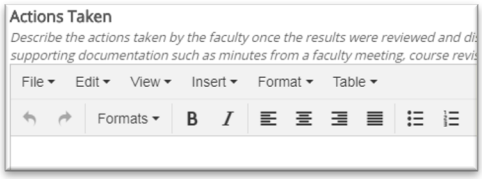
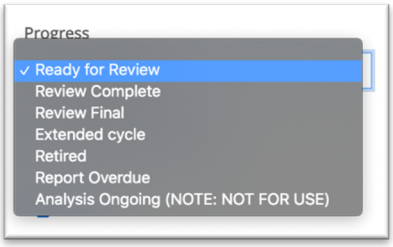
To create a form for your assessment, select the requirement for which you are reporting (**AH, OC, WC, etc.)**, then click the **+Plan Item** drop down box in the upper right part of the screen and choose **General Education Course Assessment**.



STEP #3: ENTERING THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

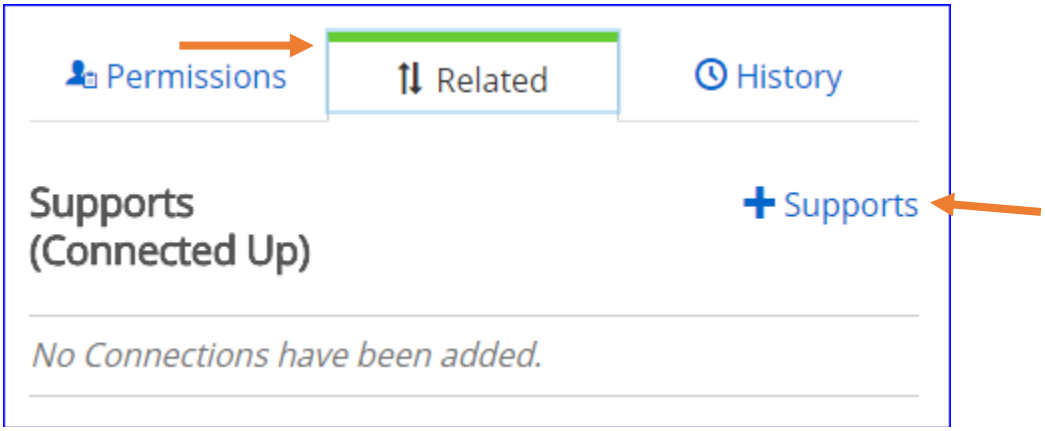
Fields in the **General Education Course Assessment Form** and the information that is entered into each field are given in the following table:

Field	Description
Course Discipline Name and Number	Enter the information without abbreviations (e.g., English 101). 
Course Title	Click the **Edit** button and enter the title as it appears in the undergraduate catalog. Do not use any abbreviations. 
Catalog Course Description	Click the **Edit** button and enter the course description. Using the online undergraduate catalog, simply copy and paste the catalog description and course notes into the field. This is only done once. The information will be rolled forward to the coming years. Verify the description and provide any edits should the course be revised and approved through the curriculum process. 
General Education Requirement	This is a pull-down menu that contains the different categories of general education courses. Select the most appropriate choice for this course. You can only make one choice. 

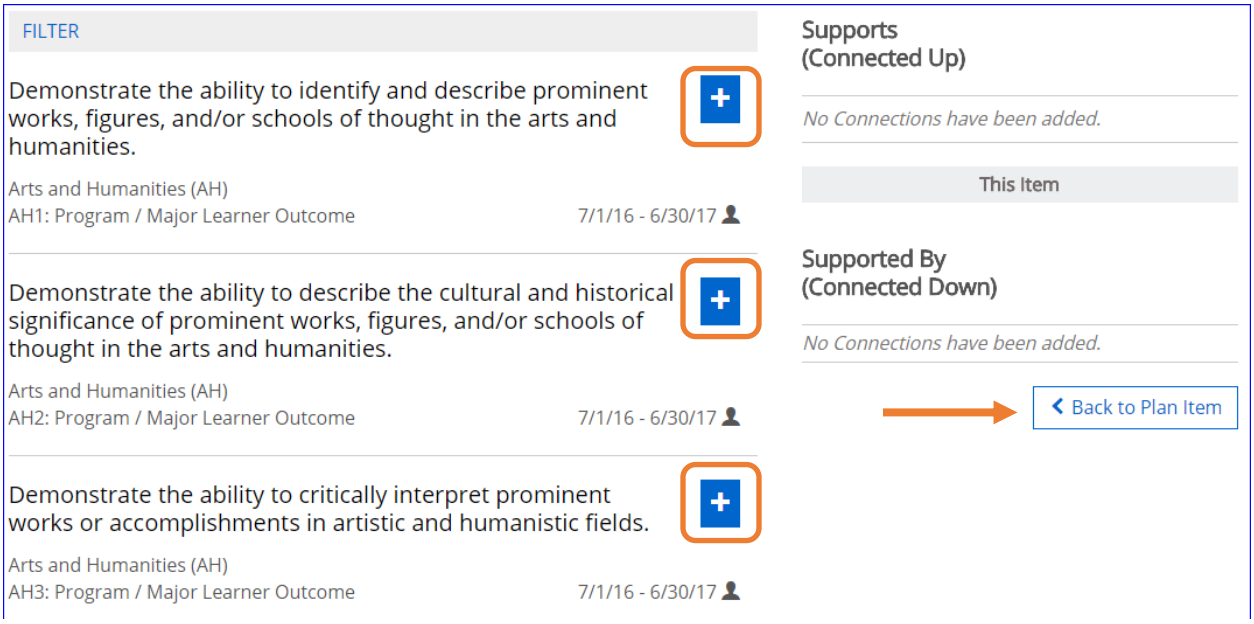
Assessment Method(s) (Required)	Use this field to describe the assessment methods used. Provide a clear description so others will understand exactly how the assessment was done. You will also want to upload any supporting documentation you have for your assessment (e.g., copy of the assignment, test questions, rubric, scoring sheets, etc.). If a rubric is used, you can also upload examples of student work that represent the different levels of achievement (always redact any information that would identify the student). 
Results	Enter a discussion of the assessment results directly in the **Results** box. The field has a **File Library**. You may want to upload any additional documentation of the results. 
Actions Taken	Provide a discussion of the actions taken based on the assessment results here. For example, if the faculty reviewed the results and decided that an assignment needs to be added to help build competency for one of the general education learning outcomes, then provide a synopsis of the discussion, what will happen, and when the revisions will be implemented.  If no actions are needed because students are performing at an acceptable level, then provide evidence that students are performing at a satisfactory level in the **Results** field. Also, in this field, provide a statement the faculty met, discussed the results, and decided no changes were needed at this point in time and the outcome will be reassessed and provide the term when it will occur. This field has a **File Library**. If you have minutes from a faculty meeting, they can be attached as evidence of the discussion.
Progress	When the report is complete, select from the **Progress** pull-down menu **Ready for Review** and email the chair of the General Education Committee (gened@utk.edu) that your report is complete. 

STEP #4: LINKING THE REPORT TO A SPECIFIC GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOME

Each report must be linked to one or more learning outcomes for the general education distribution requirement. This is done through the **Related** tab in the upper right corner of the page. When you click the **Related** tab, you will want to select + Supports .



When you click + Supports you will get the list of learner outcomes for that specific distribution requirement of general education (The example below is for the Arts & Humanities distribution requirement). Click the learner outcome that your course supports and then click **Back to Plan Item**. This will take you back to your course assessment report form.



The form auto saves as you go. When you have finished entering all the necessary information click the Done button at the bottom of the page.

APPENDIX E: ASSESSING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLANS

A QEP is a document developed by SACSCOC-accredited institutions that

(1) includes a process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment,
(2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution,
(3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP,
(4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and
(5) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement.

Engaging the wider academic community and addressing one or more issues that contribute to institutional improvement, a QEP describes a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issue(s) related to enhancing student outcomes. The topic typically emerges from a review of student data that reveals an area of weakness that needs improvement, or the institution identifies another area it wishes to improve or pursue, consistent with its mission, that will improve student learning and/or the learning environment.

A QEP is developed and submitted for review by a SACSCOC On-Site Reaffirmation Committee at the time of reaffirmation. If the institution has prepared a *Focused Report* in response to the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's draft report, the QEP is concurrently submitted with the *Focused Report*. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviews the QEP to see whether it meets the above guidelines provided by SACSCOC. Once approved, the institution may move forward with implementation.

In the years between reaffirmation and the Fifth-Year Report, the institution implements the approved QEP, collects data, analyzes the data, makes changes to the QEP based on assessment data, and prepares a QEP Impact Report (due to SACSCOC with the Fifth-Year Interim Report). The QEP Impact Report is read by peer readers serving on Committee E at either the SACSCOC Annual Meeting in December or its summer board meeting held in June. The assessment component, which is the most-cited shortcoming in QEP Impact Reports, is most relevant to this *Guide*.

THE QEP IMPACT REPORT

Institutions submitting a QEP Impact Report are asked to provide a copy of the QEP Executive Summary which was submitted to the Commission following reaffirmation and a report brief (10 pages or less) addressing the following:

1. a succinct list of the initial goals and intended outcomes of the Quality Enhancement Plan;

2. a discussion of changes made to the QEP and the reasons for making those changes;
3. a description of the QEP's impact on student learning and/or the environment supporting student learning, as appropriate to the design of the QEP. This description should include the achievement of identified goals and outcomes, and any unanticipated outcomes of the QEP; and
4. a reflection on what the institution has learned because of the QEP experience

Two outcomes are possible upon completion of the review by SACSCOC Committee E:

1. Accept with comment, which means no additional report is required
2. Refer to C&R for review, which requires the institution to submit an additional report after 12 months that documents progress on implementation of its QEP

Assessment should be addressed for the final outcomes, and for each implementation step along the way, so that adjustments can be made as necessary; the institution must use more than pre- and post-test assessment tools. The assessment plan includes both formative and summative components.

Two important strategies to remember: Specification and triangulation

Specification

- Name the assessment tools
- Clear timelines and responsibilities for administrators of assessments
- Articulated process for the review and use of the assessment results

Triangulation

- Use of multiple assessment strategies
- Quantitative and qualitative assessment
- Internal and/or external

APPENDIX F: LOCATING ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

Anthology Planning Support Center
Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) Planning and Assessment Resources Webpage
Teaching & Learning Innovation's (TLI) Assessment Frequently Asked Questions
Teaching & Learning Innovation's (TLI) Assessment Resources Webpage
UTK SACSCOC Assessment Frequently Asked Questions
UTK SACSCOC Resources Webpage
Program Assessment Training Site - (Canvas Commons) Search for: "Program Assessment Training Site" and click on course name. If you "add to favorites," the course will be listed in your Favorites in the top navigation
Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education Webpage

The Anthology Planning module has recently undergone some changes, and help can be found online through recorded webinars, or by scheduling online or in-person training by contacting Ashley Browning in the Office of Accreditation.

GLOSSARY

- **Action(s) Taken** – A statement that indicates the specific changes that a given unit/department plans to implement in the next cycle, based on assessment results.

  Assessment – The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.

- **Assessment cycle** – An annual process of establishing outcomes, targets, and assessment tools, collecting data, and analyzing results. In higher education, this generally happens annually and fits within the academic year.

- **Assessment tools (Methods)** – Instruments that are distinguished by what is being measured to gather data and provide evidence regarding student learning and program goals. May be quantitative or qualitative in nature, depending on the outcome being assessed.

- **Assessment report** – A report submitted annually from each unit/department based on its goals and accomplishments as well as an assessment plan. This report outlines how measures were taken to improve student learning outcomes and program outcomes, providing evidence for changes in outcomes. If no changes take place, documentation of no changes should still be provided to reviewers.

- **Direct assessment** – Assessment that uses coursework, exams, and other assignments directly to gauge student achievement of learning outcomes. *(Examples: participation data, observation of behavior, pre- and post-measures, rubrics, portfolios.)*

- **Indirect assessment** – Assessment that uses perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of students and other agents of the university to deduce outcomes. *(Examples: Surveys, exit interviews, retention data, graduation data, focus groups.)*

- **Learning outcomes** – Behavioral objectives for determining whether students are achieving the educational goals of a program, and, ultimately, whether overall program goals are being successfully met.

- **Meta-Assessment –** Assessment of the assessment process. At UT Knoxville, the Assessment Steering Committee conducts a meta-assessment annually to improve the process.

- **Population** – An entire group of people or objects known to have similar characteristics that enable findings to be applied broadly.

- **Random sample** – A sample selected so that each subset within a population has the same chance of being selected.

- **Retired** – Used when a department determines after several assessment cycles that this outcome is continually being successfully met and the department wants to focus on other aspects of the program OR when professional standards or the job sector shifts emphases and new outcomes are needed. ATTACH under the Action(s) Taken field section any minutes or other documentation that supports the retirement of an outcome.

- **Rubric** – A set of criteria specifying the characteristics of a learning outcome and the levels of achievement for each characteristic.

- **Sample** – A designated subset chosen to represent the entire population; may be formed in a variety of ways, including random, systematic, convenience, cluster, and stratified.

- **Qualitative data** – A type of empirical data that collects information concerned with understanding or conveying meanings or contexts rather than making statistical inferences. Common forms include participant observation, focus group, and interviewing.

- **Quantitative data** – A type of empirical data that is represented numerically, focusing on occurrences, measuring characteristics, or behavior rather than meanings. Common forms include questionnaires, experiments, and statistical analysis.