Blinn College
Assessment Manual
AY2012-13

Prepared By
Blinn College
Assessment Council
Introduction

The Blinn College Assessment Manual is an ongoing project of the Blinn College Assessment Council, a permanent body comprised of faculty and staff from across the institution. The Manual is designed as an introduction and guide to the complete assessment process at Blinn College and serves to give both the theoretical basis of assessment in higher education and the practical steps needed to ensure that assessment is ongoing and institution-wide. All users of this Manual are encouraged to comment on processes and procedures in order to improve the system; comments should be emailed to tony.adam@blinn.edu
Chapter 1
Getting Started: What Is Assessment?

What Is Assessment?

- Assessment is the shared process of gathering purposeful and systematic measurement for documentation, reflection, and improvement of both student learning and institutional practices.
  - Shared reflects a collective responsibility of instructors, students, support staff, and administrators to work together to enhance student learning and institutional practices
  - Purposeful implies careful planning
  - Systematic refers to a continuous and organized effort
  - Measurement refers to quantifying meaningful data
  - Documentation provides evidence
  - Reflection engages the college to consider what and how much our students are learning
  - Improvement enriches the quality of education

What Is the Purpose of Assessment?

- Assessment is the product of ongoing reflection on content and methods in the delivery of information. This key element makes assessment not a rigid formulation of regulations but a process that keeps changing through time. Assessment involves continuously recognizing changes in an institution and in its individual players in the process of accomplishing institutional and individual mission, goals and objectives.

- When assessment is used, a judgment is made between “where you are” against the standard of “where you want to be.” In so doing, assessment generates information and/or systematic data-driven outcomes that can be used for further reflection. The data needs to be meaningful and presented in a way for decision-makers to make appropriate changes/adjustments. The goal is to use the feedback to let go of practices that are not effective while allocating resources effectively.

- Assessment of student learning evaluates the learners’ understanding of the material being taught in relation to the mission, goals, and objectives of a course, discipline, and institution. Assessment also provides critical insights into the skills and knowledge learned as well as on the learners’ progress and success.

- Assessment not only maintains and improves the quality of college programs and services but also fosters student success.
• Assessment examines **the consistency between goals at the institution, division, and program levels.**

• Assessment examines the **consistency between stated objectives and assessment strategies.**

• Assessment helps meets the standards set by **accreditation** agencies.

• Assessment **quantifies** the quality of instruction, course material, and the students’ comprehension of the material. Since it is important to know that it is working well and what needs to be approached differently to ensure that students are mastering the course material, a faculty member may want to ask:
  
o Are students learning what you want them to learn?
  o Is your class teaching what students need to know about your subject?
  o Is your division is doing what it is supposed to do in regards to facilitating student learning in your classroom?
  o Are you quantifying and/or defining/describing what a student has learned with reference to a defined goal/outcome?
  o Do you have a means of measuring how well things are being accomplished?
  o Have you established the degree of accomplishment for a given task?

In other words, assessment can 1) identify areas for improvement, 2) validate the instruction or program, and 3) insure safety and efficiency.

**Who benefits from assessment?**

• **Students** can assess their own learning to determine which educational choices are working or not working for them and how to make better decisions in the future.

• **Prospective students** can determine how well this institution helps them reach their learning, professional, and personal education goals.

• **Instructors** can assess their teaching strategies to identify areas that can lead to improvement of students’ comprehension and performance.

• **Administrators** can assess whether departments and divisions are meeting their stated goals and how to help them meet those goals.

• **Support staff** can use assessment to determine how well their programs meet the student needs and what sort of action plan will be implemented to make improvements.

• **Accreditation agencies** can evaluate the quality of education as must be demonstrated by substantial compliance with relevant standards.
Where Can We Use Assessment?

Assessment can take place within the classroom, program, division, or institution.

1. **Within courses,** assessment can be used to determine what individual students are learning and how well they are meeting the goals of the course.
2. **Across courses,** assessment can be used to determine what and how well individual students are learning during the progression within a particular program or over their years at college.
3. **Within departments/programs/disciplines,** assessment can be used to determine how well a class or course is meeting its stated goals and/or objectives in order to advance institution-wide goals.
4. **At the institutional level,** assessment can be used for internal improvement or to meet external demands of accountability.

Assessment Is Not Evaluation!

- **Evaluation** analyzes and uses data to make judgments about student performance
- **Assessment** analyzes and uses data to make decisions about improvements in teaching strategies and student learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An instructor grades an exam and assigns a grade to a student.</td>
<td>An instructor provides feedback to a student regarding his/her performance on an exam. The student uses that feedback to study differently in order to improve learning and performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop quizzes are given in class to determine if students have done their reading before coming to class. Simple Pass/Fail grades are assigned and totaled at the end of the semester. The quizzes count for 5% of the total grade.</td>
<td>A team of instructors analyzes exam results of all students and discovers that &lt;40% of the students demonstrated understanding of an important concept. The team investigates possible causes and makes improvements to teaching/learning strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An instructor grades an essay and assigns a grade to a student.</td>
<td>An instructor develops a grading rubric for an essay assignment to help students understand what criteria their essay will be graded on and also encourage them to submit their drafts for feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Potential Barriers to Assessment

- Assessment is not new – some faculty do it regularly. However, good assessment takes effort and time. In addition, whether because of time pressure or some other factor, some faculty resist trying to formalize the process or integrate new pedagogical approaches. The Assessment Workshops offered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Enrollment Management give faculty an open forum to explore assessment practices. The hesitation to try new approaches is reduced when faculty hear how colleagues from other disciplines practice assessment in their disciplines.

- Some faculty hesitate to become involved in assessment, thinking that assessment might be used to penalize faculty instead of being used to help them attain their course and institutional goals. This usually shows a misunderstanding of the purpose of assessment, which is to provide feedback in order to facilitate accomplishing goals and objectives.

- The most common pitfalls of assessment include:
  - Merely complying with external demands.
  - Triggering resistance and hostility of faculty.
  - Gathering data no one will use.
  - Letting administrators do it.
  - Making the process too complicated.
  - Lack of information and understanding about how assessment works.

- Factors influencing the success or failure of assessments include:
  - Faculty knowledge of assessment, motivation to conduct assessment, and knowledge of how assessments are used or not used.
  - Understanding of how assessment fits into the larger picture of the college mission, vision, and goals.
  - Institutional support
    - Training, discussion, peer observations
    - Objective oversight of assessment
    - Share best practices at Blinn College
    - Division chairs training in assessment and effective use of assessment
    - Guest speakers
  - Motivation to change
    - Time/money
    - Explanation of why assessment is done at all levels
    - Explanation of how assessment helps faculty and their divisions
    - Hiring assessment consultants/experts
How to Enhance the Acceptance of Assessment

- **Educate** the members of the institution on what assessment is and on how to use it can enhance the acceptance of assessment.

- **Coordinate** between individuals involved in direct assessment and OIE&EM staff to make the process of data collection and reporting more effective, simpler, and clearer.

- **Train** faculty through workshops, interdisciplinary exchange of ideas, and attendance at conferences and symposiums, which will motivate faculty into greater involvement and less hesitation about working with assessment.

- Make assessment a **faculty-driven process** at all levels to give them a stake in the process and get them actively more involved.

Chapter 2
Good Practice In Assessment

The Assessment Cycle

Assessment is an ongoing, continuously evolving data-driven process. As this illustration shows, the process is circular rather than linear:

The process

- Begins with faculty developing student learning outcomes (SLOs) based on input from stakeholders, including governing boards, students, the community, and external agencies.
- Once the SLOs have been developed, the faculty design assessment tools such as rubrics in order to assess the students’ work.
- The tools are then implemented as part of the data-gathering process.
- After a period of time, the evidence is collected and evaluated to identify any problems in student learning.

Source: [http://placement.amatyc.org/assessmentcycle/btcmcadp062206.html](http://placement.amatyc.org/assessmentcycle/btcmcadp062206.html)

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Once those problems are identified, faculty develop potential action plans to see what affect (if any) those plans might have on student improvement.

Those plans are then integrated into the assessment cycle and the process continues until satisfactory levels of student learning are achieved.

The entire process is documented all along the way, in order that faculty can check the historical record.

Types of Assessments

- **Formative assessment** is ongoing assessment that is intended to improve an individual student’s performance, student learning outcomes at the course or program level, or overall institutional effectiveness.
  - Formative assessment can be used at any time during the semester or year to determine how effective current strategies are working and whether or not those strategies need to be revised.
  - The key elements of formative assessment are:
    - Establishment of a classroom culture that encourages interaction and the use of assessment tools.
    - Establishment of learning goals and tracking the progress of individual students towards those goals.
    - Use of varied instruction methods to meet diverse student needs.
    - Use of varied approaches to assess student understanding.
    - Feedback on student performance and adaptation of instruction to meet identified needs.
    - Active involvement of students in the learning process.

- **Summative assessment** occurs at the end of a unit, course, or program. The purposes of this type of assessment are to determine whether or not overall goals have been achieved, provide information on performance to an individual student or obtain statistics about a course or program for internal or external accountability purposes.

Both types of assessment can use direct or indirect measures:

- Direct assessment provides evidence that actual learning occurred and was related to a specific content or skill. Direct measures test a student against learning criterion directly (for example, via a pop quiz).
- Indirect assessment reveal characteristics associated with learning, but they only imply that learning has occurred (such as perceptions). Indirect measures examine evidence of learning (self-reflection, surveys).
- Even though both are necessary, we tend to rely more on direct measures because they are easier to create and produce quantifiable results.
- We tend to be more comfortable with direct measures; however, test questions must be well-written to ensure that they are truly a measure of SLOs. One or two questions
addressing a specific SLO probably cannot determine student mastery of that SLO. However, indirect measures, such as self-reflection and surveys give information that direct measures may not provide.

The Three Steps of Assessment

1. Articulate your goals for student learning.
2. Gather evidence (qualitative as well as quantitative) about how well students are meeting the goals.
3. Use the information for improvement of student learning, teaching strategies, and institutional practices.

Bloom’s Taxonomy and Formal and Informal Assessment

One of the elements that can help in the development of student learning outcomes is Bloom’s Taxonomy, which was first developed in 1956 by educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom. Since then, the taxonomy has been updated by Lorin Anderson and other cognitive psychologists to make it more relevant to the 21st Century. Note how the domains have changed from static nouns to active verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Domain</th>
<th>New Domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Creating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Analyzing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Applying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Remembering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before developing student learning outcomes, faculty should decide which type of learning they want to assess of the six in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Related Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>recalling or remembering something without necessarily understanding, using, or changing it</td>
<td>define, describe, identify, label, list, match, memorize, point to, recall, select, state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>understanding something that has been communicated without necessarily relating it to anything else</td>
<td>alter, account for, annotate, calculate, change, convert, group, explain, generalize, give examples, infer, interpret, paraphrase, predict, review, summarize, translate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>using a general concept to solve problems in a particular situation; using learned material in new and concrete situations</td>
<td>apply, adopt, collect, construct, demonstrate, discover, illustrate, interview, make use of, manipulate, relate, show, solve, use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>breaking something down into its parts; may focus on identification of parts or analysis of relationships between parts, or recognition of organizational principles</td>
<td>analyze, compare, contrast, diagram, differentiate, dissect, distinguish, identify, illustrate, infer, outline, point out, select, separate, sort, subdivide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>creating something new by putting parts of different ideas together to make a whole.</td>
<td>blend, build, change, combine, compile, compose, conceive, create, design, formulate, generate, hypothesize, plan, predict, produce, reorder, revise, tell, write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>judging the value of material or methods as they might be applied in a particular situation; judging with the use of definite criteria</td>
<td>accept, appraise, assess, arbitrate, award, choose, conclude, criticize, defend, evaluate, grade, judge, prioritize, recommend, referee, reject, select, support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Developing Student Learning Outcomes

- Definitions:
  - Goals focus on the general aims of the program or course.
  - Outcomes focus on what students are able to do/know by the end of the program or course. Outcomes are changes, benefits, or learning that occur as a result of the output. More specifically we now speak of student learning outcomes (SLOs).
  - Outputs are the measurements – how much of something happened?

- Identifying Goals and Outcomes

  - Explicit goals help focus the design and structure of a course or program and guide the development and implementation of specific, measurable SLOs. Remember that goals can be broad and theoretical. SLOs will be more specific.

  - If you have trouble identifying goals and outcomes, try answering these questions:
    - Why do you use your particular course structure?
    - Why do you use your current assignments and activities?
    - What do you want your students to learn from your assignments?
    - In the past, have your goals for students been realistic?
    - Where do students have difficulty; what do they consistently not get?
    - If you ran into a student who had taken your class the previous semester, what would you hope he would say about what he learned from your course? For each of your stated outcomes, what are the specific student behaviors, skills, or abilities that would tell you it is being achieved?
    - What would an outsider (future instructor, employer, program reviewer) need to see to believe that your students are achieving the outcomes set out for them?
    - In your experience, what evidence tells you when students have met these outcomes – how do you know when they’re “getting” it?

At Blinn College, all courses are at the lower division level, and course-level student learning outcomes are written either at the state level or by credentialing bodies. Academic units can add additional course-level SLOs, but the externally-developed outcomes are mandatory for the sake of transferability or credentialing. Discipline-level SLOs are developed locally.

The preceding sections are adapted from Stassen, Doherty, and Poe, Course-Based Review and Assessment (University of Massachusetts Amherst).

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Some examples of effective goals and outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Biology        | Students will learn and demonstrate use of the scientific method for original scientific research. | The student will demonstrate that he has formulated a hypothesis, designed a good experiment, controlled variables, operationally defined terms and interpreted data appropriately.  
The student will demonstrate understanding of the scope and sequence of the scientific report format by outlining and completing a report based on one of the in-class experiments. |
| English Composition | Students will learn to acknowledge and adjust to a variety of writing contexts. | The student will demonstrate through discussion, planning and writing an awareness that audiences differ and that readers’ needs/expectations must be taken into account as one composes text.  
The student will demonstrate in writing the ability to draft and revise work with a sense of purpose and an awareness of audience. |
| History        | The student will learn to work as a “knowledgeable practitioner” in the discipline. | The student will be able to:  
- describe relevant historical events  
- argue as a historian does  
- take a position on a debatable historical issue  
- use historical data as evidence for a particular position or point of view  
- raise and answer counter-arguments |
| Mathematics    | The student will be able to apply course concepts to mathematical problem-solving models. | The student will be able to solve algebraic and quadratic equations.  
The student will demonstrate the ability to explain each step in the problem solving process. |

These examples are adapted from Stassen, Doherty, and Poe, *Course-Based Review and Assessment* (University of Massachusetts Amherst)
Designing and Implementing Assessment Tools and Techniques

Before creating new outcomes and assessment techniques, it is essential to evaluate the syllabus and existing techniques to see if they are compatible and that the techniques are valid for measuring the outcomes. Ask yourself these questions:

- Does the syllabus explicitly state course goals and expected outcomes? Does it clearly tie course content and requirements to these goals and outcomes?
- What methods of assessment are already in use – exams, assignments, discussions, surveys, etc.? Do these relate directly to stated goals and outcomes? If not, can they be adapted to do so?
- What methods are used to ensure consistent grading, particularly of more subjective assignments?
- What other information may be necessary to evaluate whether students are meeting course goals and outcomes?

Assessment Timing and Techniques; Performance Criteria

Evaluating when and how often to assess will depend on the specific goal or outcome under consideration. The decision may involve assessing over the course of the semester or assessing at key moments in time. The choice of assessment techniques may include formal, graded, traditional assignments or more informal, ungraded activities – at the instructor’s discretion, of course. Instructors also need to decide on the criteria, or level of proficiency, that confirms progress toward or achievement of defined goals and outcomes (or the lack of progress, etc.).

Deciding When and How Often to Assess

Consider the following when choosing to assess over time or at specific points in time:

1. Am I trying to gauge student learning of class content in general?
2. Do I care about the knowledge students bring into the classroom with them at the start of the semester compared to the knowledge they will take away with them at the end?
3. Does the extent of progress or improvement over a period of days or weeks matter?
4. Do I want to assess the level of students’ reflective thinking about a particular reading assignment?
5. Am I interested in specific areas of learning that I have identified as particularly relevant or important?
6. Am I concerned about how well students understand a complicated lecture?

If you answered “yes” to questions 1, 2 or 3, use an assessment method that gauges student learning over time. If you answered “yes” to questions 4, 5, or 6, use an assessment method that evaluates student learning at a particular point in time. Of course, it is quite possible that all the questions are of interest to you and you may want to incorporate both types of assessment in your class.

Adapted from Stassen, Doherty, and Poe, Course-Based Review and Assessment (University of Massachusetts Amherst)

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Assessment Instruments and Methods for Assessing Student Learning

A few examples of various assessment techniques are included in this section. For a more comprehensive collection of ideas, consult works such as Angelo and Cross’ Classroom Assessment Techniques, Walvoord’s Assessment Clear and Simple, and Stevens and Levi’s Introduction to Rubrics.

**Minute paper**

The minute paper is a quick and easy way to assess student learning at a particular point in time. It not only provides helpful feedback but requires little time or effort to administer. Just before the end of class (you decide how long you want your students to write), stop the class and ask students to take the rest of the time writing several questions about the day’s material. These questions might include “What is the most important thing you learned in today’s class?” or “Do you still have questions about the material we covered today?” Students hand in their responses before leaving.

You can use the minute paper to assess:

- Student recall and understanding
- Student evaluation of what they recall
- Student ability to self-assess their learning and understanding

**Muddiest Point**

The muddiest point exercise is a variation of the minute paper. Administered during or at the end of a lecture or class discussion, the muddiest point exercise asks students to think about what went on in class that day and to write about what was the “muddiest” (least clear) point in that day’s class.

This exercise:

- asks the student to reflect on the class lecture or discussion
- asks the student to decide what was understood and what was unclear
- asks the student to self-assess learning and to identify what did/did not work

**Reading Reaction**

We often ask students to read and synthesize a wide variety of material during a course. Because the reading for one course is only part of the entire reading load a student may carry, the reading is often done in a hurry with the main purpose not to learn but “to get through it.” This poses two problems:

- The student is not reading to understand and gain knowledge, but reading to complete an assignment.
The student may not have the time or inclination to think critically about the reading, to judge its validity, or to evaluate its worth. The reading reaction paper forces students to slow down the reading process and asks them to actually think about what they have read. It may be administered as a short homework assignment to be completed after the reading has been done or as an in-class assignment to stimulate class discussion. Typically, a reading reaction paper asks students to respond (or react) to the reading (i.e., what did the author say, did you agree with what was written, why/why not, etc.) in one page or less. Part of the class that day can be used to discuss student reactions to the reading, or the papers can simply be passed in to provide feedback on student levels of understanding. Either way, it is a good idea to record at least a pass/fail grade for these exercises to ensure student commitment to the task. The reading reaction paper helps students learn by:

- building skills needed for critical thinking and argument construction
- encouraging students to take charge of a reading assignment and to judge its worth
- asking students to “think” instead of simply taking in the words as they read

**Pre/Post-Test**

Pre- and post-tests are another way to assess student learning from the start of the course until the end. A *pre-test* can be used at the beginning of the semester to capture the extent of student knowledge and understanding about key course concepts they will study that semester. It can also be used to measure students attitudes and values relevant to course concepts and predictive of their response and position on course materials. Using a follow-up *post-test* at the end of the semester and comparing results from the two can be an effective way to demonstrate student achievement over time.

**Portfolio Analysis**

Portfolio analysis is becoming an increasingly popular method of assessment, both at the classroom and the program level. Portfolio analysis looks at student work during a period of time and evaluates the extent of learning based on the progression of the work from the first assignment until the last. At the classroom level, this might include a series of writing assignments of increasing difficulty or all work that the student has produced for a particular course. At the program level, the portfolio might include all key pieces of work that the student has completed for the major. The advantages of the portfolio as a method of longer-term assessment include:

- A visual representation of student learning from beginning to end
- A concrete way to track and document student progress over time
- A hard copy record of tasks and output for the student to retain for future reference
- A systematic progression of tasks that can be linked to course goals and objectives and interpreted in the context of whether each was accomplished
Rubrics As Measurement Tools

One excellent way to measure student success on a particular assignment or project is through the use of a rubric. A rubric is simply a standard of performance for a defined population. That standard can be established by the individual instructor, but a more useful standard would be relevant for all sections of a course or program. There is no hard and fast rule as to how to design a rubric – some faculty prefer five levels of proficiency to coincide with the standard grading scale (A, B, C, etc.) whereas other faculty prefer three or four levels. Also, there is no rule setting how many criteria are ‘enough,’ although more than five or six criteria are probably too many. The rubric should be understandable not only by the faculty member but also by the students, so that they understand how they are being assessed on a particular point.

More importantly, each juncture of criterion and proficiency level should be adequately defined so that any assessor could use it and understand the difference between levels. Numerous examples of rubrics are available on the Web, including Winona State’s collection at http://course1.winona.edu/shatfield/air/rubrics.htm. Monmouth’s ‘A Rubric for Rubrics’ (below) is a good example of design:
### A Rubric For Rubrics:
**A Tool for Assessing the Quality and Use of Rubrics in Education**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1 Unacceptable</th>
<th>2 Acceptable</th>
<th>3 Good/Solid</th>
<th>4 Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity of Criteria</strong></td>
<td>Criteria being assessed are unclear, inappropriate and/or have significant overlap.</td>
<td>Criteria being assessed can be identified, but are not clearly differentiated or are inappropriate.</td>
<td>Criteria being assessed are clear, appropriate and distinct.</td>
<td>Each criteria is distinct, clearly delineated and fully appropriate for the assignment(s)/course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distinction Between Levels</strong></td>
<td>Little/no distinction can be made between levels of achievement.</td>
<td>Some distinction between levels is made, but is not totally clear how well.</td>
<td>Distinction between levels is apparent.</td>
<td>Each level is distinct and progresses in a clear and logical order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability of Scoring</strong></td>
<td>Crossscoring among faculty and/or students often results in significant differences.</td>
<td>Crossscoring by faculty and/or students occasionally produces inconsistent results.</td>
<td>There is general agreement between different scorers when using the rubric (e.g. differs by less than 51% or less than ½ level).</td>
<td>Crossscoring of assignments using rubric results in consistent agreement among scorers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity of Expectations/Guidance to Learners</strong></td>
<td>Rubric is not shared with learners.</td>
<td>Rubric is shared and provides some idea of the assignment/expectations.</td>
<td>Rubric is referenced used to introduce an assignment/guide learners.</td>
<td>Rubric serves as primary reference point for discussion and guidance for assignments as well as evaluation of assignment(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support of Metacognition (Awareness of Learning)</strong></td>
<td>Rubric is not shared with learners.</td>
<td>Rubric is shared but not discussed/referenced with respect to what is being learned through the assignment(s)/course.</td>
<td>Rubric is shared and identified as a tool for helping learners to understand what they are learning through the assignment/in the course.</td>
<td>Rubric is regularly referenced and used to help learners identify the skills and knowledge they are developing throughout the course/assignment(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of examples, rationale, and indicators connected to criteria descriptors at each level</strong></td>
<td>Rubric criteria is void of examples, indicators, rationale.</td>
<td>Rubric includes vague criteria examples, indicators, rationale.</td>
<td>Rubric is supported by fairly clear examples, indicators, rationale.</td>
<td>Rubric draws very clear connections between criteria examples, indicators and rationale.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Determining Level of Proficiency**

Not all assessment techniques will need a formal definition of ‘superior,’ ‘adequate,’ ‘unacceptable,’ etc. levels of proficiency. If the assessment is simply to understand better the extent of “learning” or progress students are achieving at any given time, or to gauge the effectiveness of an assignment or a particular lecture, then each instructor can use his own discretion when interpreting the information. If evidence of assessment and resulting student progress is to be reported for program review or for accreditation, however, then more formal criteria may be necessary. Some sample rubrics follow:

**SUNY Genesco General Education Rubrics**

http://gened.genesco.edu/pdfs/assess_tools_revised.pdf

**Social Science Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHODS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC ISSUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis Development, Document Analysis, Observation, Experiment, Measurement, Statistical Analysis, or Interpretative Analysis</td>
<td>Major Social Science Concepts, Major Social Science Models, Major Social Science Concerns</td>
<td>Social Issues, Political Issues, Economic Issues, Moral Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 Exceeding</strong></td>
<td>The student demonstrated a clear understanding of the relative merits of at least two of the methods used by social scientists</td>
<td>The student demonstrated a clear understanding of the relative merits of at least two social science models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 Meeting</strong></td>
<td>The student demonstrated a clear understanding of at least one of the methods used by social scientists</td>
<td>The student demonstrated a clear understanding of at least one social science model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Approaching</strong></td>
<td>The student could distinguish between the methods of social science and other liberal arts disciplines but failed to clearly describe even one social science method</td>
<td>The student could distinguish between the concepts, models, and concerns of social science and those of other liberal arts disciplines but misunderstood important elements of this social science knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Not Meeting</strong></td>
<td>The student could not distinguish between the methods of social science and other liberal arts disciplines</td>
<td>The student could distinguish between the concepts of social science and other liberal arts disciplines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## General Education Scoring Guide for Critical Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Level</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Analysis &amp; Evaluation</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4 – Accomplished | Analyzes insightful questions  
Refutes bias  
Critiques content  
Examines inconsistencies  
Values information | Examines conclusions  
Uses reasonable judgment  
Discriminates rationally  
Synthesizes data  
Views information critically | Argues succinctly  
Discusses issues thoroughly  
Shows intellectual honesty  
Justifies decisions  
Assimilates information |
| 3 – Competent | Asks insightful questions  
Detects bias  
Categorizes content  
Identifies inconsistencies  
Recognizes context | Formulates conclusions  
Recognizes arguments  
Notices differences  
Evaluates data  
Seeks out information | Argues clearly  
Identifies issues  
Attributes sources naturally  
Suggests solutions  
Incorporates information |
| 2 – Developing | Identifies some questions  
Notes some bias  
Recognizes basic content  
States some inconsistencies  
Selects sources adequately | Identifies some conclusions  
Sees some arguments  
Identifies some differences  
Paraphrases data  
Assumes information valid | Misconstructs arguments  
Generalizes issues  
Cites sources  
Present few options  
Overlooks some information |
| 1 - Beginning | Fails to question data  
Ignores bias  
Misses major content areas  
Detects no inconsistencies  
Chooses biased sources | Fails to draw conclusions  
Sees no arguments  
Overlooks differences  
Repeats data  
Omits research | Omits argument  
Misrepresents issues  
Excludes data  
Draws faulty conclusions  
Shows intellectual dishonesty |
Interpreting and Using Assessment Results

After collecting information from classroom assessments, the next step is to analyze the information. Some organization of the data will undoubtedly be necessary to make better sense of students’ (or instructors’) progress. While there are any number of methods to analyze the data, two examples follow to assist in beginning to organize, interpret, and use the results.

Data Collection and Analysis

Identifying how to use assessment data to improve teaching and learning is essential to the assessment process. The first step is organizing the information you have collected. There are a variety of ways to analyze your data, ranging from informal “eye-ballng” analysis to more formal statistical manipulation. A simple chart might help you organize your thoughts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Follow-Up</th>
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The chart above follows the procedure for data collection and analysis in the TracDat system currently used at Blinn College, and it follows the steps designed and modified over the years by James O. Nichols in his *A Practitioner's Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation, 3rd ed.* (Agathon Press, 1996). Taken as a whole, the process captures what the students should be able to do/know, how the instructor measured their abilities, evidence of student success, and any ‘actions’ taken to improve success or resolve problems.

Faculty can use formative or summative, direct or indirect measures as they are most relevant to the specific SLO. Each SLO ideally will be measured using more than one methodology, and it is not necessary to measure every SLO every semester or even every year. Academic divisions
should rotate two or three SLOs every year for each course and for their programs, as long as all SLOs are assessed over a five-year cycle.

The five columns are defined as follows:

- **Student Learning Outcome** – (course-level) as defined by The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in the Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual and including any devised by the program; (program-level) as devised by the program instructors.
- **Methodology** – how are you going to measure student success on the SLO? Be specific: “Questions #9-15 on the mid-term will align with this SLO.” “70% of the students taking the mid-term will answer all of the targeted questions correctly.”
- **Results** – what happened? Again, be specific: “Based on the locally-designed rubric, over 90% of the students were successful on the formatting criterion. However, most of those same students had a problem answering the more specific question…..”
- **Action** – probably the most important part of the process! If your students were not successful, what did you do to resolve the issue? Preferably, you will assess the SLO sometime well before the end of the semester, and you will then take action before the end of the semester and record if your intervention made a difference. The ‘action’ could be as simple as reviewing the material and re-testing the students via a short quiz or by using clickers.
- **Followup** – where you will record the results of your ‘action’ and maybe any plans for the future.

There is no exact way to recording the information, but it should be done in such a way as to be understandable by any outside reader. More detail is preferable to less, but you can also attach a separate document with more detail, if you want.

For more information or help with producing reports, contact Tony Adam, Director of Institutional Assessment, at tony.adam@blinn.edu
Chapter 3
Blinn College Assessment Council and Assessment Structure

Blinn College Assessment Council’s Vision, Mission, and Goals

In order to lead the assessment transformation, a college-wide Assessment Council was formed in January 2010. The council is comprised of the Director of Institutional Assessment, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Enrollment Management, and representatives from the Brenham, Bryan, Schulenburg, and Sealy campuses. The vision and mission of the Assessment Council are:

- **Vision**: To improve the quality of students’ educational experiences, The Blinn College Assessment Council will work collaboratively with the college community to sustain innovative, continuous, and reflective assessment practices at the course, program and institutional level.

- **Mission**: The Assessment Council functions as a reliable and trusted source for providing support, development, and examination of policies and best practices to shape the future of assessment at Blinn College.

The Assessment Council has also set forth a series of **Goals**:

**Goal #1.** Create an assessment manual and plan with policies and procedures that reflect a faculty driven process at the course, program, and institutional levels.
- **Outcome #1**: Conduct focus groups (faculty or student) to increase input in creating the assessment manual.
- **Outcome #2**: Produce course-, program-, and institutional-level assessment guides, collectively known as the assessment manual.

**Goal #2.** Provide professional development in assessment for faculty and administration.
- **Outcome #1**: Develop eCampus faculty assessment trainings.
- **Outcome #2**: Track faculty participation in workshops and trainings.
- **Outcome #3**: Develop a process to recognize and reward faculty for their efforts and contributions to assessment.

**Goal #3.** Actively reflect on the impact of assessment at Blinn within the course, program, and institutional levels.
- **Outcome #1**: Conduct focus groups (faculty or student) to reflect on the impact of assessment at the course, program, and institutional levels.
- **Outcome #2**: Disseminate assessment related information and analyses at the Fall and Spring faculty and staff professional meetings.
Guiding Principles of Blinn College’s Assessment Program

The following general principles may be useful in fostering the efforts of the Blinn College Assessment Committee. These Assessment Principles were derived from many sources including literature review and participation in various conferences on assessment.

- To improve student learning and development.
- To develop an effective, valid assessment program is a long term dynamic process.
- To develop an assessment program that adheres to Blinn College’s Mission Statement.
- To involve a multi-method approach.
- To separate the assessment of student learning and development from faculty evaluation.
- To design an assessment program that must include training and related support for faculty and staff who are responsible for assessment activities.
- To assure that assessment results will not reflect negatively against students.
- To seek and utilize the most reliable, valid methods and instruments of assessment.
- To state the assessment objectives/goals in terms of observable student outcomes that are generally categorized into one of the following areas:
  - Basic College Readiness
  - General Education
  - Major Areas of Study
  - Career Preparation
  - Personal Growth and Development

Assessment Policies at Blinn College

Assessment policies at Blinn College may vary by division and by course.

Assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) at Blinn College is a faculty-driven process aided by the support and guidance of the campus Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Enrollment Management and more particularly under the direction of the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation and the Director of Institutional Assessment.

Since the launch of the Assessment Council and website, faculty have developed a vision and mission and are working toward a college-wide Assessment Council strategic plan linked to SACS reaccreditation requirements. Regular meetings are held to discuss general assessment issues. The College values faculty involvement in leading ‘best practices’ in assessment across the institution and included assessment as a major theme at the fall 2009 and fall 2010 faculty and professional staff meetings.

Academic assessment at Blinn College starts with the establishment of student learning outcomes. This occurs at both the discipline- and course-levels. Course-level outcomes are designed to feed into discipline-level outcomes (Biology Bryan Campus example). Every effort is made to align course- and discipline-level outcomes, with the result that discipline-level
Student learning outcomes at Blinn are developed in two ways. For most of the certificate disciplines, outcomes have already been established at the state level, primarily by professional organizations and commissions. For example, the Basic Peace Officer Course objectives are produced by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education (TCLEOSE). Additionally, certain courses have established student learning outcomes as outlined in THECB’s Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM). These common learning outcomes are intended to streamline the transfer process within the state.

Each academic unit is free to create its own set of outcomes, if no externally-developed student learning outcomes exist. Faculty developed new course-level student learning outcomes and began data collection and documentation of these outcomes starting in fall 2008. The outcome-development process is dependent upon the nature of the course. If a course is unique to the curriculum (i.e., normally taught solely by the same faculty member on a regular basis), that faculty member creates his/her own student learning outcomes. However, courses with numerous sections (e.g., MUSI 1304 Foundations of Music) and/or that are repeated regularly regardless of instructor develop outcomes through joint agreement between campuses. Discipline coordinators and/or division chairs are responsible for ensuring coordination of outcomes between sections. Division leadership schedules faculty to meet within their disciplines to discuss existing outcomes and make recommendations for modifications, if any. The outcomes are forwarded electronically to the Master Course Syllabi Portal maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs. The Master Course Syllabi Portal serves as the central repository for student learning outcome inventories and related information and is designed to be the authoritative source for the wording of the outcomes. The Dean of Academic Affairs on each campus reviews the submissions and comments, and the faculty will then enter the new outcome in TracDat, the online tracking system for assessment.

All academic units have discipline-level outcomes in place, and every course also has outcomes. All outcomes are posted in TracDat and are common across campuses (i.e., academic disciplines on the Bryan and Brenham campuses share the same outcomes). Each discipline has at least two student learning outcomes, and each course has a minimum of five outcomes, with most averaging six-to-ten. Some units (e.g., Natural Sciences) have further formalized the process by rotating assessment of specific outcomes, and this procedure will be implemented institution-wide to ensure all outcomes are measured within the assessment cycle without overburdening smaller units in particular. Many outcomes have thus not been assessed during this cycle but will be scheduled during the upcoming years. The goal is not to assess every outcome for every course for every discipline every semester, but rather to develop a process which will allow faculty to focus more closely on select outcomes for a set period to ascertain student learning of that skill or particular content. Campus policy requires all course student learning outcomes to be included on all course syllabi. Outcomes might be added, revised, or deleted by faculty based on assessment results, external requirements from agencies, or changes in discipline or course emphasis.
After outcomes have been established, each academic division decides on the assessment methodology for courses and disciplines. Over the past few years most divisions have relied on post-test data to judge results, but OIE&EM strongly encourages all divisions to move away from this methodology and develop more fitting and reliable means. In an effort to assist the disciplines, scanners have been purchased and distributed across the campuses to promote item analysis. Some disciplines within the divisions had already successfully utilized this approach, and OIE&EM has worked with others to better link outcomes with data collection. Divisions are urged to develop whatever assessment methodology best suits their own disciplines, with some using common course rubrics (Speech Rubric A and B) designed with the assistance of OIE&EM. Additionally, divisions establish their own benchmarks, and these targets may be adjusted as necessary. The benchmarks and other information are all posted to TracDat by course and discipline and are reviewed by OIE&EM.

Depending on the assessment schedule, faculty collect and analyze results on a discipline-by-discipline basis. Because of the wide disparity in the size of disciplines, localized faculty-driven data aggregation is necessary for analysis to take place. For example, one course might have multiple sections with over a dozen part- and full-time instructors per semester, whereas another might only have one section and one instructor. Similarly, the same course offered simultaneously on both campuses might have a significantly larger number of instructors on one campus over the other. Regardless of the methodology, data are collected and assessed against the established benchmarks. Division leadership may, if they wish, make Assignments for individual faculty to upload documents and make comments in TracDat; this process gives more ownership to faculty and promotes the importance of assessment measures for continuous improvement. Faculty along with division leaders then discuss results and devise an Action Plan as needed. Once the Action Plan has had sufficient time to take effect, units do a Follow-Up to judge the success or failure of that Plan and make further plans to ‘close the loop.’ TracDat’s Documents section has proven a popular repository for data reports, unit meetings minutes, examples of test questions, and other materials that support statements made throughout the system.

Throughout the assessment process, OIE&EM is available for guidance and assistance in whatever form necessary. The Director of Institutional Assessment is available to meet with individuals, disciplines, and/or divisions to discuss problems, offer suggestions, and generally provide means to ensure the process flows smoothly and in a timely fashion. OIE&EM also ensures sustainability of processes and methodologies, archiving historic data and disseminating data reports to academic divisions on a regular basis (OIE&EM reports).

Assessment Workshops and Training

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Enrollment Management (OIE&EM) regularly offers workshops and training sessions, both formal and informal, to anyone requiring assistance in all phases of assessment, from developing outcomes to negotiating TracDat. OIE&EM personnel serve as facilitators for the “summits” by offering guidance and direction and assisting in consensus-building. Faculty can also use the current communications processes available throughout the College (i.e., email, eCampus, etc.) to foster inter-program cooperation. This system of continual discussion strengthens the concept of ongoing assessment as part of the
accepted culture of the College. Additionally, all members of the Assessment Council have undergone training as part of their membership requirements. OIE&EM has also prepared and distributed training guides to all academic units.

Assessment training at Blinn College is conducted by the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation, the Director of Institutional Assessment, and members of the Assessment Council. Training sessions are held regularly throughout the academic year on the two main campuses, and support materials are available electronically for all personnel.

**Fast Track Assessment Workshops**

Every semester a series of assessment workshops are offered on both main campuses and are open to any faculty or staff member interested in learning more about assessment techniques. The sessions take place over a period of four weeks and include discussions of best practices, overview of training videos, and readings relative to the interest of participants.

**TracDat™ Training Workshops**

TracDat™ is the institution’s way of charting the progress of programs and disciplines. According to Nuventive, the program developer, TracDat™ is “the leading assessment management solution for managing, continuous improvement throughout higher education institutions. It’s an enterprise-wide solution ‘capable of managing the entire assessment process.’” TracDat™ can help ask questions on assessment like “How does your institution manage assessment? Are you manually collecting and managing all required data and information? Are these efforts coordinated across the institution? Does your campus need help with assessment? Are annual reports the fastest way to deliver updates on open issues? Are your accrediting agencies satisfied with your student learning assessment process?” In so doing it can be used to review the assessment practices of the institution.
Chapter 4  
Institutional Assessment

Blinn College assesses its overall effectiveness as an educational institution based upon the degree to which institution- and program-level strategic goals and outcomes are met. In 2009, the Board of Trustees approved the 2009-2012 Strategic Planning Goals that included a clarification of the mission and vision for the College.

The benefits of the strategic planning include clarification of mission and vision, inclusion of all stakeholders, development of a framework for continuous improvement, integration of multiple initiatives into a coherent overarching plan, improved communication, and strategic use of resources. Following the year-long college-wide Strategic Planning Process in 2008, programs developed strategic plans based on goals, outcomes, and assessments linked to institution-wide goals.

Blinn College 2009-2012 Program-Level Strategic Plans are linked to institution-wide goals. In addition, the College views identification and measurement of student learning outcomes and improvement of student learning in its educational programs as essential to continuous assessment, one of Blinn’s institutional goals. The College uses several institution-wide assessment processes that are broad-based, interrelated, and linked to its mission. The College uses these assessment measures to strengthen and improve student learning:

- Institution-wide key performance indicators
- Assessment of general education outcomes through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Program Review - a process which includes student learning outcomes by program area

The current Blinn College Key Performance Indicators for Student Success are as follows:

- Transfer Rates - to include study of withdrawal rates of students
- Successful Passing Rates for Distance Learning Students Successful Passing Rates - emphasis on Developmental Students
- Passing rates for licensure and certification examinations
- Persistence in Technical Program Courses
- Job Placement Rates for Technical Graduates
- Retention and Transfer Rates for Career/Technical Education
- Student and Employer Satisfaction
- Progress toward Participation and Success Targets for THECB’s Closing the Gaps by 2015 Initiative Achievement of General Education Coursework: Core Curriculum (42 hours)

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Chapter 5
Academic Transfer and Certificate Program Assessment

Program-Level Assessment

Student learning outcomes assessment at the discipline-level has developed less quickly than course-level assessment. During training sessions and meetings with the Director of Institutional Assessment and Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation, faculty developed two discipline student learning outcomes, with the intent to measure at least one outcome during each assessment cycle. As mentioned previously, the College defines a “discipline” as a course of study of one year or greater in length that leads to a degree or certificate.

Meetings with academic transfer faculty stressed the importance of developing student learning outcomes at the discipline level that encompass as much as possible the basic knowledge that a student should retain after exiting the coursework sequence. Because many of the College’s students transfer to four-year institutions rather than obtain a two-year degree, academic transfer discipline-level assessment, more often than not, focuses on student accomplishment in a small number of courses rather than a full sequence toward graduation. Although a student will designate a “major” (as noted on the CBM 001 Student Enrollment report to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board) at some point in his/her career at the College, the majority of students do not work towards a degree. Thus a student might register as an “Art major” but only take one or two Art courses at Blinn before transferring out and being graduated from a local university. Exceptions to this general rule of thumb include the Allied Health and other certificate disciplines (e.g., Radiologic Technology, Dental Hygiene, Law Enforcement Technology). Regardless, disciplines such as English, Biology, and Math that offer support courses for transfer students or disciplines that have the primary focus of offering a major (see Associate Degree Nursing, Legal Assisting, Criminal Justice) are trained to write and evaluate two discipline-level student learning outcomes based on an assessment cycle designed by faculty. These SLOs are developed in such a way as to encompass what faculty believe to be essential content knowledge and skills across the courses. An outcome for a discipline with a large number of students taking primarily core courses will emphasize different skills than the Allied Health certificate programs. Given the need to assess some skills more regularly than others, not every discipline-level SLO is measured annually within the academic disciplines.

The term 'discipline' at Blinn College encompasses a range of offerings, from as small as a few courses offered within a Division (e.g., Geology, Biology, Chemistry, Physics) to one which offers numerous certificate/degree awards (i.e., LVN, Radiologic Technology, Emergency Medical Services Program) such as Blinn's Allied Health program. The Parallel Studies Program for example offers courses in reading developmental education, English as a Second Language, Study Skills, and education. The College does not offer capstone courses typical of a university.
Course-Level Assessment

For the purposes of this manual course-based assessment refers to the regular collection and logical analysis of information, from a variety of student assignments, to enhance learning opportunities and improve instruction.

Assessment vs. Grading

Classroom assessment involves more than traditional grading of the usual assignments (unit exams, term papers), which may provide only a sum total of performance over a broad range of learning outcomes; it is on-going evaluation that provides feedback to both instructors and students as to how well students are meeting specific learning outcomes.

Beginning the Process

Course-based assessment begins by identifying a few broad intellectual goals pertinent to a particular discipline (e.g., improve critical and analytical thinking), then establishing several course-specific student learning outcomes (SLOs) that can be achieved by mastering the course content. In other words, specific course content will be tied to one or more specific SLOs, which will then be tied to one or more of the broad intellectual goals. As noted earlier, course-level SLOs for all Blinn College courses are either mandated by The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or by programmatic certification, although programs have the option of including additional SLOs if they so desire.

Benefits to Students and Instructors

Students benefit from this process because instructors’ expectations are clearer, course content seems more relevant, and they gain a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. In turn, instructors benefit because they can make better adjustments to classroom instruction techniques and become better judges of the learning process (or lack thereof) in their students.
Achievement of General Education Coursework

At Blinn College, assessment of student learning outcomes through the 42-hour core curriculum began in 2002. Blinn College evaluates all courses in the core curriculum each semester to ensure that students are receiving quality general education. The state of Texas mandates that all public higher education institutions maintain a core curriculum of at least 42 semester hours and assess the effectiveness of the core.

Completion of a degree program at Blinn College requires that students demonstrate competence in reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, basic mathematics, and computer literacy. The college publishes the general education core competencies in its student handbook that focus on broadly-defined skills for students to improve in their professional, social, and personal development. Instructors submit core curriculum assessment matrices (example provided) to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Enrollment Management (OIE&EM) where summary reports are generated for each campus, and aggregate reports are generated for the institution. Appropriate benchmarks and rating processes are established institution-wide. Institutional reports are submitted to the THECB as required.

Faculty within each program decide on appropriate locally developed measurements, with guidance from assistant division chairs and division chairs. Divisions then conduct randomized samples and report results to OIE&EM. The College recognizes the need to develop an institution-wide process whereby the core curriculum assessment process extends beyond division-wide measurements. A Core Curriculum Assessment Committee oversees the assessment process and is currently working to align assessment practices with state mandates. In addition, some academic programs have embedded program-level core curriculum competencies (e.g., Fine Arts Division-Critical Thinking) in course-level Student Learning Outcomes assessments.

New Core Objectives have been developed recently by the THECB’s Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee (UEAC) as part of the Core Curriculum Revision Project and are currently scheduled for full implementation statewide scheduled by fall 2014. Each institution of higher education in the State of Texas will submit data reports to THECB, although the specific format of these reports has not been released. The new Core Objectives are: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical & Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility. Each Foundational Component Areas has a ‘Required’ or an ‘Optional’ designation, as follows:
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Optional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life &amp; Physical Sciences</td>
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<tr>
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**Institutional Option MUST contain a minimum of 3 Core Objectives selected by the institution.

**REQUIRED** = required Core Objectives to be addressed in each course selected for inclusion in the Foundational Component Area.

**OPTIONAL** = institution may include Core Objective for each course selected for inclusion in the Foundational Component Area.


Chapter 7
Program Review

Program Review

Program Review is an integral part of the institution's overall planning process. The purpose of Program Review is to systematically evaluate progress toward achievement of program strategic goals and outcomes, including how a program can be strengthened. This self-study process focuses on four tenets: the search for the true state of the program area, the identification of accomplished services in the program area and those needing improvement, recommendations for implementing improvements, and use of results and follow-up. The overarching goal of program review is to foster student success and learning.

Program-level assessment is required on a rotational schedule. All campus units, both academic and support, take part in the review process. Separate templates are utilized depending on the type of program. The program director or division chair is responsible for overseeing the timely and accurate completion of the Program Review process.

Program Review assessment at Blinn College was modified during AY2011-12 to simplify the writing and review process while simultaneously expanding the scope of the review to include external consultants and focus groups. Academic programs (including academic transfer and certification) are reviewed on a five-year cycle, while support programs are reviewed on a three-year cycle. The main difference between the academic and support processes is that the academic units comment on faculty load and student enrollment within their programs in addition to the topics also covered by the support units. The process and timeline are as follows for all programs:

1. Staff from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Enrollment Management (OIE&EM) meet with program directors/chairs to explain the process and answer any questions.
2. OIE&EM staff prepare Word templates which include enrollment & faculty load data (for academic programs). Academic Support and other units (e.g., Enrollment Services, Budgeting) will use the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards In Higher Education) Guidelines as their template.
3. Templates and data files are distributed electronically to program directors/chairs.
4. Program directors/chairs respond to questions and statements in the template, including updates to strategic plans.
5. OIE&EM staff conduct focus groups with full- and part-time faculty/staff (excluding unit leaders) and students (where applicable) in each unit. Comments are captured anonymously and recorded as a SWOT analysis. A brief report is prepared by OIE&EM and forwarded to the unit leader.
6. Each unit arranges for an external consultant to come in for a day to offer suggestions, comments, etc. on the unit’s strengths and weaknesses. The consultant’s report is sent to the unit head and OIE&EM.

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7. All documents are forwarded to members of the Program Review Committee for study. The Committee is composed of leaders from both academic and support units, including academic vice-presidents and the vice-president for finance.

8. The unit head prepares a one-hour presentation for the Program Review Committee based on the templates, focus group report, and external consultant’s report.

9. The unit head prepares an Executive Summary to be presented to the Executive Council for comments, actions, etc.

10. All documents are stored on the OIE&EM server for future reference.

The College is scanning its previous years’ Program Reviews from 2005 onward that were not electronically submitted. Since late 2008, the College has worked to improve terminology and to establish better guidelines for those responsible for financial or enrollment requirements in the Program Review document. Further, starting in Fall 2009, the College saw the need to strengthen its current program review to inform its strategic planning efforts and decided to revisit the current five-year cycle. From late spring through the summer 2010, meetings were held by the Program Review Committee to reconsider a one- to three-year reporting cycle tied to budgetary planning in lieu of the five-year cycle required currently. Moreover, the committee utilized ‘best practices’ from leading practitioners in the field of outcomes-based assessment in program review to inform decision making for improvements.

The College understands the importance of program review as part of its institution-wide continuous improvement cycle and is committed to excellence in all aspects of program review. The use of feedback is an integral part of the continuous improvement cycle and a foundation to sound assessment practices.
Chapter 8
Service Learning Assessment

Service Learning Assessment

Service Learning combines community service with classroom instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility to engage students. Service learning programs involve students in activities that address local needs while developing their academic skills and commitment to their community.

Assessment is an integral factor in the implementation and ongoing development of the program and student-centered outcomes. Tracking the number of students or classes engaged in Service Learning is an important snapshot to the health of a program and gives us an idea of progress on the different campuses and in the community. Longitudinal results show impressive gains over time.
Institutional Use of Assessment Results: Distance Learning

Distance Learning at Blinn College is administered through the combined efforts of Academic Affairs (responsible for curriculum, content, and student outcomes), the Distance Learning Program (responsible for learning tools, including the learning management platform and environmental outcomes) and Academic Technology (responsible for maintaining the infrastructure and instructional pedagogy). This unified effort for online course delivery at Blinn College ensures a learner-centered environment for the students through continuous monitoring and quality improvement of student learning outcomes, course design and development, and the learning management platform.

Quality Assessment for Distance Learning Courses

The respective instructional Division designs, develops, and administers all courses ensuring that course objectives and student learning outcomes have full faculty and administrative review and approval. However, because teaching at a distance is such a different modality than face-to-face instruction, Blinn College Distance Learning has developed an additional level of course review for all online and blended courses. Each online or blended course taught by a unique instructor is reviewed on a two-year cycle as described in the Course Review Rubric. Course Review Teams are comprised of the Division Chair or designee, an Instructional Designer and the Dean of Distance Learning (DL). Each member completes an independent review of courses using a standardized rubric developed from the online standards. Individual evaluations are collected into a summary document, which with the assistance from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Enrollment Management (OIE&EM) is analyzed by Division Chairs and appropriate faculty to determine if course adjustments are necessary.

Adoption of Best Practice Standards

In addition, the Office of Distance Learning has developed a Procedures Manual that was adopted by our Board of Trustees as standards of practice for faculty use with Blinn distance courses. The Blinn Online Standards document outlines ten standards of good practice that must be met by all online and blended courses. These standards address specific differences inherent to the delivery of courses in an online environment that can affect student retention and completion rates for online or blended courses.

Distance Learning Support for Faculty Assessment of Students

A variety of applications to assist faculty in student assessment are built into eCampus, the learning management system (LMS). Built-in student assessment tools include an exam generator, assessment question bank manager, survey tool, gradebook, assessment rubric wizard,
assignment drop box, gradable discussion forums, Turnitin assignment drop box, Assessment At-a-Glance (graphical performance display), item analysis, and ANGEL Secure Browser. In addition, faculty have access to Respondus, which is a powerful tool for creating and managing exams and TurnItIn an integrated online tool to help both faculty and students avoid plagiarism and ensure academic integrity. SoftChalk enables faculty to easily create interactive self-check questions as well as learning games and activities in Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) compliant format that can be imported directly into eCampus.

**Student Self-Assessment for Distance Learning**

Because not all students know if distance learning is a good “fit” for them, through Blinn College’s membership in Virtual College of Texas, all students have free access to SmarterMeasure (formally READI). A powerful online, self-assessment tool, SmarterMeasure allows students to measure their readiness to learn and study online. Student reports provide individualized measures of life factors, learning styles, technical competency, on-screen reading rate and recall, typing speed and accuracy; enabling students to determine the appropriateness of the online learning environment to their individual needs.
Resources

Assessment Conferences

http://www.assessmentconferences.com/

Assessment Glossaries

http://www.sabes.org/assessment/glossary.htm

Assessment Materials

http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm

http://www.asha.org/academic/assessment.htm

http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/index.html

http://www.academicprograms.calpoly.edu/assessment/assessplanguide.html

http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acmss.html

Course-Based Assessment

http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/course_based.pdf

Program-Based Assessment

http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/program_based.pdf