

# Administrative Unit Assessment

*The Nuts and Bolts of Writing a Good  
Assessment Plan*

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# Why do administrative units need to conduct assessment?

- To determine if the needs of those you serve are being met efficiently and effectively.
- To determine if MSU's mission is being accomplished through the work you do.



# Assessment allows you to:

- **To improve** – This evaluation is formative. Assessment activities provide a feedback loop to help shape or form better programs and services.
- **To inform** – Assessment activities can show a clearer picture of what is really happening in a program or unit and can inform others of contributions the program or unit makes.
- **To prove** – This evaluation is summative. Assessment activities provide evidence to sum up what a program or unit is accomplishing and providing in a way that can be persuasive to students, faculty, staff and the larger community.
- **To support** – The assessment process should provide support for campus decision-making activities such as unit review and strategic planning, as well as external accountability activities such as accreditation. *(Adapted from WEAVE and Central Florida)*

# Process for Developing a Unit Assessment Plan

## 1. Organize for assessment

- Identify the key players in your unit. While one or more persons may lead the unit assessment process, it is critical that all staff members assume responsibility for designing, implementing, and carrying out the assessment process.



## 2. Define and articulate the mission of your administrative unit.

- The mission is a broad statement of the administrative unit's purpose. Your unit's mission statement links the unit to your division and ultimately to the overall mission of MSU.
- Review the University's mission and identify how your unit supports MSU's mission.
- The unit mission should reflect each unit's contribution to the educational and career paths of students/others who specifically encounter the unit.



## Questions to ask:

- What is the primary function of your unit?
- What are the most important activities involved?
- What should those you serve experience after interacting with your unit?



# Example

- ***MSU Mission*** - We are a diverse community of learners committed to student success. MSU is accredited as a comprehensive University offering quality higher education opportunities in a collegial and open environment. MSU pursues academic excellence, research, community engagement, and life-long learning. MSU is dedicated to improving the quality of life while preserving and promoting the unique cultural heritage of East Kentucky.
- ***Institutional Research & Assessment Mission*** - The primary mission of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) is to provide high quality information and analytical support to Morehead State University decision makers that will enhance institutional effectiveness through university planning, policy making, decision making, and assessment. The Office collects, analyzes, reports, and serves as a repository for institutional data pertaining to students, faculty and staff, and academic programs.



### 3. Define the goals of the unit

- Goals are broad statements that describe the overarching long-range intended outcomes of an administrative unit.
- Goals are usually not measurable and need to be further developed as separate outcomes.

# MSU Goals

- **A**cademic Excellence
- **S**tudent Success
- **P**roductive Partnerships
- **I**mproved Infrastructure
- **R**esource Enhancement
- **E**nrollment and Retention Gains

**ASPIRE**

MSU Strategic Plan 2006-2010

## Goal 1 - Academic Excellence

How will we develop, deliver, and maintain superior academic programs?



### 1. We will develop and maintain a culture of excellence through:

- ▶ Quality instruction with high standards of teaching and learning
- ▶ Effective admission standards and general education requirements
- ▶ Scholarship, undergraduate and graduate research, and creative activities
- ▶ Periodic review of all academic programs and annual assessment of student learning outcomes
- ▶ Regional accreditation and national accreditation in all available academic disciplines and professional programs
- ▶ International education and study abroad opportunities

### 2. We will recruit and retain superior faculty through:

- ▶ A culture that fosters diversity, scholarship and quality instruction
- ▶ Competitive salary and benefits
- ▶ Professional development opportunities
- ▶ Effective instructional support services
- ▶ Quality technology and library services
- ▶ Quality classroom and research space

### 3. We will expand accessibility to academic programs through:

- ▶ Online and other distance learning technologies
- ▶ On-site delivery of targeted programs
- ▶ Flexible scheduling

## Goal 4 - Improved Infrastructure

How will we effectively manage human, capital and fiscal resources?

1. We will improve institutional effectiveness through broad-based participation in the strategic and capital planning, budgeting and assessment processes.
2. We will develop and maintain state-of-the-art classrooms and laboratories to support excellence in teaching and research.
3. We will systematically implement the University Campus Master Plan (see [addendum](#)) which includes sub-plans that focus on:
  - ▶ Housing Facilities Master Plan
  - ▶ Athletic Facilities Master Plan
4. We will foster quality performance and service of faculty and staff through:
  - ▶ Annual appraisal and compensation processes
  - ▶ Opportunities for professional development
  - ▶ Opportunities to recognize and celebrate achievement
5. We will utilize continuous improvement assessment to ensure effectiveness and efficiency is maintained in:
  - ▶ Organizational structure
  - ▶ Resources allocation
  - ▶ Institutional processes



## 4. Define your unit's outcomes

Outcomes of administrative units:

- are more specific statements and reflect the broader goals.
- should focus more on process and student development than learning.
- primarily will describe what the unit is going to do and what its impact will be on students and other key stakeholders (alumni, parents, employers, etc.)

Adapted from University of Central Florida

# Three (3) Categories of Outcomes

- Outcome Statements – reflect gains you want those you serve to make – for example, what can someone do after interacting with your unit/program.
- Process Statements – concern the accomplishments of your unit's functions, such as:
  - Level of volume of activity
  - Efficiency with which you conduct the processes
  - Compliance with external standards or regulations
- Satisfaction statements – describe how those you serve rate their satisfaction with your unit's processes or services.



Consider these questions:

- What are the most important results or impacts that should occur as a result of your unit's activities?
- What are your critical work processes and how should they function?
- What does the user of your service experience through interaction with your unit?



# Important

- You will identify a long list of potential outcomes supporting the unit mission statement.
- If your unit plan is only for one area, then select 3-5 planning outcomes to assess this year.
- If you are combining several units, then more outcomes need to be selected for assessment to improve all areas.
- Keep your list of outcomes to refer back to next year after initial outcomes have been accomplished or you have reached a plateau.

# Write SMART Outcomes



- **S**pecific – Be clear about what your unit plans to accomplish, as well as when, where or how. Use action words or concrete verbs – i.e. Increase, promote, reduce, locate, etc.
- **M**easurable – Write your outcome so that it is quantifiable and a target can be set, so that your unit can determine if it has reached the outcome.
- **A**chievable – Know the outcome is something that your unit can accomplish.
- **R**ealistic – Make sure that the outcome is practical in that it can be achieved in a specific time frame or for a specific amount of money.
- **T**ime-bound – When will the outcome be done? Identify a specific time frame.

# Examples of SMART outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the services provided by offices that are involved in the enrollment process during spring 2008 SOAR sessions.
- Facilities Management will improve the accessibility of all University facilities for all students, faculty, staff, and community members.
- Engineering Services will assure estimate accuracy in construction project estimates.
- Campus and program assessment/planning activities are directly supported by OIRA.
- Administrative Computer Applications will provide timely follow-up to all requests for Colleague access.

## 5. Identify appropriate performance criteria and assessment measures

### Selecting Assessment Methods

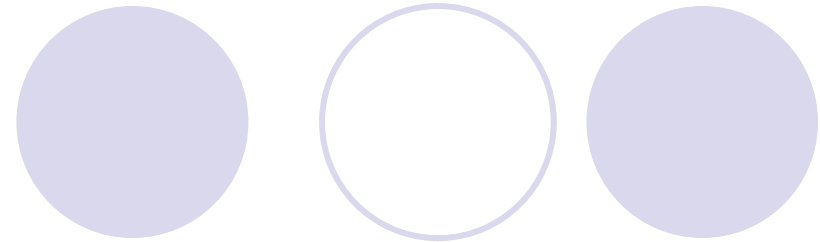
The acronym MATURE is used when selecting or developing measures for your outcomes

MATURE stands for the following terms when choosing assessment methods:

**M**atch  
**A**ppropriate  
**T**arget  
**U**seful  
**R**eliable  
**E**ffective and **E**fficient

Source: 2005 University of Central Florida  
Administrative Assessment Handbook  
[http://oeas.ucf.edu/doc/adm\\_assess\\_handbook.pdf](http://oeas.ucf.edu/doc/adm_assess_handbook.pdf)

# Match **ATURE**



- Match the Outcome with the appropriate assessment method. Successful and useful assessment cannot be achieved if you do not align the assessment method with the Outcome that you are trying to assess.

Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the services provided by offices that are involved in the intent to graduate process.

- Example of an assessment method that does not match the Outcome you are assessing:

Assessment method: Students will successfully download the intent to graduate form.

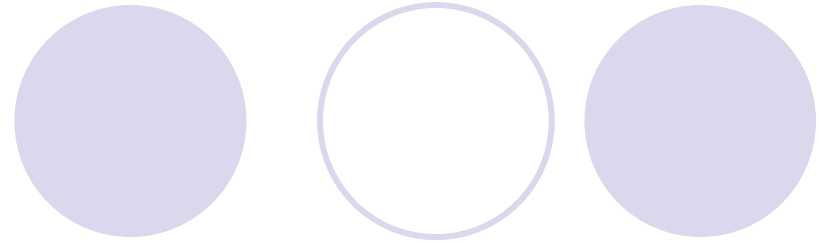
- Example of an assessment method that matches the Outcome you are assessing:

Assessment method: After the workshop session, students will achieve a 90% or higher on the set of questions related to the services provided by offices that assist in the intent to graduate process.

# M Appropriate TURE

- Choose methods that are appropriate. They can be direct or indirect. Direct measures include assessments that evaluate a quality indicator, or student ability or achievement in one of the areas noted. Indirect measures can be survey responses to targeted questions or ancillary parts of a direct measure. There are times when one measurement instrument could measure more than one Outcome. (For example, a survey may target several Outcomes.)
- Consider measures that provide you with information that is easily interpreted and unambiguous and that can be used to improve where necessary.
- Determine beforehand if there are available resources to assist in the collection of data on the chosen measure. Consider assessment methods for which data might already exist. The Office of Institutional Research may have information that could be useful for your assessment plan. Avoid selecting assessment methods that require complicated data collection techniques, when possible.

MA Target URE



- Each measure should be directed. It should specify, when possible, the desired level of performance (level of satisfaction, productivity, efficiency, performance).
- Numerical scores or percentages are best here.



# MAT Useful RE

- Choose assessment methods that will provide you with useful and useable information. The measure that you are trying to assess should not only be interesting but one that would allow you to make inferences about the progress toward the Outcome. Assessing state requirements or the achievement of a goal or the completion of an activity does not provide evidence about your operations or about student achievement. That is, do not assess a curricular requirement since it is unlikely that you will learn anything additional than the percentage of students meeting the requirement.



# MAT Useful RE

Outcome: Hypothetical Administrative Unit will demonstrate increased timeliness in terms of processing student requests.

- Example of assessment that will not provide useful, useable information:
  - Assessment: Number of students served by Hypothetical Administrative Unit will be tracked for three semesters.
- Example of assessment that will provide useful, useable information:
  - Assessment: A computerized log will track the date and time of each student request and the date and time that it is resolved. The time between request and resolution will be compared for two semesters.
- Note: The first example assessment shows that data are being collected, but not useful data. The second example assessment provides information that can be used to determine if the administrative unit is increasing its timeliness.

# MATU Reliable E

A decorative graphic consisting of six circles arranged in a horizontal line. The first circle is solid light blue and contains the text 'MATU'. The second circle is hollow with a light blue outline and contains the text 'Reliable'. The third circle is solid light blue and contains the text 'E'. The fourth circle is solid light blue. The fifth circle is hollow with a light blue outline. The sixth circle is solid light blue.

- The measure is based on tested, known methods.
- A reliable assessment method is one that yields consistent responses over time. The method selected should be one that provides dependable, consistent results time after time. The instrument and should be clearly worded and not ambiguous. The time available to complete the instrument should be consistent with its length.



# MATUR Effective and Efficient

- Each approach accurately and concisely measures the **Outcome**.
- Two assessment methods are recommended for each **Outcome**. Two methods provide a higher level of accuracy and reliability.
- Attempt to utilize a combination of **direct** and **indirect** assessment methods.
- Multiple questions on a survey may be relevant to one **Outcome** (e.g., quality of advising). However, questions on a survey may also be directed at and provide evidence for multiple **outcomes**.

# Examples of Assessment Measures

- Student satisfaction surveys
- Number of complaints
- Count of program participants
- Growth in participation
- Average wait time
- Comparisons to professional organizations' best practices
- Average service time
- Staff training hours
- Number of applications

# Examples of Assessment Measures

- Processing time for requests
- Number of users
- Focus groups
- Opinion surveys
- External review
- Number of staff trained
- Dollars raised
- Attendance at events
- Student participation in clubs and activities



# Direct and Indirect Assessment

- **Direct methods** measure knowledge and performance typically through some type of demonstration.
- **Indirect methods** measure changes in behavior, attitudes, or values.

# Doctor Visit Example



- When going to a medical doctor for the first time, you must fill out a form that asks questions like: *Am I taking any medications and which ones? Have I ever had a major operation, and if so, for what purpose? Has anyone in my family ever had a serious disease, like cancer? Why am I seeing the doctor? What are my symptoms?*
- That's a survey, an ***indirect*** assessment.

# Doctor Visit Example

- So then I see the doctor and she listens to my heart, thumps my knee, and looks in my ears and eyes. She asks for a urine and blood sample. She orders up a test, such as a colonoscopy.
- These are all ***direct*** assessments.



# Doctor Visit Example

- In short, the doctor's ***indirect*** assessments gave her some indications, but no evidence. She had to actually look at or listen to physical evidence to have a ***direct*** assessment.



# Assessment Inventory – Direct Methods

- **Volume of activity**, such as number of persons served
- **Levels of efficiency**, such as average time for response
- **Measures of quality**, such as average errors in audit
- **Behavioral observations:**
  - An expert observer (often a supervisor) observes a practical application of an outcome (e.g., completing a certain procedure) and rates performance.
  - An observer counts specific occurrences of a behavior that is one of the targets for a group involved in a particular experience.

# Assessment – Direct Measures

## Example

- **Outcome:** “Provide prompt access to pre-admission advising”
- **Assessment Measure:** Analysis of appointment records
- **Target:** 90% within 5 days of appointment request

# Assessment – Direct Measures

## Example

- **Outcome:** “Increased alumni participation in University activities”
- **Assessment Measure:** Increased number of membership events held  
*[Is this an appropriate measure???*]

# Assessment Inventory – Indirect Methods

- **Graduating student surveys.** A graduating student survey (seniors and graduate students) can include specific questions about most administrative areas. These data can be provided to each administrative area via a website to allow identification of service and issues of concern.
- **Alumni survey.** An alumni survey can be useful in assessing levels of satisfaction with a program or service.
- **Other locally developed surveys.** Point-of-service surveys, advisory board surveys and other questionnaires can be developed that ask students or customers about satisfaction with services or programs.

# Assessment Inventory – Indirect Methods

- **Case Study.** Cases studies are focused, systematic examination of one instance of a phenomenon such as an event, program, process or person. Typically, they involve collection of qualitative and quantitative data such as observations, surveys, and interviews for an in depth study of the phenomenon. A report on the case study can help integrate the evidence into one response.
- **Focus Group.** Individuals who are users of the support service or whom benefit from the service (e.g., employers, alumni, faculty, parents, etc.) can provide important qualitative data that can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses within the program.
- **Interview.** One-on-one structured interviews with students, faculty, employers and alumni conducted by a trained interviewer can provide useful information, which can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses within the program.

# Assessment – Indirect Measures

## Example

- **Outcome:** “Students satisfied with financial aid counseling”
- **Assessment Measure:** Post-session with survey card for each student counseled
- **Target:** 70% satisfied or very satisfied

# Example



**ASPIRE**  
MSU Strategic Plan 2006-2010

- **MSU Goal #2 - Student Success**: We will create a campus environment and student life program that ... *prepares graduates to successfully live, work, and contribute to society.*
- **Unit Mission**: The Career Planning office will assist students in transition from academia to the world of work by preparing students for life after graduation. .... *by offering assistance with resume writing and interviewing...*
- **Outcome**: Students attending Career Planning resume workshops will produce quality resumes.

# Example



**Direct  
Measure**

- **Outcome:** Students attending Career Planning resume workshops will produce quality resumes.
- **Assessment Measure #1:** Using the checklist describing the five (5) quality components of a resume, the CP Director (and staff) will analyze resumes submitted for company referrals once per semester.
- **Target:** The resumes of 80% of students who attended a workshop will receive greater than 4 rating on checklist. No indicator will be below average of 3.0.

# Example



- **Outcome:** Students attending Career Planning resume workshops will produce quality resumes.
- **Assessment Measure #2:** Survey given to recruiters by CP Director regarding quality of resumes reviewed. Recruiters will rank student resumes on 5-point scale once per semester.
- **Target:** Recruiters will rank student resumes with average score of 3.5 or higher. No indicator will be consistently below average of 3.0.

(adapted from Nichols & Nichols)



# Assessment – Example

## Example

- ***Outcome:***
  
- ***Assessment Measure:***
  
- ***Target.***



# Conducting/completing an assessment

- Each measure/target should include:
  1. who will complete the particular assessment
  2. when will the assessment be completed
  3. what criteria has been identified with an established measurable level of success

# Tips for Selecting Assessment Measures

- **Start small** --- When developing and using a new assessment method, start small and test it. That way if it turns out that it is not an effective assessment instrument you will have not wasted valuable time and resources.
- **Allow for continuous feedback** --- Encourage feedback by discussing assessment measures with key staff members. Incorporating all of the key staff members ensures the success of assessment.
- **Match the assessment measure to the outcome and not the reverse** --- Develop and write your unit goals and outcome statements before selecting assessment methods. Do not develop an assessment instrument and then fit an Outcome to it.

## 6. Establish a schedule for the assessments

- Assessments can occur:

- Yearly ( or every 2 - 3 years)
  - Each semester
  - Each month
  - Quarterly
- Choose a time frame that gives you a clear picture without overdoing it.
  - Use year end data only when necessary.

## 7. Submit your plan for review.

- All 2008-09 administrative unit plans need to be entered into WEAVE and approved by Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> this year.

SEPTEMBER 2008						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

The slide features a decorative arrangement of seven circles. In the top row, there are three circles: the leftmost is an outline, the middle is a solid light purple, and the rightmost is a solid medium purple. In the bottom row, there are three circles: the leftmost is a solid medium purple, the middle is a solid light purple, and the rightmost is an outline. The text '8. Implement the Plan' is centered horizontally between the two rows of circles.

## 8. Implement the Plan

## 9. Analyze the findings from your assessment

- Those responsible for the assessments need to aggregate the results.
- Meet with the key unit members and ask questions such as:
  - What can you infer from the data?
  - What future actions will you take?
  - What changes have you made (or will you make) based on assessment results?
  - What are the budgetary implications?

## 9. Analyze the findings from your assessment

- Celebrate when you achieve a target!
- Come to a clear understanding of areas that still present opportunities for growth and improvement.
- Enter findings into WEAVE and upload supporting documentation.
- You may need to revisit and improve your assessment measures.

## 10. Use your results



- Meet with your key members so that data driven improvements can be made on a continuous basis.
- This is a critical step that must be documented.
- Changes in services might include:
  - Revising organizational structure
  - Reallocating resources
  - Revamping administrative procedures/streamlining processes
  - Modifying or expanding relations with public or external agencies.

# Timeline of Events --- 2009-2010

- By **July 15<sup>th</sup>**, administrative support unit supervisors need to check that assessment data results are in WEAVE to assure data is aggregated/prepared for August meetings.
- By **August 15<sup>th</sup>**, all personnel in Administrative Support units meet within their unit to: (1) discuss previous year's outcomes and assessment data/results, (2) develop plans of action to address any targets that were not met, and (3) adjust existing and/or develop new unit outcomes, assessment methods and targets.
- By **August 30<sup>th</sup>**, all Administrative Support unit plans of action, adjusted/new outcomes, adjusted/new assessment methods, and targets uploaded to WEAVE and approved for current academic year.

Note: The dates set above are final dates for steps to be completed. Administrative Support Units are encouraged to finalize data aggregation and analysis and upload new plans as early as possible. OIRA will plan to have the new cycle open July 1 for plan entry.



# Resources

- NC State University/University Planning and Analysis: Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment  
<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>
- Nichols, J.O. and Nichols, K.W. (2005). *A Road Map for Improvement of Student Learning and Support Services Through Assessment*. NY: Agathon Press.
- Schuh, J.H. and Upcraft, M.L. (2001). *Assessment practice in student affairs: An applications manual*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Morehead State University, A Quality Enhancement Guide for Administrative Support Units (2007).  
<http://www.moreheadstate.edu/files/units/ira/WEAVEMSUDraft2.pdf>
- University of Central Florida, Administrative Assessment Handbook. (2005). [http://oeas.ucf.edu/doc/adm\\_assess\\_handbook.pdf](http://oeas.ucf.edu/doc/adm_assess_handbook.pdf)