



State University of New York

Building Meaningful Conversations About Student Learning



**Academic Affairs Assessment Plan
2006-2007 Academic Year**

For more information about curriculum, instruction, and assessment at Binghamton University, please contact:

Sean McKitrick
Assistant Provost for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment
Binghamton University
PO Box 6000
Binghamton, New York 13902-6000
(607) 777-2150
smckitri@binghamton.edu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	5
	History of assessment at Binghamton University	6
II.	Mission and Values	8
	Binghamton University Mission and Vision	9
	Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Mission and Values	10
III.	Student Learning Assessment: 2006-2007 Academic Year Goals, Objectives, and Indicators of Success	11
IV.	Building Meaningful Conversations in General Education: General Education Assessment Plan, 2006-2007 Academic Year	19
	Overview	20
	Matching Assessments with General Education Student Learning Outcomes	23
	Action Framework: Building Meaningful Conversations	25
	Impacting Student Learning, Curriculum, and Instruction	26
V.	Building Meaningful Conversations at Program and Major Levels: Developing, Enacting, and Monitoring Assessment at Binghamton University's Fields of Study	27
	Overview	28
	Monitoring of Assessment Focused on the Major	29

VI. Building a Culture of Assessment: Assessment Training and Resources	31
Overview	32
Assessment Information	33
Assessment Training	33
Assessment Resources for Instruction	33

Introduction



HISTORY OF ASSESSMENT AT BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

Binghamton University has been engaged in student learning assessment for over a decade. The Division of Academic Affairs has fostered conversations with faculty and administrators about how to further enhance student learning, even prior to the time that assessment was required by regional accreditors and the state of New York.

Beginning in 2001, there has been a concerted effort to formalize the process in order to focus more directly on student learning achievements. Academic affairs, in cooperation with the Faculty Senate and its associated organizations, has developed a system of assessment which has included the formation of Assessment Category Teams (ACTs), each devoted to the 13 general education student learning outcome areas defined by that program:

- Composition
- Oral Communication
- Foreign Language
- Laboratory Science
- Social Science
- Mathematics/Reasoning
- Aesthetics
- Physical Activity/Wellness
- Critical Thinking and Information Management
- Global Interdependencies
- Pluralism in the United States
- Humanities
- Wellness

Charged by the Faculty Senate, the Educational Policies and Procedures Committee (EPPC), has overseen the activities of each ACT, which collects a random sample of portfolios assembled by instructors teaching courses in each general education category. These course portfolios contained course syllabi, statements of how the courses meet the student learning objectives relating to each general education category, samples of student work, and estimates of what proportion of students exceed, meet, approach, or do not meet the student learning objectives. These portfolios have been electronically stored for ACT members' reference over the years.

In addition, in 2002, the EPPC directed all programs and departments to submit assessment plans by 2003, with statements of student learning objectives and assessment methodologies to be employed. Departments and program submitted these plans to the

provost's offices, and began the process of assessing student learning. In subsequent years, programs began submitting assessment reports with detailed information about how program student learning objectives were being met. This information was also stored in the provost's office for review with each relevant department chair.

In 2003, the State University of New York system organized the "GEAR initiative" in which writing, critical thinking, and mathematics/reasoning were areas designated for assessment. After developing a common set of rubrics to be used to assess specific samples of student work, SUNY campuses, including Binghamton University, were directed to begin collecting these samples and training a random sample of instructors and ACTs on using these rubrics to assess student learning. For the 2006-2007 academic year, the area of focus will be critical thinking.

In 2006, academic affairs recruited and hired an Assistant Provost for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment, whose role is to oversee the assessment process, and to facilitate the use of assessment information for enhancements in student learning, curriculum, and instruction, in general education and all undergraduate and graduate major areas of study at the University.

This document serves as the first formal assessment plan. Its specific focus is the assessment plan for the 2006-2007 academic year. In what follows, we outline the university mission and vision statements, link those statements to the mission and vision of the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment, and then outline the objectives, assessments, and accountability initiatives in academic affairs, including general education and program areas of study. It concludes with a statement of future activities in curriculum, instruction, and assessment at Binghamton University.



Mission and Values



**Binghamton University and Office of
Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment**

Binghamton University Mission and Vision Statements

Mission statement

“The State University of New York at Binghamton is a research university committed to excellence in teaching and scholarship. Binghamton offers carefully focused Masters and doctoral programs and a range of undergraduate programs taught from diverse perspectives to a pluralistic community. A continuing commitment to the liberal arts forms the basis for undergraduate instruction in the arts and sciences and in the professional programs of nursing, engineering, management, and education. Binghamton guides students in the development of their intellectual life and prepares them to contribute constructively to their community and region, to New York State, the nation, and to a world that is rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent. Graduate education and research emphasize both scholarly depth within the disciplines and unique interdisciplinary perspectives, and provide the basis for undergraduate education that is at the forefront of knowledge. As a public institution of higher education, Binghamton recognizes its responsibility to build a multicultural campus community that offers opportunity for access and participation to all members of society. Binghamton University actively contributes to the state and nation through continuing education, applied research, and other services. In pursuit of its mission Binghamton continually evaluates its programs, structures, and processes and alters them when change will enhance its quality and effectiveness.”

Vision

Since its inception in 1946 as Triple-Cities College, significant change has characterized the history of Binghamton University. It has evolved from a four-year liberal arts college with a reputation for superb undergraduate education into an excellent doctoral research university with a range of liberal arts and professional programs, one that carefully seeks to preserve that undergraduate excellence. In fewer than 60 years, Binghamton University has become recognized for the quality of its academic programs and for the significant contributions its faculty make to understanding hearts and minds, society and culture, the physical world in its myriad forms, and the deepest reaches of abstract thought -- analytical, philosophical, and mathematical. Excellence is a delicate state of being; it must be continually recreated. Achieving Binghamton’s greatest potential will require committing ourselves both to enhancing our core strengths and to further change. Binghamton University faces important challenges stemming from shifting national trends and state and institutional realities. This plan charts a course to address those challenges; it arises from the **vision of a truly distinguished and unique institution of higher education, one that combines an international reputation for research, scholarship and creative endeavor with the best undergraduate programs available at any public university.**

Realizing our vision

Our mission as a premier public university is to enrich the lives of people in the region, nation and world through *discovery, education and engagement*. The four overarching strategies below are designed to advance this mission. Pursuing the following actions will preserve the University’s heritage, broaden its range of influence, enhance its visibility and acclaim, and ensure its vibrancy and vitality.

- Invest in academic excellence, innovation, growth, and diversification
- Enhance engagement and outreach
- Create an adaptive infrastructure to support our mission
- Foster a campus culture of diversity, respect and success

These recommendations encourage the University to pursue both the traditional and the innovative, to reconsider and expand relationships within and beyond the institution’s traditional bounds, and through decisive action, to position the University to determine its own course in the rapidly changing environment of higher education. Ways to achieve these strategies are set forth in an appended document, *Implementing Our Strategies: A Roadmap To the Future*.

Office of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Mission and Vision Statements

Mission

The Office of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment is committed to the university's mission to "continually evaluate its programs, structures, and processes and alter them when change will enhance quality and effectiveness." In so doing, it recognizes its responsibility to work with faculty, administrators, and internal and external constituents of the university to assure that student learning, instruction, and curriculum are of the highest quality.

Vision and conceptual framework: "Building meaningful conversations about student learning"

In keeping with the university's vision of functioning as **"a truly distinguished and unique institution of higher education...that combines an international reputation for research, scholarship, and creative endeavor with the best undergraduate (and graduate) programs available at any public university,"** we focus on two specific aspects of the university's objectives:

- To invest in academic excellence, innovation, growth, and diversification
- To foster a campus culture of diversity, respect, and success

The role of the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment is built upon the expectation that assessment leads to informed and meaningful conversations about curriculum and instruction that can lead, in turn, to enhancements in quality and outcome. "Building meaningful conversations about student learning" means that we will assist the academic affairs community in its efforts to assess student learning in ways that are relevant to faculty, administrators, and internal and external constituents of the university in enhancing curriculum and instruction.

Given Popham's (2004) concern that the curriculum, instruction, and assessment model can only be effective if integrated, it is our view that our effectiveness relies primarily upon the quality of conversations about how various assessments lead to enhancements in curriculum, instruction, and student learning. Our focus on "building meaningful conversations about student learning" causes us to focus on training department chairs, undergraduate and graduate directors, as well as academic affairs staff and management, on how to define goals and objectives for their various areas of responsibility, and how to assess those goals and objectives, so meaningful conversations can occur. More importantly, "building meaningful conversations about student learning" means creating and monitoring effective assessment, fostering discussions about what assessments say about the quality of curriculum and instruction at division, department, and program levels, and encouraging and monitoring actions that result from such discussions intended to further enhance quality and effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and student learning at Binghamton University.

Realizing our vision

To accomplish our mission and vision, we will pursue the following goals:

- Assist undergraduate program faculty, staff, and administrators in developing, implementing, and using fully-functioning assessment plans
- Assist graduate program faculty, staff, and administrators in developing, implementing, and using a fully-functioning assessment plan
- Consult with individual faculty, committees, academic programs, deans, and academic support offices regarding how best to maintain and continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning, both undergraduate and graduate
- Oversee the University's efforts to assess the various components of general education and each undergraduate and graduate major and professional program, integrating yearly activities into the broader six-year cyclic review of respective academic units
- Gather information from different sources to observe what already-existing assessments have to say about student learning at Binghamton University
- Collaborate with the Center for Learning and Teaching to effect continuous university-wide improvement in curriculum and instruction
- Develop with faculty effective strategies to assess specific learning goals

Student Learning Assessment



2006-2007 Academic Year Goals, Objectives, and Indicators of Success

Goal 1: Assist undergraduate program faculty, staff, and administrators in developing, implementing, and using fully-functioning assessment plans

Objectives

- Objective 1.1:** Meet with department chairs and review assessment reports submitted to provost's office by end of Spring 2004. Write report evaluating to what extent programs have (1) defined student learning outcomes; (2) defined and used assessments according to each defined student learning outcome; (3) engaged faculty discussions about the degree to which assessment attest that students are achieving the defined student learning outcomes; (4) used findings from faculty discussions in teaching, learning, and curriculum
- Objective 1.2:** Upon invitation, meet with department faculty to discuss assessment processes, ways to assess student learning effectively, and how to use assessment process to enhance student learning, curriculum processes, and program instruction.
- Objective 1.3:** Organize database that indicates progress made in respect to Objective 1.1.

Indicators

- Indicator 1.1:** Establishment of initial database and baseline measures by December 2006; evidence of 10% increase in database indicators by July 2007
- Indicator 1.2:** Meet with at least 5 faculty groups by June 2007; purpose of meeting should be to discuss assessment processes, methods, and implementation
- Indicator 1.3:** Establishment of initial database by June 2007

Goal 2: Assist graduate program faculty, staff, and administrators in developing, implementing, and using fully-functioning assessments plans

Objectives

- Objective 2.1:** Meet with department chairs and review assessment reports submitted to provost's office.
- Objective 2.2:** Organize initial database
- Objective 2.3:** Assist Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate School with Periodic Evaluation of Academic Units

Indicators

- Indicator 2.1:** Meet with 3-4 department chairs, graduate program directors to discuss student learning assessment at graduate levels by June 2007
- Indicator 2.2:** Establishment of initial database by June 2007
- Indicator 2.3:** Assist in the writing of at least 2 self study documents and prepare assessment of undergraduate program reports for review by SUNY system for at least 2 undergraduate programs by June 2007

Goal 3: Consult with individual faculty, committees, academic programs, deans, and academic support offices regarding how best to maintain and continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning, both at undergraduate and graduate levels

Objectives

- Objective 3.1** Conduct workshops that include department chairs, undergraduate and graduate directors, as well as faculty, to train them on how to write assessment plans, etc.
- Objective 3.2** Consult with department chairs, undergraduate and graduate directors, on their different assessment needs
- Objective 3.3** Work with Faculty Senate committees on the assessment of general education
- Objective 3.4** Work with the Center for Learning and Teaching, the Institute for Student Centered Learning, the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, and other relevant Faculty Senate bodies to generate a process for acting on assessment findings

Indicators

- Indicator 3.1** Conduct four workshops, and supply evidence of workshop effectiveness using workshop survey. Workshop effectiveness should indicate qualitative as well as quantitative indicators of participant satisfaction by June 2007.
- Indicator 3.2** Evidence 10% improvement in the development of assessment processes using assessment database (see above) by June 2007
- Indicator 3.3** Conduct meeting with principal parties by December 2007; Consult with EPPC and define existing student learning outcomes by June 2007; submit ACT reports to SUNY system by September 2006; Organize ACTs for all general education categories by April 2007

Goal 4: Oversee University's efforts to assess the various components of general education and each undergraduate and graduate major and professional program, integrating yearly activities into the broader six-year cyclic review of respective academic units

Objectives

- Objective 4.1** Oversee initial organization of SCBA process, as communicated by SUNY system, selecting and training instructors, training ACT members, collecting data, and submitting reports by July 2007
- Objective 4.2** Working with Faculty Senate Executive Committee, facilitate appointments of ACTs, and train members
- Objective 4.3** Write and communicate general education assessment system
- Objective 4.4** Train department chairs, undergraduate and graduate directors, on information needed in assessment reports due at end of 2006-2007 academic year
- Objective 4.5** In consultation with assistant/associate deans in various colleges and schools, establish formation of feedback mechanisms whereby they can receive progress report on the status of assessment in their areas of concern

Indicators

- Indicator 4.1** Submission of SCBA reports in critical thinking/information management, foreign language, and laboratory science by December 2006; submission of ACT reports in aesthetics, humanities, physical activity/wellness, and social science by September 2007
- Indicator 4.2** ACTs organized by March 2007
- Indicator 4.3** Write general education assessment system by February 2007
- Indicator 4.4** Generate document on what is expected in assessment report and mention in at least one workshop by December 2006; receive majority (>50%) of assessment reports by June 2007
- Indicator 4.5** Meet with assistant/associate deans by December 2006; Meet with them to review progress report by September 2007

Goal 5: Gather information from different sources to observe what already-existing assessments have to say about student learning

Objectives

- Objective 5.1** Collaborate with Division of Student Affairs and other organizations within the university to investigate what assessment information already exists
- Objective 5.2** Manage survey administration for National Survey of Student Engagement, in collaboration with Office of Institutional Research

Indicators

- Indicator 5.1** Find at least two sources of information that can be used to inform academic affairs about the quality of student learning by June 2007
- Indicator 5.2** Achieve a response rate of at least 35% on NSSE by June 2007

Goal 6: Collaborate with the Center for Learning and Teaching to effect continuous university-wide improvement in curriculum and instruction

Objective

Objective 6.1

Work with Center for Learning and Teaching and Institute for Student Centered Learning to match workshops with instructional or outcomes needs as discovered in general education student learning assessments

Indicator

Indicator 6.1

At least one workshop presentations results from need revealed through student learning assessments by June 2007; at least two planning meetings between Assistant Provost for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment, and CLT and ISLC leaders

Goal 7: Develop with faculty effective strategies to assess specific learning goals

Objectives

- Objective 7.1** Train faculty, staff, and management on assessment, and its use in monitoring and enhancing curriculum, instruction, and student learning
- Objective 7.2** Develop and maintain media through that faculty, staff, and management can obtain information on assessment

Indicators

- Indicator 7.1** Teach at least four workshops by June 2007, with evidence that at least 85% of participants were satisfied with what they learned from the workshops
- Indicator 7.2** Develop assessment web site by December 2006, Blackboard assessment organization by December 2006, and publish three assessment newsletters by June 2007. Provide evidence that web site, organization, and newsletters effectively convey information.

Building Meaningful Conversations in General Education



General Education Assessment Plan 2006-2007 Academic Year

Overview

As discussed earlier, general education assessment contains thirteen areas of focus, each with its separate student learning objectives, as described below:

Learning Outcomes for General Education Requirements

(Revised 10/23/03)

C requirement - Composition

Students in C courses will demonstrate

- 1. The ability to write effectively and coherently, in ways appropriate to the discipline and the level of the course.*
- 2. The ability to revise and improve their writing in both form and content.*

O requirement - Oral Communication

Students in O courses will demonstrate

- 1. Proficiency in oral presentations.*
- 2. The ability to improve oral presentations in response to critiques.*
- 3. Skill in listening to and critiquing oral presentations.*

Foreign Language Requirement

Students who satisfy the Foreign Language requirement will demonstrate:

- 1. Basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language.*
- 2. Knowledge of the distinctive features of cultures(s) associated with the languages they are studying.*

G requirement - Global Interdependencies

- 1. Students in G courses will demonstrate knowledge of central characteristics of western societies (i.e., those in Europe and North America) as they developed and/or continue to develop in dynamic interaction with other regions of the world and in the context of global systems of economic and/or cultural exchange.*
- 2. For western societies, students will demonstrate knowledge of long-term patterns of development or knowledge of broad issues or aspects that are foundational to the West.*

3. *For nonwestern societies, students will demonstrate knowledge of central characteristics of one or more nonwestern civilizations.*

P requirement - Pluralism in the United States

Students in all P courses will demonstrate an understanding of

1. *United States society from the perspective of three or more groups that constitute that society, including at least three of the following groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans.*
2. *How these groups have affected and been affected by basic institutions of American society, such as commerce, family, legal and political structures, or religion.*

In addition, students who have not scored 85 or above on the New York State Regents examination in United States history (or its equivalent) must take a P course where they also will demonstrate knowledge of:

3. *An historical narrative of the United States and its institutions over a period of at least a century, including connections to prior and subsequent periods, with this narrative including several themes that have shaped the development of American society, such as the struggle for democracy, citizenship, racial and gender inequality, religious freedom, and civil rights; the conflicts that have erupted over these issues; and the consensus, if any, that has been reached on each of them.*
4. *How the history of the United States relates to the history of at least two other regions of the world, as a means of understanding America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.*

A requirement - Aesthetics

Students in A courses will demonstrate an understanding of the creative process and the role of imagination and aesthetic judgment in at least one principal form of artistic expression in such fields as art, art history, cinema, creative writing, dance, graphic design, music, and theater.

H requirement - Humanities

Students in H courses will demonstrate an understanding of human experience through the study of literature or philosophy.

L requirement - Laboratory Science

Students in L courses will demonstrate

- 1. Understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including the formulation and testing of hypotheses and the collection, analysis and interpretation of data.*
- 2. Knowledge of concepts and models in one of the sciences.*

N requirement - Social Sciences

Students in N courses will demonstrate

- 1. Knowledge of major concepts, models, and issues (and their interrelationships) of at least one of the social sciences: anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, or sociology.*
- 2. An understanding of the methods used by social scientists to explore social phenomena, including, when appropriate to the discipline, observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and analysis by mathematics or other interpretive frameworks.*

M requirement - Mathematics/Reasoning

Students in M courses will demonstrate competence in an area such as calculus, symbolic logic, the logic of computers, the logic of deductive and inductive reasoning, or probability and statistical inference.

S requirement - Wellness

Students in S courses will demonstrate knowledge of such topics as diet and nutrition, physical development, substance abuse, human sexuality, stress and stress reduction techniques, relaxation methods, or the characteristics that define physical, mental or emotional fitness/wellness

Y requirement - Physical Activity

Students in Y courses will demonstrate one or more of the following attributes: neuromuscular coordination, muscular strength and muscular endurance, cardio-respiratory endurance, or flexibility.

Matching Assessments with General Education Student Learning Outcomes

Our conceptual framework, “Building meaningful conversations about student learning,” asserts that we use assessments that include faculty, and which produce information that causes them to reflect upon and use information to further enhance the learning outcomes of Binghamton University students in respect to the goals and objectives described above.

Another assumption of our conceptual framework is that the assessments used to evaluate student performance are both direct and indirect assessments, meaning that they include direct observation of student performance as well as measurements of attitudes and perceptions about how well students met these objectives. Another assumption is that the general education assessment plan looks at the achievement of student learning objectives at the beginning, middle, and end of students’ experience at Binghamton University.

We therefore have chosen a number of different assessments to observe student performance which might lead to faculty conversations about the degree to which students succeed in meeting the above-described student learning objectives and goals:

1. SAT scores (entry-level assessment of student learning)
2. Scores from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (entry-level and end-point assessment of student learning objectives and goals)
3. Assessment Category Team (ACT) portfolio reports (mid-level assessment of student learning objectives and goals)
4. Strengthening Campus Based Assessment (SCBA) rubric scores for critical thinking/information management, mathematical reasoning, and composition (mid-level assessment of student learning objectives and goals)
5. Scores from the Student Opinion Survey (SOS) (end-point assessment of student learning objectives and goals)
6. Scores from relevant questions on internship surveys (end-point assessment of student learning objectives and goals)
7. Results of ad hoc reports, including electronic focus groups of faculty commenting on students’ performance (mid-point and end-point assessments of student learning objectives and goals)

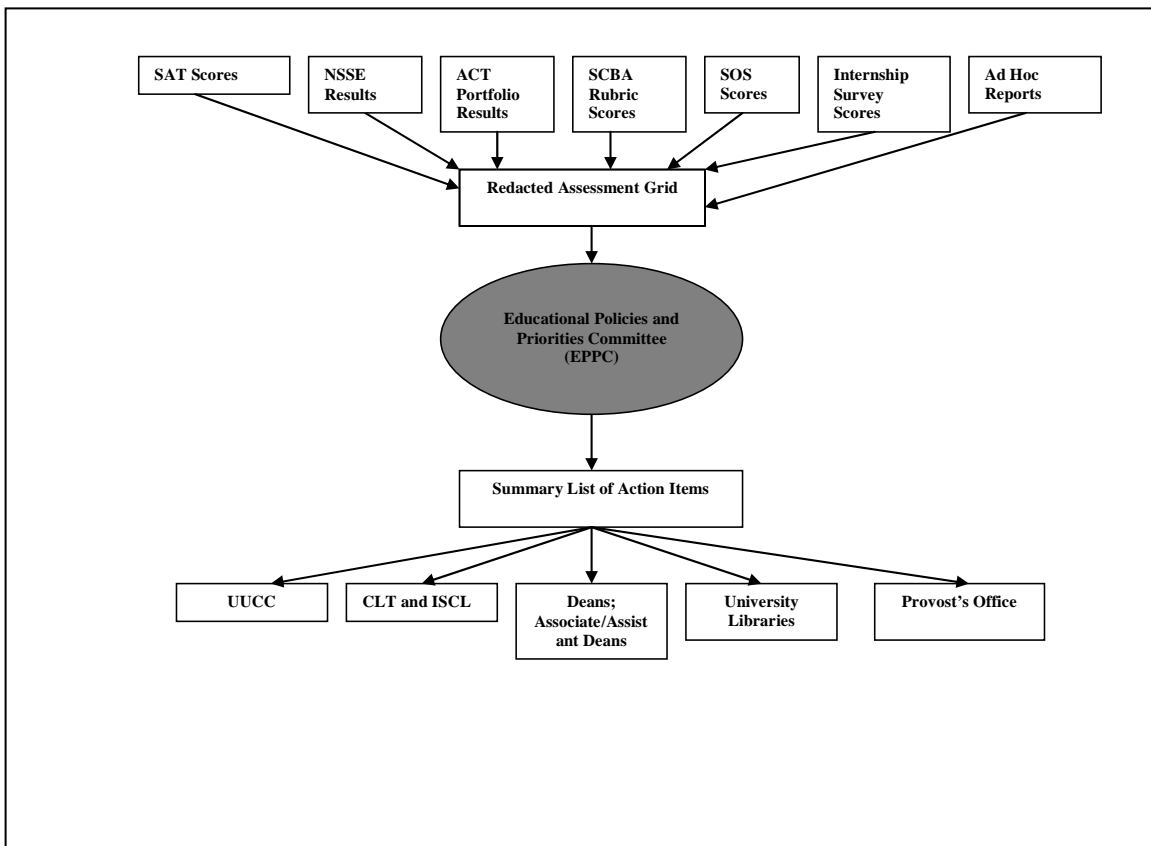
The following table describes the various general education categories, and the types of assessments used to assess each:

Binghamton University General Education Assessment Plan, 2006-2007 Academic Year

General Education Category	Entry-Point Assessments	Mid-Point Assessments	End-Point Assessments	Post-Assessments
Composition	NSSE, SAT writing scores	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports; internship assessments	NSSE, SOS surveys, internship surveys	Alumni surveys
Oral Communication	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports; internship assessments	NSSE, SOS surveys, internship surveys	Alumni surveys
Foreign Language	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE	
Laboratory Science	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE	
Social Science	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE	
Mathematics/Reasoning	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports; internship assessments	NSSE	Alumni surveys
Aesthetics	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE	
Physical Activity	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE	
Critical Thinking	NSSE, SAT writing scores, freshman survey	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports; Library Survey	NSSE, SOS surveys	Alumni surveys
Information Management	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports; Library Survey	NSSE, SOS surveys	Alumni surveys
Global Interdependencies	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE	
Pluralism in the United States	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE	
Humanities	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE	
Wellness	NSSE	GENED portfolio analysis/ACT Reports	NSSE, SOS surveys	

Action Framework: Building Meaningful Conversations

Relevant questions on the above-described assessments will be assigned to each student learning outcome and goal, and reported on a grid found at the end of this section. ACT reports and findings relevant to each student learning outcome and goal will be summarized on a table, along with the results of other assessments, for review by members of the EPPC and other Faculty Senate associated bodies, as described in the following graphic:



EPPC members will look at each general education category every three years on varying schedules, as indicated on the grid at the end of this section. They will conclude what strengths and weaknesses can be discovered from the assessments, consider and develop recommendations made to enhance student performance in respect to the student learning outcomes (especially in the ACT reports), and construct a summarized list of action items that will be enacted by various groups (i.e., UUCC, Center for Learning and Teaching, provost's office, etc., found on the bottom of the above grid) within the Division of Academic Affairs.

The Assistant Provost for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment is charged with the task of communicating the summarized list of action items to the various groups within the Division of Academic Affairs, and will assure that the conversations about the EPPC's findings occur. The Assistant Provost will also offer progress reports to the EPPC regarding the status of these conversations, recommendations made, and other actions.

Impacting Student Learning, Curriculum, and Instruction

The above process only goes so far in that it demonstrates how assessments will lead toward discussions and then toward recommendations to further enhance student learning at Binghamton University. How will the above-described assessment system assure that recommendations are enacted? How will we know that the assessment process has made a difference?

As described above, the Assistant Provost for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment will ensure that the recommendations made by the EPPC are communicated to the various organizations within academic affairs, and will work with them as they discuss how to move from the EPPC's recommendations, to discussing such recommendations, to making their own goals and objectives regarding how to enhance student performance. Any weaknesses found in study performance, for example, will be discussed by the organizations, and actions will be taken to address them. The Assistant Provost is charged with the responsibility of continuing these conversations, and moving them from discussion to action, as well as tracking developments over time.

Building Meaningful Conversations at Program and Major Levels



Developing, Enacting, and Monitoring Assessment in Binghamton University's Fields of Study

Overview

In response to the State University of New York's requirement that all majors assess student learning, the Binghamton University Faculty Senate communicated the following to all associate/assistant deans, department chairs, and graduate and undergraduate directors:

We are now mandated by the state to assess our majors in terms of desired student learning outcomes. Within the structure of state requirements, a faculty committee appointed by our Faculty Senate worked hard to develop a plan for outcomes-based assessment of the major that is appropriate for Binghamton University. This plan was approved by the Faculty Senate in March 2002.

The procedure below details necessary steps each major will need to take in order to begin the new assessment process:

- *Statements of the learning outcomes desired for each major will be developed by February 2003 by each program/department faculty.*
- *Each program will develop a statement of the criteria and methodology it will use for evaluation of the major by March 2003.*
- *Each program will develop a mechanism for evaluating assessment results and using results to consider changes by April 2003.*

Some programs will find it easier and more efficient to complete these steps in one process. To help departments with the new procedures for assessment of the major, we are planning a two-hour workshop early in the spring semester as a resource for undergraduate directors and chairs in programs which have not previously done outcomes-based assessment. More details about this workshop will be sent to you later this semester.

Major programs are asked to collect assessment data on a regular basis, preferably annually, and to prepare a report to the department/program faculty every three years with copies to the Dean and to the Educational Policy and Priorities Committee of the Faculty Senate, which will oversee the assessment process. For programs that prepare self-study reports for external accrediting bodies, these reports will be submitted in lieu of departmental reports. External evaluation of major programs will continue to be a regular process, on a 6-year cycle, depending on funding.

Departments are therefore asked for assessment reports on a three-year cycle. These reports are reviewed, as indicated above, by the EPPC, as well as by the Assistant Provost for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment, to observe how the university might be of assistance to departments and programs as they implement the plans they have developed.

In addition, several programs undergo a periodic review process in which 2-3 external reviewers are invited to the university, and examine a program's curriculum, resource allocation, and student learning, among other things; the same holds true for programs accredited by various organizations such as the American Psychological Association.

Monitoring of Assessment Focused on the Major

The Assistant Provost develops a database that rates each program on a three-point scale (1=insufficient development/no information available; 2=developing; 3=completed) in respect to the following areas of emphasis:

- Degree to which student learning outcomes are defined and lend themselves to assessment and student learning
- Degree to which assessments address student learning objectives
- Degree to which faculty meaningfully discuss students’ achievement of learning outcomes and make recommendations to act
- Degree to which discussed actions are implemented in areas such as instruction, curriculum, student learning (departmental) objectives, etc.

On an annual basis, undergraduate and graduate programs will be evaluated using the following rubric:

Assessment Rubric

	Not Yet Developed	In Development	Developed
Degree to which student learning outcomes are defined and lend themselves to assessment and student learning	There is little or no evidence that student learning outcomes exist for the program	Student learning outcomes exist, but are incomplete or do not address all of the desired outcomes for the program; or, student learning outcomes exist, but faculty are unable to assess them	Student learning outcomes exist, and lend themselves to assessment
Degree to which assessments address student learning objectives	There are little or no assessments used to assess student learning	Assessments exist, but have not yet been summarized, aggregated or analyzed for communication to faculty; or, assessments are reported only episodically (not regularly)	Assessments exist, and have been communicated to faculty on a regular basis

<p>Degree to which faculty meaningfully discuss students' achievement of learning outcomes and make recommendations to act</p>	<p>Faculty discussions about assessments have not yet occurred on a formal basis, or have only been discussed in fits and starts</p>	<p>Faculty discussions about assessments have occurred, but only informally</p>	<p>Faculty discussions about assessments directly evaluate student learning outcomes and occur on a regular basis</p>
<p>Degree to which discussed actions are implemented in areas such as instruction, curriculum, student learning (departmental) objectives, etc.</p>	<p>There is no evidence that assessment-based discussions have led to action</p>	<p>There is some evidence that assessment-based discussions have led to action; or, there is some evidence that recommendations based on assessment-based discussion have been enacted</p>	<p>There is ample evidence to demonstrate that assessment-based discussions have led to action; or, there is ample evidence demonstrating that recommendations based on assessment-based discussions have been enacted</p>

At the end of July of each year, aggregate information about how well departments are performing in respect to assessment will be shared with the provost, deans, and assistant/associate deans. In a meeting with assistant/associate deans, goals for the following academic year will be made in order to assist departments and programs in their efforts to develop assessment systems.

Building a Culture of Assessment



Assessment Training and Resources

Overview

Much attention has been spent on the concept of developing an assessment “culture.” Unfortunately, current definitions of the term remain vague, and therefore fairly meaningless to those charged with developing and implementing assessment plans.

What do we mean by developing an “assessment culture?” Sidney Verba, the renowned political scientist, defined culture as a system of “shared values, norms, beliefs, and expectations.” We define it in a very similar vein, focusing on the following beliefs, expectations, and norms of the American Association of Higher Education, which communicated 9 principles essential for meaningful assessment:

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

Our conceptual framework, “Building meaningful conversations about student learning,” assumed all nine of the AHE’s 9 principles, focusing on providing trustable, valid information that enable conversations about student learning, which in turn lead to recommendations, implementation of such recommendations, and follow-up on a regular basis. It assumes individual and collective accountability, and asserts that faculty are primary actors in all aspects of the assessment process. It is, after all, they who develop the curriculum, teach critical courses, and, on an everyday basis, encounter the strengths and weaknesses in student learning.

The Office of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment recognizes the difficulties associated with assessing student learning, given all we do other than assessment. Even assuming that faculty highly value the 9 principles outlined above, it is often difficult to find the time necessary to adequately assess student learning, and enact recommendations made as a result of assessment-based discussions. A primary question therefore becomes one of efficiency—“How can I manage assessment without sacrificing the time and attention needed to other obligations?”

A way to address this question, and the concerns associated, is to provide information, training and resources in order to make the assessment process more time and resource efficient. In what follows, we list the information, training, and resources available to members of the academic affairs community for the 2006-2007 academic year.

Assessment Information

The following information will be provided to all interested members of the Binghamton University community by the beginning of 2007:

- A web page with information about training opportunities, general education assessment, documents pertaining to major assessment at undergraduate and graduate levels, and other resources (<http://assessment.binghamton.edu>)
- A Blackboard organization, “Assessment at Binghamton University,” which will contain news articles on developments on assessments, sample assessment plans and report from Binghamton University departments and programs (as well as elsewhere), research articles on assessment and its relationship to curriculum, instruction, and student learning, and a number of instructional slides on qualitative and quantitative assessment methods. Those interested in being included on the site should contact the Assistant Provost so they can be enrolled in the organization
- Three copies of the Binghamton University assessment newsletter, “Conversations@BU About Assessment” will be sent to all faculty, and will be available on the assessment web page mentioned above
- The Assistant Provost will be available to all faculty and staff groups, including programs and departments—or individually

Assessment Training

- Four seminars will be held during the 2006-2007 academic year on writing assessment plans, organizing assessment, and other topics of interest
- Additional workshops will be held to train ACT members and instructors participating in the SCBA process
- Instructional slides, as mentioned above, will be placed on the assessment web site as well as the assessment blackboard organizations

Assessment Resources for Instruction

- Various research articles on the role of assessment in teaching and learning will be placed on the assessment blackboard site
- A number of workshops will be jointly planned with the Center for Learning and Teaching/Institute for Student Centered Learning