

***UMaine student learning outcomes assessment plan:
Originally approved 06/30/2014***

***Last updated: 4/28/2021
Updated Approved by Provost Volin***

The purpose of assessment is to improve student learning

UMaine's planned design for a comprehensive and meaningful system of learning assessment reflects the complexity of learning outcomes to be measured. Led by the Assistant Provost, reporting to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, and with the guidance of the Assessment Advisory Board, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) will coordinate program-level and General Education outcomes-assessment for the purpose of improving student learning. UMaine's approach to assessment supports faculty who serve at the center of the process to determine the most appropriate data-based methods for their academic programs. UMaine will use multiple sources of faculty-determined evidence including program level measures, course-embedded assessments, and other faculty-selected approaches to document the progress and achievements of our students.

Core values for assessment at UMaine:

- Assessment is important at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Learning outcomes are created and endorsed by faculty and are reflections of what students know and can do.
- Student learning outcomes are measurable and reflect specific demonstrated skills that help us improve what and how we teach and how programs can best serve the needs of students.
- Data are collected through course-embedded and other routinely used measures given at key points during students' academic careers to serve the purpose of improving future student and program outcomes.
- Student engagement in campus and community experiences is a critical aspect of the UMaine experience and the impact of these experiences can be measured.
- The experiences of students after they graduate is a valuable source of information that can be used to inform curriculum and instruction.

Mission and responsibilities of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA):

- There is a regular, reasonable, equitable, and transparent process for reporting student assessment data.
- Faculty, staff, and students will have access to a variety of high-quality online assessment resources to help them complete their work.
- Faculty, staff, and students will have access to high-quality professional development provided by their peers and assessment experts on assessment design, implementation, review, and usage.
- Faculty will have direct assistance to provide feedback, guide development, and offer suggestions about program assessment.

Assessment Policies for UMaine:¹

1. *Academic Learning Outcomes Assessment and Reporting*: All undergraduate, professional, and graduate academic programs at UMaine will be actively engaged in student learning outcomes assessment as evidenced by, but not limited to:

- a) Published student-learning-outcomes that are clear statements of what students are expected to know and be able to demonstrate at the completion of the academic program. These student learning outcomes and community engaged objectives will be published on the program's website. The OIRA website will include direct links to each program's published learning outcomes. Student-learning-outcomes and community engaged efforts will be periodically reviewed by the faculty in the respective academic programs for ongoing relevance.
- b) A plan of student learning outcomes assessment that is endorsed by the program's faculty. Plans should include a regular cycle for collecting and analyzing assessment data, for discussing curricular and programmatic changes, for implementing interventions, and for re-assessing the impact of implemented changes. The logistics of how data are collected and managed are at the discretion of the program. Assessment plans will be published on the program's website via a link to the OIRA website.
- c) Reports of student learning outcomes assessment that are provided to the OIRA using staggered cycles of no more than three years (See reporting cycle in Appendix A). All program learning outcomes should be assessed within each three-year cycle.
 - a. Units report on a three-year cycle at the program/department level using a set of self-study templates (any updates will still be reported as part of the college annual reporting process).

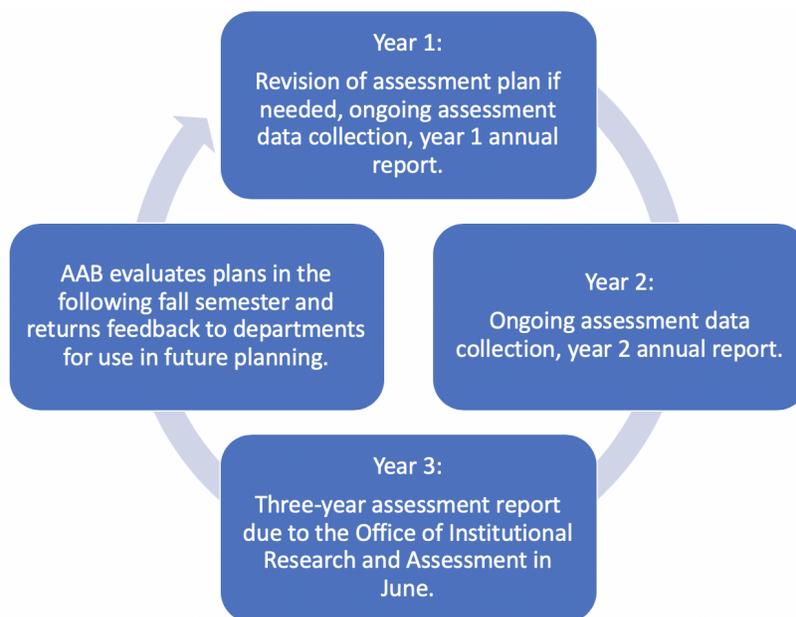
Three-year reports will include, but not be limited to:

- i. the specific learning outcomes examined during the current review cycle
- ii. the specific data/evidence used (beyond course grades) to determine the degree to which students have achieved outcomes
- iii. the evaluation process used to examine evidence of student learning. Specifically, the procedures and tools used, stated levels of performance, how the tools were scored, and how the data were compiled.
- iv. the results of the analysis of the evaluation data including a summary of quantitative results of student learning, analysis of programmatic strengths and weaknesses, identification of assessment strengths and weaknesses, reflections and conclusions.
- v. specific recommendations and planning for change based on assessment results including the specific changes intended, as well as a timeline for completion.

¹ UMaine uses the University of Rhode Island's assessment policies and reporting structure.

- b. *Review and Approval of Plans and Reports:* Evaluation of the three-year student learning outcomes assessment plans and reports will be made by the OIRA and the AAB. Programs will be notified directly with the evaluation results and suggestions for modification, if necessary. Reports will be published on the OIRA website. In an annual report to the Faculty Senate, AAB will provide commendations for outstanding examples of student learning outcomes assessment as well as a general summary on outcomes assessment.
- c. *Yearly Assessment Reporting:* All units will be expected to provide a yearly assessment update, which they can then use in developing their three-year report described above. For all programs, this update will include a) the program-level student learning outcomes that were assessed during the academic year, b) the assessment activities used to measure the corresponding learning outcomes, c) the results for at least one assessed learning outcome, and d) a reflection on the results. The OIRA, in collaboration with the AAB, will provide an online form that units can use to submit this yearly assessment update information. Non accredited programs with recently completed external program reviews (i.e., within the last 12 months) will be expected to report on actions taken to address any curriculum or student learning concerns raised during the review. Accreditation requirements for accredited programs will be reviewed by OIRA to determine if they meet the University's assessment standards. If they do, the yearly reporting requirement will be waived to reduce reporting redundancy (see Appendix B for more details).

Assessment Cycle



2. *Office of Institutional Research and Assessment Support and Guidance for Academic Programs:* Guidelines for preparation of outcomes assessment plans and reports will be provided by the OIRA with the assistance and approval of the AAB. OIRA staff will be available to offer advice on the logistics of collecting assessment data, consultation on techniques to analyze results, and to provide feedback/guidance on designing curricular and programmatic changes. Rubrics for evaluating the plans and reports will be generated by the OIRA and posted on its website.

4. *University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes Assessment:* The OIRA will work with other university offices to collect, maintain, analyze, and distribute student learning outcomes assessment findings, derived from a variety of local and national sources. OIRA staff will identify patterns of student performance to inform ongoing program and institutional improvement. Assessment of General Education outcomes will follow a similar approach to implementation and reporting.

5. *Service Learning and Community Engagement:* The OIRA will work with key campus and community partners to identify and implement appropriate outcome measures for internships, service learning courses, volunteer opportunities, and other experiential learning activities.

Appendix A

Appendix A: Assessment Reporting Calendar (2015-2033)				
Department/Program/School	Reporting Cycle	Full Reports Due		
Division of Lifelong Learning				
Bachelor of University Studies	A			
Maine Business School				
Business				
MBA				
College of Education and Human Development				
Elementary Education				
Secondary Education				
Child Development and Family Relations				
Kinesiology and Physical Education				
Athletic Training				
-----		2016		
Graduate Degrees		2019		
College of Engineering		2022		
Biomedical Engineering		2025		
Chemical Engineering		2028		
Civil Engineering		2031		
Computer Engineering		Etc.		
Construction Engineering Technology				
Electrical Engineering				
Electrical Engineering Technology				
Engineering Physics				
Mechanical Engineering				
Mechanical Engineering Technology				
Survey Engineering Technology				

Graduate Degrees: M.S				
College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture				
School of Biology and Ecology	B			
Communication Sciences and Disorders				
School of Earth and Climate Sciences				
Ecology and Environmental Science				
School of Economics				
School of Food and Agriculture				
School of Forest Resources				
School of Marine Sciences				
Molecular and Biomedical Sciences				
School of Nursing				
School of Social Work				
Wildlife Ecology				
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences				
Anthropology	C			
Art				
Chemistry				
Communication and Journalism				
School of Computing Information Science				
English				
History				
International Affairs				
Mathematics and Statistics				
Modern Languages and Classics				
New Media				
Philosophy				
Physics and Astronomy				
Political Science				
Psychology				
School of Performing Arts: Music and Theatre				
Sociology				
Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies				
-----				2018
School of Policy and International Affairs				2021
Honors College		2024		
Honors Program		2027		
		2030		
		2033		
		Etc.		

*Individual Department schedules may change based on accreditation review cycle.

Appendix B

Specialized Accreditor Review Process

Background

In fall 2019, the Assessment Advisory Board (AAB) tasked the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) to develop a procedure for evaluating the assessment process of programs with specialized accreditors. These programs are beholden to their accreditors for their assessment process, which might include reporting requirements that are duplicated by UMaine assessment reporting requirements. However, there was concern that the assessment process for some accreditors might not align well with the UMaine Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan.

Accreditor Review Overview

There are several minimum requirements needed for a program's specialized accreditation process to meet the intent of the UMaine Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan as well as NECHE standards for institutional accreditation. In general, these requirements can be summarized as:

- (a) a need for well-defined program learning outcomes,
- (b) evidence that these outcomes are used to structure learning in the program,
- (c) learning outcomes are assessed on a regular basis, and
- (d) results of outcomes assessment are used to improve the curriculum.

If a specialized accreditor requires all these components, then AAB is reasonably confident that a sound assessment process is being followed and accepts the specialized accreditor as providing primary oversight of the assessment process in the program.

Accreditor Review Process

The published accreditation documents for an accreditor are reviewed by OIRA staff for evidence of assessment requirements. Evidence of whether each critical component of the assessment process is required by the accreditor is documented in the [Specialized Accreditor Review Checklist](#) form. In certain cases, further communication with the program may be needed to clarify the accreditor's expectations. Once the review is complete, OIRA (in consultation with AAB) will determine whether the accreditor's assessment requirements are robust enough to waive the annual reporting expectation for the program.

Reporting Waiver and Implications

If a waiver is granted, the program is relieved of the annual assessment data reporting requirements as defined in the UMaine Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan. The program will still be expected to submit a 3-Year Summary Assessment Report as part of the cohort-based three-year reporting cycle. Additionally, units are asked to share any reports created for the accreditor, and any feedback from the accreditor, with the AAB.

Contact Information

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